

## THE UNITY OF QUR'ANIC THEMES: Historical Discourse and Contemporary Implications for *Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī* Methodology

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### Abstract

The discourse concerning whether the Qur'an possesses thematic unity has persisted as a subject of prolonged debate throughout history up to the present day. While the majority acknowledges this unity, a minority rejects it. These contrasting perspectives bear significant implications for the methodology of *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* (thematic exegesis): namely, the robustness or fragility of this method. Consequently, this paper examines the historical discourse on Qur'anic thematic unity, contextualizing it with the methodology and urgency of *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* in the modern context to strengthen the foundations of this method. After applying the principles of literature review utilizing historical analysis, this study demonstrates that the discourse on Qur'anic thematic unity falls under the terms *naẓm* (coherence), *siyāq* (context), and *munāsabah* (correlation) in '*ulūm al-qur'ān* (Qur'anic sciences), as well as the theory of *istiqrā'* (induction) in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), all of which are relevant as analytical tools for *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī*. Thus, this paper has implications for strengthening the arguments of the group that accepts the unity of meaning in the Qur'an while simultaneously reinforcing the methodological foundations of *tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī*.

**Keywords :** Theme Unity, Al-Qur'an, Tafsir, al-Mawḍū'ī

### Abstrak

Diskursus tentang apakah al-Qur'an memiliki kesatuan tema telah menjadi perdebatan panjang dalam sejarah sampai hari ini. Mayoritas mengakuinya tetapi minoritas menolak. Kedua pandangan ini berimplikasi besar

terhadap metodologi tafsir *al-mawḍūʿī*: kuat atau tidaknya metode tersebut. Karena itu, tulisan ini mendiskusikan sejarah kesatuan tema al-Qur'an yang dikontekstualisasikan dengan metode dan urgensi tafsir *al-mawḍūʿī* dalam konteks modern untuk menguatkan fondasi metode tersebut. Setelah menerapkan prinsip-prinsip kajian pustaka dengan menggunakan analisis historis, tulisan ini menunjukkan bahwa diskursus tentang kesatuan tema al-Qur'an berada di bawah terma *naẓm*, *siyāq*, *munāṣabah* dalam *ʿulūm al-qurʾān* serta teori *istiqrāʾ* dalam *uṣūl al-fiqh* dimana semuanya relevan sebagai alat analisis tafsir *al-mawḍūʿī*. Dengan demikian, tulisan ini berimplikasi pada penguatan argumentasi kelompok yang menerima kesatuan makna dalam al-Qur'an sekaligus menguatkan fondasi metodologi tafsir *al-mawḍūʿī*.

**Keywords :** Kesatuan Tema, Al-Qur'an, Tafsir, al-Mawḍūʿī

## Introduction

The Qur'an, as divine revelation, presents itself as guidance in addressing various challenges faced by humanity. However, despite being considered the primary guide in life, Qur'anic exegesis research, particularly that which has dominated for centuries, has tended to analyze verses in isolation using the *tahlili* (analytical) method of interpretation. This approach is deemed inadequate in comprehensively addressing the needs of the community, as it has not fully succeeded in revealing the core message contained within the Qur'an holistically.<sup>1</sup>

Recent initiatives in Qur'anic exegesis research have emerged, developing a new approach called the *Tafsir Maudhu'iy* (thematic interpretation) method. This approach aims to interpret the Qur'an as a cohesive whole rather than a mere collection of isolated verses, emphasizing thematic discussion to explore the meanings within the Qur'an. Through this approach, efforts are made to understand the interconnections between Qur'anic verses, appreciate the unique structure of verses and chapters, and present

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Irfan Helmy, "Kesatuan Tema Dalam Al- Qur'an," *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (2020), 169–184.

the Qur'an as a source of inspiration and comprehensive guidance in addressing various human challenges.

However, the discourse on the thematic unity of the Qur'an in its various derivatives - nazm (arrangement), siyāq (context), munāsabah (correlation), and istiqrā' (induction) - has been a subject of prolonged debate to this day. A small group rejects it, while the majority acknowledges it. 'Izz al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Salām (d. 1262 CE),<sup>2</sup> Subḥī al-Ṣāliḥ,<sup>3</sup> Thomas Carlyle,<sup>4</sup> and Salwa M. S. El-Awa<sup>5</sup> can be classified into the first group, while the second group is supported by Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 210 AH),<sup>6</sup> al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 502 AH),<sup>7</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751 AH),<sup>8</sup> Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790 AH),<sup>9</sup> Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905 CE),<sup>10</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1996 CE),<sup>11</sup> Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn,<sup>12</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim,<sup>13</sup> and many others. Regarding these

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<sup>2</sup> Al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), 1: 37.

<sup>3</sup> Subḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm Li al-Malāyīn, 1977), 151–52.

<sup>4</sup> Nevin Reda El-Tahry, "Textual Integrity and Coherence in the Qur'ān: Repetition and Narrative Structure in Surat Al-Baqara" (University of Toronto, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Salwa. M.S. El-Awa, "Linguistic Structure," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (West Sussex - Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2009), 70.

<sup>6</sup> Abū 'Ubaydah, *Majāz Al-Qur'an* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Khānījī, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Ghariḥ Al-Qur'an* (Riyāḍ: Maktabah Nazār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, n.d.).

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Tibyan Fī Aqsām Al-Qur'an*, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn Sālim al-Baṭāṭī (Mekkah: Dār al-'Ālam al-Fuwa'id, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt Fī Uṣūl Al-Shari'ah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2005), I: 24–25 & II: 37 – 41.

<sup>10</sup> 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shaḥāṭah, *Manhaj Al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Kairo: Nashr al-Rasā'il al-Jāmi'iyyah, 1963), 35.

<sup>11</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Naḥw Tafsīr Lisuwar Al-Qur'an Al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajīyyat Al-Baḥth Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'i Li Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Amman: Dār al-Bashīr, 1995), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāḥith Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'i* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1989), 17.

two perspectives, this paper assesses that the divergence of opinions has implications for the methodology of *tafsir al-mawḍūʿī*.

The implication lies in the strength of the foundation of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī, an exegetical method that emerged in the modern era. According to M. Quraish Shihab, tafsir al-mawḍūʿī based on surahs was initiated by Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1963 CE) in January 1960, while tafsir al-mawḍūʿī based on themes was conceived by Aḥmad al-Sayyid al-Kūmī in the 1960s.<sup>14</sup> Thus, if the view of the first group is acknowledged, the foundation of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī would also be weak. Conversely, if rejected in favor of the second opinion, the foundation of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī would be strong and robust. Therefore, this paper discusses the depth of the Qur'an's thematic unity contextualized with the method and urgency of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī in the modern context.

This article applies the principles of literature review with historical analysis as the employed approach. The presence of this article is deemed important in contributing to the development and strengthening of the relatively new tafsir al-mawḍūʿī methodology compared to other exegetical methods. Additionally, this article will attempt to analyze the various existing opinions and is expected to bridge these differences of opinion. The effort to develop a relevant exegetical methodology and bridge classical understanding with contemporary needs in comprehending and applying Qur'anic teachings will be the novelty offered by this article.

## Discussion

### The Thematic Unity of the Qur'an: The Embryo of *Tafsir al-Mawḍūʿī*

The embryonic form of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī (thematic exegesis) can be examined through three theories in 'ulūm al-qur'ān (Quranic

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<sup>14</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 111.

sciences) - *naẓm* (composition), *siyāq* (context), and *munāsabah* (coherence) - and one theory in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) - *istiqrā'* (induction), as well as how these theories contribute to the unity of meaning in the Quran.

*Naẓm* and *munāsabah* are studies concerning the structure and coherence of the Quran. However, *naẓm* gained earlier popularity, as evidenced in the works of early scholars such as *Naẓm al-Qur'ān* by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 225 AH). Subsequently, the concept of *munāsabah* emerged, introduced by Abū Bakr al-Nīsābūrī (d. 324 AH), who critically questioned the placement of verses and surahs: "Why is a verse positioned before and after this verse? What is the wisdom behind placing a surah before and after this surah?" This critical inquiry was directed at the Baghdad scholars of that time due to their lack of knowledge regarding the relationships and congruence between verses and surahs.<sup>15</sup>

From al-Nīsābūrī's critical question, it is evident that the concept of *munāsabah* refers to the relationship between one verse and other verses, both within a single surah and across different surahs, as well as the interconnection between surahs. Meanwhile, according to al-Jurjānī, the concept of *naẓm* refers to the interrelation between words in verses, both within a single surah (intra-surah) and between surahs. "In other words, *naẓm* examines the relationship between words within the Quranic text. This concept of *naẓm* became a source of inspiration for later scholars, such as al-Iṣfahānī in his compilation of the Quranic lexicon, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*. This approach initiates its discussion from the root word and then explores the meanings of other terms in the Quran that share the same root," with the aim of attaining a deeper understanding of meaning.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣriyyah, 2006), 724.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'ān*, 426.

In addition to *naẓm* and *munāsabah*, another theory related to the unity of Quranic themes is *siyāq*. In 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, *siyāq* takes two forms: *al-siyāq al-maqāmī* (external context) and *al-siyāq al-lughawī* (internal textual relationships). The first type of *siyāq* encompasses *asbāb al-nuzūl* (reasons for revelation), *tartīb al-nuzūl* (chronological order of revelation), Meccan and Medinan verses, and *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* (abrogating and abrogated verses). The second type of *siyāq* includes: *munāsabah* or the relationship between verses and surahs, the relationship between the beginning and end of a surah, the relationship between a surah and its constituent letters, and the relationship between the name and purpose of a surah.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in relation to the unity of Quranic themes, *naẓm*, *munāsabah*, and *siyāq* are integrated to form and reinforce *tafsir al-mawḍū'ī*. In other words, *tafsir al-mawḍū'ī* itself emerges from *al-wiḥdah al-mawḍū'iyah* or thematic unity.<sup>18</sup>

There is one more theory that cannot be dissociated from the discussion of thematic unity, namely, *al-istiqrā'* (induction). Al-Ghazālī defines *al-istiqrā'* as "an investigation of a case in order to reach a decision based on a collection of evidence relevant to that case."<sup>19</sup> This implies that the corroboration of evidence in resolving an issue must be based on multiple pieces of evidence relevant to that issue, not just one or two. For instance, in Islamic history, a group emerged that rejected *ijmā'* (consensus) as the third source of Islamic law. Indeed, in *al-Fath al-Mubīn fī Ṭabaqāt al-Uṣūliyyīn*, Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī mentions a scholar of *uṣūl* like Abī Ishāq al-Nizām (d. 221 AH), without affiliation to any school of *fiqh*, who

<sup>17</sup> Quṭb al-Raysūnī, *Al-Naṣṣ Al-Qur'ānī Min Tabāfut Al-Qirā'ah Ilā Afaq Al-Tadabbur* (Maroko: Wizārah al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyah al-Mamlakah al-Maghribiyyah, n.d.), 83–94.

<sup>18</sup> Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn, *Manhajīyyat Al-Baḥth Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī Li Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mustaṣfā Min 'Ilm Al-Uṣūl* (Kairo: al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah, 2010), 72.

rejected *ijmā'* and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) as sources of Islamic law. He authored *Kitāb al-Nukt*, which argues that *ijmā'* cannot be used as a proof,<sup>20</sup> because it is not supported by definitive (*qāṭ'i*) and *mutawātir* evidence.

For al-Ghazālī, such a view is certainly untenable. Based on the analysis of *al-istiqrā'*, the position of *ijmā'* is robust and can serve as a source of law. Therefore, he compiled evidence (hadith) with various different wordings under one meaning: "The community of Prophet Muhammad will not unite upon an error - *lā tajtami'u ummatī 'alā al-khaṭa'*"),<sup>21</sup> thus for him, the status of *ijmā'* is strong and certain.

This method was subsequently developed by al-Shāṭibī (d. 1388 CE), through al-Ghazālī, into the term *istiqrā' al-sharī'ah*. For al-Shāṭibī, a piece of evidence with a presumptive (*ẓannī*) status, for example, if combined with other evidence to form a collection of evidence, then based on this collection, certainty of knowledge will be achieved. Even definitive (*qāṭ'i*) evidence such as prayer, for instance, like Allah's command in the Quran: "Establish prayer!", if its confirmation, according to al-Shāṭibī, is based on this single evidence alone, it would be insufficient and still open to some objections. However, if it is based on a collection of evidence under one meaning, there is certainly no opportunity for anyone to doubt or refute it.<sup>22</sup>

In al-Shāṭibī's hands, this theory is specifically employed to confirm *maṣlaḥah* (benefit) (*ḍarūriyyah* - necessities, *ḥājjiyyah* - needs, and *taḥsīniyyah* - improvements). He recognizes this principle with the term *istiqrā' al-sharī'ah*. If the evidence is complete and comprehensive, he terms it *istiqrā' al-ma'nawī*. And if the evidence is incomplete and not comprehensive, but is

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<sup>20</sup> Al-Ghazālī, 141–43.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Ghazālī, 255.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt Fi Uṣūl Al-Sharī'ah*, 37–41.

mutawātir in nature, he terms it *istiqrā' shabīh bi 'l-tawātur al-ma' nawī*. Al-Shāṭibī states:

“This is the evidence of inductive investigation into the *sharī'ah* (*istiqrā' al-sharī'ah*), an examination of its universal and particular proofs, and what is gathered from these general matters within the limits of *istiqrā' al-ma' nawī* (meaningful induction). This cannot be established based on specific evidence alone, but rather through a collection of interconnected proofs containing diverse objectives. Consequently, a ruling is constructed based on the combination of these proofs, to the extent that it is generally attributed, such as the courage of Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, and the generosity of Hatim.”<sup>23</sup>

In relation to the unity of Quranic themes, Fazlur Rahman adopted and developed this theory of *al-istiqrā'* through al-Shāṭibī in formulating his "double movement" theory for interpreting the Quran. Notwithstanding his controversial persona and certain *taḥrīf* (distortions) of al-Shāṭibī's *al-istiqrā'* theory, Rahman also emphasized the principle of integrating evidence in Quranic interpretation. The significance of this principle is such that Rahman quoted nearly half of the third introduction in the first volume of al-Shāṭibī's *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah*,<sup>24</sup> and repeatedly invoked it to reinforce his argument.<sup>25</sup> It is also from this foundation that he launched his stringent and incisive critique of atomistic interpretations of the Quran:

“Many Muslims who have been for centuries habituated to think of the laws of the Quran in a discrete, atomistic, and totally

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<sup>23</sup> Al-Shāṭibī, II: 39.

<sup>24</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 21–22.

<sup>25</sup> Fazlur Rahman, 30 & 101.

unintegrated manner (even though the Quran loudly proclaims that it is a highly integrated and cohesive body of teaching).”<sup>26</sup>

### Delving into the Term Tafsir *al-Mawḍūʿī*

Linguistically, tafsīr (تفسير) means elucidation, disclosure, and explanation. This definition is encountered in the Quran: "وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ إِلَّا جُنُودًا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا" - And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation”<sup>27</sup> where the word تفسير in this verse serves as a masdar (verbal noun) from fassara – yufassiru – tafsīran, meaning bayyana (to elucidate), kashafa (to disclose), and waḍaḥa (to explain).<sup>28</sup> Terminologically, exegetes have different phrasings but concur on the key concept of tafsir as the science of understanding the Quran. This concept, in the phrasing of al-Imām al-Zarkashī, is "the science that aims to understand the Book of Allah [the Quran] revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him), explaining its meanings and deriving its laws and wisdom”.<sup>29</sup> In al-Zarqānī's phrasing, tafsir is "the science that discusses the Noble Quran in accordance with the dīlālāh (indications) intended by Allah the Exalted, commensurate with human capabilities [in understanding it]”.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr understands tafsir as "the science that discusses the expressions of the Quran and their beneficial aspects, either by summarizing or expanding [the meanings of these expressions]”.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Fazlur Rahman, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Akhmad Bazith, "Metodologi Tafsir 'Al-Furqan Tafsir Qur'an' (Membaca Karya A. Hassan 1887-1958)," *Education and Learning Journal* 1, no. 1 (2020): 30, <https://doi.org/10.33096/eljour.v1i1.34>.

<sup>28</sup> Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, *Jamharat Al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm Li al-Malāyīn, 1983), II: 718.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Imām al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān Fī ʿUlūm Al-Qurʾān* (Kairo: Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), I: 13.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil Al-ʿIrḡān Fī ʿUlūm Al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1995), II: 6.

<sup>31</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr Al-Taḥrīr Wa Al-Tanwīr* (Tunisia: al-Dār al-Tūnisīyyah li al-Nashr, 1974), I: 11.

From the above exposition, it is evident that tafsir encompasses several fundamental concepts: first, as a means to understand the Quran, whether through explanation, interpretation, or ta'wil; second, as a tool closely related to linguistic aspects, the historical context of revelation, the concept of naskh (abrogation) and mansukh (abrogated), and fields of humanities and natural sciences; third, the understanding of the Quran must be aligned with human capacity; fourth, the primary objective of interpreting the Quran is to derive its laws and wisdom; and fifth, Quranic exegesis evolves with the advancement of human knowledge.<sup>32</sup>

As for the term al-mawḍūʿī (الموضوعي), it is derived from al-mawḍūʿ (الموضوع) with the addition of ya al-nisbah at the end, which functions to attribute. If al-mawḍūʿ means "thematic," when ya al-nisbah is added (read: al-mawḍūʿī), it means "that which is thematic." From this, it can be understood that tafsir al-mawḍūʿī, in simple terms, is thematic exegesis where the Quran is interpreted thematically under a single theme with specific conditions, or in the words of Faḥr Allāh Saʿīd as follows:

“The science (al-ʿilm) that addresses the decrees of the Quran where its meanings and objectives are unified by gathering diverse verses, then analyzing them under specific conditions to elucidate the meanings contained therein, as well as extracting their elements and binding them comprehensively.”<sup>33</sup>

However, among contemporary exegetes, there is a divergence of opinion as to whether tafsir al-mawḍūʿī should be considered a method or a distinct science under the broader field of Quranic exegesis. Faḥr Allāh Saʿīd and the majority of other scholars

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<sup>32</sup> Bashīr ʿUthmān, “Taʿrīf Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍūʿī: Dirāsah, Naqdiyyah, Muqāranah,” *Majallah Al-Iḥyā* 32, no. 23 (2023): 52.

<sup>33</sup> Faḥr Allāh Saʿīd, *Al-Madkhal Ilā Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍūʿī* (Kairo: Dār al-Tawzīʿ wa al-Nashr al-Islāmiyyah, 1977), 20.

understand it as a "science" (al-'ilm), while Aḥmad Raḥmānī regards it merely as a "method" (al-manhaj) for understanding the Quran.<sup>34</sup>

Notwithstanding this difference, contemporary scholars concur on three points: First, the object of tafsir mawḍū'ī is the decrees of the Quran. Second, its methodology involves gathering Quranic verses under a single meaning, which are then analyzed inductively (al-istiqrā'). Third, its objective is to elucidate and derive legal rulings therefrom.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Development and Characteristics of Tafsir *al-Mawḍū'ī***

In contemporary scholarly discussions, tafsir al-mawḍū'ī is divided into two forms: based on surah and based on theme or subject. According to M. Quraish Shihab, the first form of tafsir al-mawḍū'ī was initiated by Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1963 CE), a professor of tafsir at Al-Azhar University, Egypt, in January 1960 through his work *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. As for the second form of tafsir al-mawḍū'ī, Aḥmad al-Sayyid al-Kūmī, also a professor of Tafsir at Al-Azhar University, Egypt, is considered the first to conceive it in the 1960s<sup>36</sup> through his work *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.<sup>37</sup>

Quraish Shihab is correct in stating that the concept of tafsir al-mawḍū'ī began to develop in the 1960s. After this era, it continued to evolve, both in tafsir al-mawḍū'ī based on surah and subject. However, disassociating tafsir al-mawḍū'ī from the historical context of tafsir is also inaccurate. Other data indicate that the idea of this exegetical method, both based on surah and subject, predates what Quraish Shihab has noted.

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<sup>34</sup> Bashīr 'Uthmān, "Ta'rif Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī: Dirāsah, Naqdiyyah, Muqāranah," 58.

<sup>35</sup> Bashīr 'Uthmān, 55–57.

<sup>36</sup> Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, 111.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Sayyid al-Kūmī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī Li Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Kairo: Dār al-Hudā, 1980).

According to Muṣṭafā Muslim, tafsir al-mawḍūʿī has existed since the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). He provides evidence from a hadith narrated by Bukhārī and Muslim from 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd that when surah al-An'ām verse 82 was revealed: "Those who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice - those will have security, and they are [rightly] guided," the companions felt it was difficult to implement, and then complained to the Messenger of Allah: "Is there anyone among us who has never wronged himself?" The Messenger replied: "It is not as you understand it... The meaning of *ẓulm* (injustice) [in this verse] is *shirk* (polytheism)," said the Prophet.<sup>38</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim's opinion was promptly refuted by Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn. According to him, this hadith differs from the operational aspects of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī.<sup>39</sup>

Regardless of the above differences, the works of early scholars can be traced, and it is difficult to say they are not the embryo of tafsir al-mawḍūʿī. It began in the 2nd century Hijri. During this period, there was a Mu'tazilite figure named 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255 AH). According to Muṣṭafā al-Ṣāwī al-Juwaynī (d. 1988), he was the first figure indicated to have applied the al-mawḍūʿī method in interpreting the Quran, although not as perfectly as the current al-mawḍūʿī method.[5] Al-Daghāmīn agrees with al-Juwaynī about al-Jāḥiẓ being the pioneer of the al-mawḍūʿī method, although according to him, al-Jāḥiẓ was more focused on *i'jāz al-qur'ān* (the inimitability of the Quran) from the perspective of current literary studies.<sup>40</sup>

In the subsequent century, Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH), more commonly known as al-Jaṣṣāṣ, emerged as one of the critics of Imām al-Shāfi'ī's ideas concerning *khavar al-*

<sup>38</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāḥith Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍūʿī*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn, *Manbajīyat Al-Baḥth Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍūʿī Li Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-Daghāmīn, 17–18.

wāḥid from the Hanafi school of thought.<sup>41</sup> He authored *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, a book on Quranic laws, which can also be classified as a work of jurisprudential exegesis. This text was composed according to the Quranic manuscript arrangement (taḥlīlī) but focused on jurisprudential discussions. Within this work, he addressed jurisprudence thematically, organizing it by specific chapters and titles. For instance, in his interpretation of Surah al-Fatihah [1]: 1, he included a discussion on the basmala divided into nine chapters, ranging from linguistic aspects to jurisprudential considerations such as the legal ruling on reciting the basmala during prayer.<sup>42</sup>

When comparing al-Jaṣṣāṣ's work with al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī Lisuwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, a thematic exegesis based on Quranic chapters by Muṣṭafā Muslim et al.,<sup>43</sup> one observes similarities in their approaches. Both align with the characteristics of thematic exegesis, which emphasizes themes and comprehensive exploration of these themes from various aspects in accordance with the guidance of the interpreted verses.<sup>44</sup> The primary distinction lies in their focus: al-Jaṣṣāṣ concentrates on thematic jurisprudential exegesis, while al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī Lisuwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm encompasses a broader range of themes from diverse perspectives. Notwithstanding this difference in focus, the methodologies employed by contemporary scholars demonstrate a strong connection to those of earlier scholars, including the thematic exegetical approach. However, earlier scholars had not yet formally named or systematically developed this method as it exists today.

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<sup>41</sup> Hüseyin Hansu, "Debates on the Authority of Hadith in Early Islamic Intellectual History: Identifying Al-Shāfi'ī's Opponents in Jimā' Al-'Ilm," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 136, no. 3 (2016): 515–33.

<sup>42</sup> Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'an*, ed. Muḥammad al-ṣādiq al-Qamahāwī (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' li al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1996), 68.

<sup>43</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍūʿī Lisuwar Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Sharjah: University of Sharjah, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Nashruddin Baidan, *Tafsīr Mawḍūʿī: Solusi Kontemporer Atas Masalah Sosial Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), 152.

Approximately two centuries after al-Jaṣṣāṣ, al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 502 AH) emerged with his work, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*. While its classification as either exegesis or a Quranic lexicon may be debatable, it presents comprehensive explanations of Quranic themes, beginning with root words and expanding to related terms sharing similar roots, thus deepening the understanding of these terms.<sup>45</sup> This approach essentially embodies the thematic method itself. For example, the word "حب" gives rise to "الحَب و الحبة" (*al-ḥabb wa al-ḥabbah*), referring to seeds, grains, or kernels, which appear in several Quranic verses, such as Surah al-Baqarah [2]: 261, Surah al-An'am [6]: 59 and 95, and Surah Qaf [50]: 9. From this word also emerges "الحُب" (*al-ḥubb*), denoting love or affection, as found in Surah al-Insān [76]: 8, among other Quranic instances.<sup>46</sup>

From the perspective of modern thematic exegesis methodology, al-Isfahānī's work is limited primarily to exploring relationships between verses to discern meanings. Aspects such as *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *mansūkh* are overlooked, while the connection between verses and *hadith* remains weak. This is understandable given his focus on elucidating the semantic meanings of the Quran. Nevertheless, the embryonic form of thematic exegesis as understood in the modern context can be traced to his work, which can be complemented by other texts such as *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH/981 CE),<sup>47</sup> *al-Tibyān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751 AH/1349 CE),<sup>48</sup> al-Shāṭibī's theory of *al-istiqrā' al-sharī'a'ah* in *al-Muwāfaqāt*<sup>49</sup> and *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wahīdī (d. 468 AH),<sup>50</sup> among others.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'ān*.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, 137–38.

<sup>47</sup> Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*.

<sup>48</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Tibyān Fī Aqsām Al-Qur'ān*.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt Fī Uṣūl Al-Sharī'ah*.

<sup>50</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan al-Wahīdī, *Asbāb Al-Nuzūl*, ed. Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991).

In fact, numerous other works warrant examination, such as *Majāz al-Qur'ān* by Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 210 AH),<sup>51</sup> *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh fī Kitāb Allāh 'Azza wa Jalla wa al-Ikhtilāf al-'Ulamā' fī Dhālik* by Abū Ja'far al-Naḥās (d. 338 AH),<sup>52</sup> *al-Tibyān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751 AH/1349 CE),<sup>53</sup> *al-Shāṭibī's* (d. 790 AH) theory of *al-istiqrā'* al-sharī'ah in *al-Muwāfaqāt*,<sup>54</sup> or exegetical works by al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn 'Arabī. However, due to space constraints, this review focuses on two works: *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH) and *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* by al-Isfahānī (d. 502 AH).

As previously mentioned, the concept of thematic exegesis focusing on surah-based interpretation was first proposed by Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, a professor of Exegesis at the Faculty of Theology, Al-Azhar University, Egypt, through his work *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* in January 1960. Meanwhile, the concept of subject-focused thematic exegesis was initially proposed by Aḥmad al-Sayyid al-Kūmī, another professor of Exegesis at the same faculty, in the 1960s<sup>55</sup> through his work *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍi' li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.<sup>56</sup>

Following the contributions of these two scholars, the concept of thematic exegesis (*tafsir al-mawḍi'*) continued to be developed by subsequent scholars. For instance, within the first model focusing on surah-based exegesis, works such as *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍi' Lisuwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* compiled by Muṣṭafā Muslim et al<sup>57</sup> and Naḥw *Tafsīr Lisuwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* pioneered by

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<sup>51</sup> Abū 'Ubaydah, *Majāz Al-Qur'an*.

<sup>52</sup> Abū Ja'far al-Naḥās, *Al-Nāsikh Wa Al-Mansukh Fi Kitāb Allāh 'Azza Wa Jalla Wa Al-Ikhtilaf Al-'Ulamā' Fi Dhālik*, ed. Sulaymān Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Aḥmar (Riyadh: Dār al-Āṣimah, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Al-Tibyān Fi Aqsām Al-Qur'ān*.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt Fi Uṣūl Al-Sharī'ah*.

<sup>55</sup> Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*, 111.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Sayyid al-Kūmī, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍi' Li Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*.

<sup>57</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍi' Lisuwar Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*.

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazālī.<sup>58</sup> emerged. In the second model, examples include *al-Insān fī al-Qur'ān*<sup>59</sup> and *al-Mar'ah fī al-Qur'ān*<sup>60</sup> authored by 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, as well as *al-Ribā fī al-Qur'ān* by Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī. One of the most comprehensive works in this genre is the Encyclopedia of Thematic Exegesis - *al-Mawsū'ah al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, published in 2019.<sup>61</sup> This 36-volume encyclopedia, written by 166 authors from various countries, covers 354 Quran-related themes, including narratives of Adam (peace be upon him), cosmological verses, Abraham (peace be upon him), and others.

Among non-Arabic authors, works such as *The Quranic Jesus: a New Interpretation* by Carlos Andres Segovia Mint,<sup>62</sup> *God and Man in the Qur'an* by Izutsu, and *Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān* by Fazlur Rahman, among others.<sup>63</sup> are noteworthy. While the classification of these three works as thematic exegesis may be debated, methodologically, the authors employ thematic exegetical approaches. In the Indonesian context, there are works such as *Penciptaan Jagat Raya dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Sains* (The Creation of the Universe in the Perspective of the Quran and Science),<sup>64</sup> *Penciptaan Bumi dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Sains* (The Creation of the Earth in the Perspective of the Quran and Science),<sup>65</sup> *Penciptaan Manusia dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan*

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<sup>58</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Nahw Tafsīr Lisuwar Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm*.

<sup>59</sup> 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, *Al-Insān Fī Al-Qur'ān* (Winsor, Inggris: Mua'assasah Hindāwī, 2014).

<sup>60</sup> 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād, *Al-Mar'ah Fī Al-Qur'ān* (Winsor, Inggris: Mua'assasah Hindāwī, 2014).

<sup>61</sup> Anonim, *Al-Mawsū'ah Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍū'ī Li Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Riyāḍ: Markaz Tafsīr li al-Dirāsāt al-Qur'āniyyah, 2019).

<sup>62</sup> Carlos Andres Segovia, *The Quranic Jesus: A New Interpretation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

<sup>63</sup> Fazlur Rahman, "Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 22, no. 11 (1983): 170–85.

<sup>64</sup> LPMQ & LIPI, *Penciptaan Jagat Raya Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> LPMQ & LIPI, *Penciptaan Bumi Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2010).

Sains (The Creation of Humans in the Perspective of the Quran and Science),<sup>66</sup> Air dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Sains (Water in the Perspective of the Quran and Science),<sup>67</sup> Tumbuhan dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Sains (Plants in the Perspective of the Quran and Science),<sup>68</sup> and Kiamat dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an dan Sains (The Day of Judgment in the Perspective of the Quran and Science).<sup>69</sup> All these works were authored by the LPMQ team, Research and Development Agency of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, in collaboration with the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI).

### **Thematic Exegesis (Tafsir al-Mawḍū'i) as a Method**

Many experts have discussed the al-mawḍū'i method in Quranic exegesis. The following is a summary of the perspectives of four scholars ('Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmawī, Muṣṭafā Muslim, Quraish Shihab, and al-Daghāmīn), which have been synthesized with minor additional explanation:

First, theme determination. At this stage, the exegete selects the theme to be discussed. For example, Women in the Quran, Water in the Quran, Faith in the Quran, Animals in the Quran, and so forth. Numerous other examples have been discussed by previous researchers in Arabic, English, and Indonesian literature, as the author has mentioned in previous discussions. For these steps, the author uses the sample topic of khamr (intoxicants).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> LPMQ & LIPI, *Penciptaan Manusia Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2010).

<sup>67</sup> LPMQ & LIPI, *Air Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> LPMQ & LIPI, *Tumbuhan Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> LPMQ & LIPI, *Kiamat Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an Dan Sains* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, 2011).

<sup>70</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmawī, *al-Bidāyah fi al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i*, Terj (Jakarta: Pt. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1996), 45; Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fi al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'i* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam 1989), 37-39; Ziyād Khalīl Muḥammad al-

Second, tracking and collecting relevant verses based on the theme under discussion. To facilitate this work, at this second stage, one can be assisted by Quranic concordances such as *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī,<sup>71</sup> *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* by al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d. 1108 CE)<sup>72</sup> and others.

Third, arranging the chronological order of the verses' revelation. This is done to enable the exegete to understand the development of Quranic guidance on the discussed theme. For instance, the Quranic guidance on the prohibition of *khamr* was revealed gradually in four different verses: *al-Nahl* [16]: 67, *al-Baqarah* [02]: 219, *al-Nisā'* [04]: 43, and *al-Mā'idah* [05]: 90-91. Initially, *al-Nahl* [16]: 67 only generally discussed intoxicating drinks from date palm and grape juice, considered as good provisions. The subsequent verse, *al-Baqarah* [02]: 219, began to assert that *khamr* and gambling are sinful acts, although they have some benefits. However, despite this assertion, *khamr* was still consumed by the *Jahiliyyah* society, even praying while intoxicated, leading to the revelation of the next verse, *al-Nisā'* [04]: 43, which prohibits praying while intoxicated. Finally, a definitive prohibition and absolute proscription of *khamr* came in *al-Mā'idah* [05]: 90, explicitly declaring it as an abomination and a work of Satan to be shunned.

Fourth, establishing key terms or vocabulary. Although not mandatory, this greatly aids in understanding the key terms related to the theme under discussion. At this stage, the exegete can be assisted by Quranic concordances as mentioned in the second part, as well as authoritative Arabic dictionaries such as *Lisān al-'Arab* by

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Daghāmīn, *Manhajīyyat al-Baḥṭh fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Amman: Dār al-Bashīr, 1995), 134; M. Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 115-116.

<sup>71</sup> Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li Alfāz Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 180–82.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Al-Mufradāt Fī Gharīb Al-Qur'ān*.

Ibn Manẓūr,<sup>73</sup> *Tāj al-'Arūs Min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* by Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī,<sup>74</sup> and others, along with other supporting references. Even scientific dictionaries can be used if the interpretation relates to scientific verses.

Fifth, after establishing and understanding the key terms, the next step is to master the entire content and meaning of the verses being interpreted. For example, in the case of the prohibition of khamr mentioned in the third part, the verses related to khamr such as al-Nahl [16]: 67, al-Baqarah [02]: 219, al-Nisā' [04]: 43, and al-Mā'idah [05]: 90-91 must be comprehensively understood. This means grasping what and how they are interpreted, which can be aided by other relevant works in the fields of exegesis, jurisprudence, history, and hadith, as well as understanding why it was prohibited and the process of its prohibition, among other aspects.

Sixth, interpreting the global ideas of the discussion by considering linguistic aspects, Quranic guidance on the verse, the contents of the verses supported by hadith, āthār of the companions, and other relevant sciences. In relation to khamr, as mentioned in the fifth part, this means not only uncovering the what, how, and why through exegetical, jurisprudential, historical, and hadith approaches but also approaching it from the perspective of modern science regarding the benefits and harms it causes in various aspects.

Seventh, applying scientific methodological steps that include the theme, an introduction encompassing diverse perspectives, core discussions that can be in the form of chapters or sub-chapters, and then a conclusion.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Šādir, n.d.).

<sup>74</sup> Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj Al-'Arūs Min Jawāhir Al-Qāmūs* (Kuwait: Maṭba'ah Ḥukūmah al-Kuwayt, 1997).

### The Importance of Thematic Exegesis (*Tafsir al-Mawḍūʿī*)

The passage of time, changes in social structures, and the advancement of knowledge have significantly impacted the emergence of societal issues across various aspects. This situation has rendered the *tafsir al-mawḍūʿī* (thematic exegesis) relevant as a Quranic analytical tool in addressing these issues. Consequently, in the modern context, this method has evolved into a distinct branch of knowledge within exegetical studies.

In the classical context, this method did not receive particular attention. According to al-Farmawī<sup>75</sup> this was due to the lack of perceived necessity among earlier scholars. Their comprehensive knowledge across various fields was sufficient to resolve societal issues within their temporal context. In contrast, the current context, with its limitations for non-Arabic speakers in understanding the Quran through Arabic, coupled with increased academic specialization, has intensified the demand for studying the Quran through the *mawḍūʿī* method<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, the dominance of the *taḥlīlī* method for centuries has been criticized for presenting the Quran in a fragmented manner, rather than as a cohesive and integral whole. This is what Fazlur Rahman termed as discrete, atomistic, and unintegrated manner of Quranic interpretation.<sup>77</sup> To address this impasse, Rahman proposed the double movement theory for Quranic interpretation, while other scholars such as Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt (d. 1963 CE) and Aḥmad al-Sayyid al-Kūmī conceived the *tafsir al-mawḍūʿī*, which presents Quranic themes as a unified whole rather than disparate elements.

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<sup>75</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmawī, *Al-Bidāyah Fī Al-Tafsīr Al-Mawḍūʿī* (Jakarta: Pt. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1996), 59.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmawī, 60.

<sup>77</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 20.

Alī Ḥasan al-'Arīḍ elaborates on the importance of the tafsir al-mawḍū'ī method through the following points: firstly, the al-mawḍū'ī method involves collecting verses related to a specific theme dispersed across various surahs. This approach falls within the category of al-tafsīr bi l-ma'thūr, which helps prevent interpretative errors; secondly, by gathering verses under the same theme in the Quran, the exegete can explore the relevance between these verses; thirdly, through the application of the al-mawḍū'ī method, exegetes can present their thoughts comprehensively on the theme under discussion; fourthly, this method assists exegetes in resolving potential ambiguities and contradictions; fifthly, this approach aligns with contemporary needs that prioritize focused studies with clear delineations of topics and sub-topics studied holistically; sixthly, through this method, an exegete can fully grasp the content of a theme, which is then elucidated satisfactorily, uncovering the inherent secrets within.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, the al-mawḍū'ī method in Quranic interpretation is not without weaknesses. Some of its limitations are as follows: firstly, it may sever verses from their siyāq and sibāq (contextual continuity) with other verses. For instance, the commands for prayer and almsgiving often appear in conjunction in the Quran, but if the focus is solely on interpreting almsgiving, the discussion on prayer may be truncated, despite their unity; secondly, it discusses understanding within a predetermined interpretative theme, thus binding the exegete to that title.<sup>79</sup>

Ultimately, the presence of tafsir al-mawḍū'ī in this era represents a significant development in Quranic studies, reflecting ongoing efforts to maintain the relevance and applicability of Quranic understanding in an ever-changing context, while

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<sup>78</sup> 'Alī Ḥasan al-'Arīḍ, *Tarīkh 'Ilm Al-Tafsīr Wa Manahij Al-Mufasssīrīn* (Jakarta: Pt. Raja Grafindo Persada, 1994), 94.

<sup>79</sup> Baidan, *Tafsīr Maudhu'i: Solusi Kontemporer Atas Masalah Sosial Kontemporer*, 165–68.

preserving the integrity of its original message. This also indicates that thematic exegesis must be maintained due to its significant value in addressing the challenges of Quranic interpretation in the modern era. However, its development must be accompanied by continuous efforts to overcome its weaknesses and maintain the integrity of the Quranic message as a whole.

## Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the discussion of the Qur'an's thematic unity cannot be separated from the theories of *naẓm* (composition), *siyāq* (context), and *munāsabah* (coherence) in '*ulūm al-qur'ān* (Qur'anic sciences), while the theory of *istiqrā'* (induction) in *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) also contributes to the discourse on the Qur'an's thematic unity. However, the theories of *naẓm*, *siyāq*, and *munāsabah* in forming semantic unity have been subject to extensive debate. Ultimately, the majority of scholars have accepted these theories and contributed to the establishment of the foundation for *tafsīr al-maṣṣūṭ* (thematic exegesis) in the modern context. Therefore, this paper argues that *naẓm*, *siyāq*, *munāsabah* in '*ulūm al-qur'ān* and *istiqrā'* in *uṣūl al-fiqh* are relevant as analytical tools in *tafsīr al-maṣṣūṭ* without negating other theories. Historically, this relevance can be traced to early and medieval works demonstrating how scholars formed semantic unity under these four theories, albeit not as comprehensively as in the modern context. Notable figures include Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 210 AH), Abū Ja'far al-Naḥās (d. 338 AH), al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 370 AH), al-Isfahānī (d. 502 AH), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751 AH), Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790 AH), al-Rāzī, and many others who contributed to the discussion of the Qur'an's semantic unity through various analytical tools. In the contemporary context, without negating other exegetical methods, *tafsīr al-maṣṣūṭ* can serve as a Qur'anic analytical tool in addressing the comprehensive challenges facing the Muslim community, theme by theme. Thus, this paper has implications for strengthening the

arguments of those who accept semantic unity in the Qur'an while also reinforcing the methodological foundation of *tafsir al-mawḍū'ī*.

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