

## **The Paths of the Interpreters in Determining their Doctrinal Doctrines through their Interpretations "Tafsir" "Analytical Theoretical Study"**

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### **Abstract**

*This research delves into the methodologies employed by exegetes in delineating their doctrinal perspectives through their interpretations, constituting an analytical study. It encompasses two main sections: the first section deals with defining doctrine and elucidating the influence of beliefs on the perspectives and inclinations of the exegetes, while the second section highlights the methodologies pursued by exegetes in elucidating their doctrinal stances. This discussion revolves around three methodologies: the method of exposition and clarification, the method of preference, and the method of refuting critics and undermining their arguments. The study concludes by summarizing the significant findings and recommendations.*

**Keywords:** *Exegetical doctrine, elucidation of doctrines, methodologies for expounding doctrines.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, and blessings be upon the most noble of prophets and messengers. Since the creation of mankind by the grace of Allah on this earth, humans have remained creatures of their environment, shaped by their thoughts and perceptions that they cannot disentangle, even if they wish to.

Within their thoughts, beliefs emerge some staunchly defended and others contested present between the lines of their expressions. This reality has been present in the writings of exegetes and within their works. What the exegete believes and holds dear significantly influences their interpretations, distinctly manifesting itself while they classify sciences, especially those intertwined with beliefs, such as the science of interpretation sought after by proponents of principles and opinions to articulate their doctrines and reveal their perspectives. Consequently, this led to the emergence of doctrinal trends within the realm of interpretation.

These trends surfaced early in Islamic history, evident towards the end of the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) during the time of the Kharijites. Later, these tendencies became apparent among the followers of the Sunnah, manifesting in what they perceived solely through narrations until Ibn Jarir came forth, explicitly revealing these inclinations in narration, interpretation, deduction, and refutation of dissenters.

The importance and rationale behind the chosen research lie in the following aspects:

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1. Understanding the position of doctrine in the interpretative discourse, given that doctrine constitutes one of the fundamental principles of interpretation as mentioned by scholars.
2. Uncovering the methodologies employed by sectarian groups and factions, examining the approaches they used to determine their doctrines in interpretation based on their authored works.
3. Highlighting the influence of belief systems on the perspectives, statements, and inclinations of interpreters.

The research problem revolves around addressing the following inquiries and ambiguities:

- What is the impact of belief systems on the perspectives, statements, and inclinations of interpreters?
- What methodologies have interpreters employed to articulate their doctrines and defend them through their authored works?

Research Objectives:

This paper aims to explore the influence of belief systems on the perspectives, statements, and inclinations of interpreters. Additionally, it seeks to unveil the methodologies adopted by interpreters to articulate and defend their doctrines through their authored works.

The structure of this research encompasses:

- Introduction: Outlining the importance, rationale, research problem, and objectives.
- First Section: Defining doctrine and elucidating the influence of belief systems on the perspectives and inclinations of interpreters, comprising two subsections:
  - Subsection One: Defining doctrine linguistically and technically.
  - Subsection Two: The impact of belief systems on the perspectives and inclinations of interpreters.
- Second Section: Analyzing the methodologies employed by interpreters in establishing their doctrines, encompassing three subsections:
  - Subsection One: The method of exposition and clarification.
  - Subsection Two: The method of correction and preference.
  - Subsection Three: The method of responding to critics.
- Conclusion: Summarizing the significant findings and presenting recommendations.

## **2. DEFINITION OF BELIEF "AQIDAH" AND EXPLAINING THE IMPACT OF THE FAITH ON THE INTERPRETER'S OPINIONS AND PREFERENCES:**

There are two Subsection:

First: Definition of Aqidah in Language and Terminology:

In the linguistic context of Aqidah "doctrine" stems from the root word that is the opposite of dissolution, indicating a binding or firmness. It denotes tightness, firmness, cohesion, affirmation, and certainty (from the root letters 'Ain, Qaf, and Dal). It signifies a singular origin signifying strength, intensity, and reliance. All branches of this concept stem from it (Ibn Faris: 4/86). The term was initially used in various types of contracts

and sales, then expanded to encompass design and unwavering belief (Ibn Manzur: 3/296-300, Al-Zubaidi 8/394).

In its terminological sense, "doctrine" refers to matters that the heart must affirm, bringing tranquility to the soul, establishing a steadfast certainty unblemished by doubt or hesitation. It embodies unwavering faith that remains untouched by doubt in one's belief system. It must align with reality, rejecting doubt or conjecture. If knowledge does not reach the level of absolute certainty, it cannot be termed as doctrine. It's called doctrine because it forms a firm attachment within one's heart (Al-Wajeez: 1/24, Al-Aql, p. 5).

Second: The Impact of Belief Systems on the Perspectives and Inclinations of Interpreters:

The belief system of an interpreter significantly influences their interpretation. Once a belief is ingrained in the hearts, its influence becomes challenging to extricate, especially when dealing with religious sciences, particularly those closely associated with disciplines like the science of interpretation. This science is sought after by Islamic sects as an indispensable source, albeit varying in degrees of reliance and citation. Consequently, this discipline bears the brunt of doctrinal influences within its realm (Al-Mutrafi: p. 199).

Theological trends emerged in interpretation at an early stage in Islamic history. Their initial appearance was during the late period of the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him), at the time of the emergence of the Khawarij. This emergence significantly impacted interpretation, as doctrinal differences were considered one of the reasons for variations among interpreters. Adherents of these doctrines resorted to the Holy Quran, extracting elements that aligned with their doctrines. They subjected the Quranic text to conform to their opinions and interpreted conflicting passages in ways consistent with their beliefs.

Ibn Qutaybah Abdallah ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, a reputable writer and compiler, who served as a judge in Dinawar, was esteemed for his religious commitment and virtue. Among his works were "Gharib al-Quran," "Mushkil al-Quran," "Mushkil al-Hadith," "Adab al-Katib," and "Uyun al-Akhbar." He passed away in the year 276 AH. Refer to: "Siyar A'lam al-Nubala" 11/345 and "Tabaqat al-Mufassirin" by al-Dawudi 1/251.

The Mu'tazilites interpreted the Quran in a peculiar manner, aiming to reconcile it with their doctrines and imposing interpretations in line with their perspectives (Tawil Mukhtalif al-Hadith 1/269). Consequently, divergent methodologies in interpretation emerged, wherein their proponents contradicted the doctrine of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah.

These contradictions manifested either in well-defined positions or dominantly in favor of their proponents, thereby becoming distinctive labels that set them apart from other interpreters (Al-Dhahabi: p. 20, Al-Mutrafi: p. 5). Among the prominent doctrinal issues that sparked controversy were the following:

- The issue of relying on apparent similarities:
- The issue of the apparent and the hidden:
- The issue of employing reason to interpret transmitted knowledge.

### **3. THE PATHWAYS OF INTERPRETERS IN DETERMINING THEIR DOCTRINES:**

Involve three main elements:

- A. THE method of explanation and clarification (Al-Uthaymeen: 2/232):

Elucidating the meaning and establishing it in the minds is the primary task of the initial interpreter. The essence of interpretation is clarification, followed by subsequent assessments such as preference, clarification, annotation, or other related measures.

Interpretation texts are abundant in explicating the beliefs of interpreters and affirming their understanding within the context of their verse interpretation. This is achieved by showcasing their beliefs initially through the interpretation of the verse in light of those beliefs, substantiating them. Often, when there are multiple interpretations within a verse, the explanation might focus solely on those that support their belief, without considering other interpretations as viable choices, in their opinion.

For further clarification and illustration of this approach from the texts of interpreters, the matter of faith is an illustrative example. It's a subject that has led to differences between the adherents of Sunni Islam and other sects. According to the creed of Sunni Islam, faith encompasses belief in the heart, declaration by the tongue, and actions through deeds. Faith increases with obedience and decreases with disobedience. However, there have been dissenting opinions from two sects:

The first sect views faith solely as affirmation in the heart, excluding everything else from constituting faith. For them, faith neither increases nor decreases, as it is solely an affirmation of the heart. They argue that all people are equal in this regard, whether devout or sinful. According to them, actions do not fall within the domain of faith. They are known as the Murji'ah.

The second sect contends that actions are part of faith and a prerequisite for its existence. According to them, committing major sins expels one from the realm of faith. These sects include the Khawarij and the Mu'tazilah. Among them, the Khawarij are deemed disbelievers in my view, while according to the Mu'tazilah, they are in an intermediate state, neither described as believers nor disbelievers, having exited faith but not entered disbelief, residing in a space between the two states (Al-Uthaymeen: 2/232).

Interpreters have established their beliefs on this matter within their expositions of verse meanings. For instance, Saadi outlined the doctrine of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah (Sunni Islam adherents) when interpreting the verse: "{And Allah would not let your faith go to waste. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful}" [Quran 2:143]. He stated: "Allah does not let your faith go to waste," by estimation during trials or other circumstances.

This includes believers who died before the Kaaba's direction was changed. Allah does not nullify their faith because they obeyed Allah's command and followed the Prophet at that time, as obeying Allah is adhering to His command at any given time accordingly.

B. The pathway of preference:

Preference encapsulates what the interpreter believes, regardless of whether they provide reasoning or evidence for their preference. It represents a definitive judgment according to the interpreter's convictions, opinions, and schools of thought. The act of preferring certain interpretations over others has surfaced frequently within exegetical discussions. Many interpreters have adopted this method as a means to highlight the most accurate interpretation and prioritize certain opinions.

The interpreter's creed significantly influences their preference. Their preference aligns with what resonates in their hearts and what they firmly believe in terms of beliefs. Consequently, interpreters might present various interpretations of a verse, sometimes elaborating or summarizing certain viewpoints. When they reach a preference, it aligns with their creed.

Illustrating this, some sects deviate from the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah regarding the affirmation of Allah's approach and arrival. According to the Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah doctrine, these aspects are affirmed without interpretation, comparison, or

anthropomorphism. For example, al-Tabari, in his interpretation of the verse {Do they await but that Allah should come to them in covers of clouds and the angels [as well], and the matter is [then] decided?}[Quran 2:210], supported the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah regarding Allah's arrival. He said: "Abu Ja'far said: This indicates the grandeur of Allah. Do the deniers of Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his message, expect Allah to come to them covered by clouds and angels?" He then mentioned differences among interpreters in interpreting Allah's arrival, presenting various views:

- First view: There is no other description except what Allah has described Himself with, concerning arrival, descent, or judgment. Extrapolating any description requires information directly from Allah or His Messenger. Concerning Allah's attributes and names, no interpretation is valid except what we have mentioned.
- Second view: His arrival is similar to what is known regarding the arrival of a coming entity from one place to another.
- Third view: The meaning of "that Allah should come to them" signifies the arrival of Allah's command and judgment.
- Fourth view: Instead, the meaning is: Do they await nothing but His rewards, His accountability, and His punishment?

Then he continued: "So, the intended meaning of this statement is to threaten the disbelievers with inevitable events, such as death awaiting them as they persist in disbelief, severe punishment, and the anticipated signs of Allah's power, or the signs that encourage repentance and signal the impending Day of Judgment" (Al-Tabari 4/266).

Contrarily, Ibn Atiyyah's preference opposed al-Tabari's preference as he aligned with the Ash'ari doctrine.

In his interpretation of the same verse, he did not affirm Allah's attribute of arrival in relation to His arrival in command, severity, or judgment. He said: "Al-Tabari said: This refers to the situation of the accountability on the Day of Resurrection. He attributed this to Qatadah and a group of interpreters. Al-Zajaj narrated: This refers to the punishment that Allah imposes in this world upon whomever He wills among His servants, such as thunderbolts, earthquakes, and similar events. Al-Qadi Abu Muhammad said: Regardless of all these interpretations, it is interpreted as 'the command of your Lord,' or 'the severity of your Lord,' or 'the judgment of your Lord.' Otherwise, the literal arrival is impossible concerning Allah. Don't you see that Allah says, 'So Allah seized them from where they did not perceive' [Quran 59:2]? This arrival occurred metaphorically, and what was added is excluded..." He concluded his interpretation of the verse by stating: "The purpose of this verse is to threaten the disbelievers with inevitable consequences, implying, 'Do they expect, while persisting in disbelief, anything other than the severe punishment that awaits them, the divine punishments that are anticipated, or the signs indicating the closeness of the Day of Judgment?'" (Al-Andalusi 2/366).

Additionally, he interpreted the verse {And your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank}[Quran 89:22] as, "The meaning is: His decree, authority, and judgment have arrived" (Al-Muharrar Al-Wajiz 5/480). Ibn Atiyyah's interpretation and its deviation from the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah, which affirms Allah's attribute of arrival and judgment on the Day of Resurrection, diverge from that doctrine. This interpretation resembles that of theologians who deny Allah's actual arrival and explain it as the arrival of His command or authority, an invalid interpretation. The fundamental principle regarding actions attributed to Allah is their validity unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise (Ibn Taymiyyah 65).

### C. The pathway of response and criticism of opponents:

This involves engaging with dissenting views, responding to them, and criticizing their statements by refuting them, weakening their evidence, invalidating their arguments, highlighting their weak points, and introducing doubts regarding their arguments.

Examples of this include Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi's rebuttal and refutation of statements made about the meaning of a verse that contradicted his beliefs. In his interpretation of the verse {Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills}[Quran 4:48], he refuted the views of different sects concerning the rights of those committing major sins. He mentioned each group's stance and then refuted it, saying: "This verse is the ruling on the matter of warning.

It clarifies the contradiction between various interpretations. It is the decisive argument for the Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah against the Kharijites, Mu'tazilites, and Murji'ah. According to the creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah, sinners among believers are subject to the will of Allah; if He wills, He may punish them, and if He wills, He may forgive them. Their argument relies on this verse, considering it as definitive evidence.

According to the Kharijites, sinners are punished regardless of whether their sins are minor or major. According to the Mu'tazilites, they are punished for major sins without exception. In response to both, it is stated in the verse, "and He forgives what is less than that." As for the Murji'ah, they believe that all sinners are forgiven without exception, and that sin does not harm one's faith. They argue using the phrase "for whom He wills," claiming it refers to a select group among sinners, interpreting the verse to mean that it refers to the repentant who will not be punished. This interpretation is far-fetched because the statement "Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him" encompasses those persisting in polytheism without repentance.

Similarly, the phrase "and He forgives what is less than that" refers to those persisting in disobedience without repentance. The Mu'tazilites applied the warning to sinners, and the Murji'ah applied it to disbelievers, and the Ahl al-Sunnah applied it to sinners whom Allah will not forgive. Contrary to others, Ahl al-Sunnah reconcile the promise and warning verses, unifying their meanings. Other interpretations result in conflicting verses. In summary, the disbeliever who repents is forgiven unanimously, while the one who dies in disbelief is unanimously not forgiven and is eternally destined for Hellfire. However, the disobedient among the believers, if they repent, are forgiven, and if they die without repentance, this is where the dispute among people lies" (Al-Kalbi 1/195).

## 4. CONCLUSION:

Praise be to Allah at the beginning and the end. After these discussions, we drew the following conclusions from this study:

The beliefs held by the interpreters had a significant impact on the interpretative heritage, as each faction sought to substantiate the fundamentals of its beliefs through the interpretation of the Quran.

The influence of belief in interpretation emerged very early in Islamic history, first appearing during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) after his assassination when the Kharijite faction emerged.

As a result, doctrinal inclinations surfaced in the field of interpretation, leading to various doctrinal differences evident in the interpretations of the Quran and the preference for certain viewpoints.

Interpreters followed three main pathways in articulating their beliefs: the pathway of explanation, the pathway of reconciling between differing opinions, and the pathway of refuting and criticizing the statements of opponents.

The pathways chosen by interpreters to articulate and defend their beliefs are discernible across various interpretation works, showcasing diversity among them.

- Recommendations:

The arena of creed and its elucidation remain among the greatest endeavors in calling people to Allah. Considering the obscurity of many doctrinal matters among students of knowledge, I propose the title: "Issues Where Interpreters Differ from the Creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah in Matters of Faith.

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