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Taşkent Cad. Şehit H. Temel Kuğuoğlu Sokak. No: 30 06490 Bahçelievler/ANKARA

Tel: 0312 216 06 00 • Faks: 0312 223 34 29

[www.ayu.edu.tr](http://www.ayu.edu.tr) [yayinlar@Yesevî.edu.tr](mailto:yayinlar@Yesevî.edu.tr)

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## ‘THE TURKISH UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION’: REDISCOVERING MĀTURĪDĪ IN MODERN TURKEY

Phil Dorroll

Wofford College, USA

This presentation will attempt to describe the revival and rediscovery of Māturīdī’s theology in modern Turkey, a movement that I refer to as “Turkish Neo-Māturīdism.” This movement has its roots in a number of important theological and institutional developments in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. These roots, which I will discuss in turn, include: 1) late Ottoman-era *kalām* debates, 2) the rise of Islamic modernism<sup>1</sup> throughout the Muslim world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, 3) the transition to a modern state just before and during the republican period, and 4) the growth of Islamic theology as an academic project in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Turkey. In fact, it is probably best to describe the modern Turkish theological interest in Māturīdī as one important strain of Islamic modernism among many examples in modern Turkey. Turkish Neo-Māturīdism is a broad movement across modern Turkish history that began in the search for a distinctively Turkish national Islamic heritage. As a part of this search, Muslim theologians in Turkey identified Māturīdī as a key part of a distinctively Turkish heritage of Islam and Islamic thought. I argue that the modern Turkish rediscovery of Māturīdī is not just significant for modern Turkish history, but for the history of Islamic theology as a whole. In my view, it can be considered a part of the history of the Māturīdī school of thought in general, and it grows from powerful and persuasive interpretations of Māturīdī’s theological ideas.

### *Historical roots of Turkish Neo-Māturīdism*

The roots of this revival of Māturīdī theology stretch to *kalām* debates in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire. Numerous scholars have pointed out that Ottoman medreses were distinctively eclectic, and included both Ash‘arī and Māturīdī works in their curricula.<sup>2</sup> The Ottoman state and the medrese system that it patronized emphasized a broad Sunni theological consensus, and held that both Ash‘arī and Māturīdī theological doctrines were equally acceptable and orthodox. This doctrine of theological synthesis first appeared in the Mamluk period with the work of Tāqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355), who authored the first example of what would later become a large genre

<sup>1</sup> The term “modernist” (or “reformist” or “progressive”) is used here in English to refer to theological projects often referred to by the terms *yenilik* or *yenilikçi* in Turkish (not usually *reformcu*, which has much stronger political connotations).

<sup>2</sup> See for instance Philipp Bruckmayr, “The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalam and Underlying Dynamics”, *Iran and the Caucasus* 13 (2009), p. 66; Hüseyin Atay, *Osmanlılarda Yüksek Din Eğitimi*, Dergah Yayınları, İstanbul 1983, p. 77-100.

of short *ikhtilāf* treatises that stressed the fundamental agreement of Ash‘arī and Māturīdī doctrine on important doctrinal points; all other disagreements were therefore considered to be minor, or simply semantic, and thus not deserving of mutual accusations of heresy.<sup>3</sup> Other examples of these treatises became extremely popular in the Ottoman period, and numerous examples of them, dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, are extant in manuscript libraries throughout Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

There was, however, an important group of Ottoman theologians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who argued that Māturīdī’s theology was, at least in some respects, superior to that of Ash‘arī. These authors were distinctive in that they evinced an exclusive preference for Māturīdī, which must have seemed out of place in the pluralistic Ottoman theological environment. During this period, one group of Ottoman theologians argued that only Māturīdī’s understanding of human action was acceptable and they implied that Ash‘arī’s understanding of this issue was tantamount to fatalism. According to these Ottoman theologians, Māturīdī’s assertion that human beings can, at least in some sense, choose their actions (*ikhtiyār*; or *al-ikhtiyār al-juz’ī* or *al-irāda al-juz’iyya*) was a far superior assertion to the traditional Ash‘arī doctrine that described divine omnipotence and human choice as mutually exclusive concepts. These theologians included most notably Muḥammad ibn Muṣṭafā Ḥamīd al-Kefevī Akkirmānī (d. 1760)<sup>5</sup>, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Gümülcinevī (ca. mid. 18th century)<sup>6</sup> and the famous scholar Davūd al-Karsī (d. 1756)<sup>7</sup> whose work was approved by Akkirmanī himself upon the former’s arrival in Istanbul to complete his studies.<sup>8</sup> These debates represent perhaps the last example of a significant Sunnī *kalām* debate conducted in exclusively classical terms, i.e., focusing on traditional theological problems using traditional methods of argumentation. These scholars’ work helped preserve the influence of Māturīdism in late Ottoman intellectual culture. Only a century or so later, other Ottoman theologians would turn to Māturīdī in the context of modernization debates, as will be discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> Bruckmayr, “The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalam and Underlying Dynamics”, p. 60; Ulrich Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunni Theology in Samarqand*, Trans.: Rodrigo Adem, Brill, London 2014, p. 4-11; a critical edition of Subki’s *Nuniyya* can be found in Edward Badeen, *Sunnitische Theologie in Leiden: osmanizcher Zeit*, Oriental-Institut Istanbul, Würzburg 2008, p. 2-18.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance: Ḥasan ibn Abī ‘Udhba’s *Rawḍat al-Bahīyya fīmā bayna al-Ashā’ira wa al-Māturīdīyya*, (ed. Badeen 2008 and ‘Alī Farīd Daḥrūj, 1996). Other examples include: *Risālat al-Ikhtilāf bayna al-Ashā’ira wa al-Māturīdīyya fī ithnatay ‘ashara masa’la* by Ibn Kamal Pasha (d. 1534) (ed. Badeen 2008); *Risāla fī al-farq bayna madhhab al-Ashā’ira wa al-Māturīdīyya* by Yahyā Efendi ibn ‘Alī al-Nawā’ī (1533-1598) (ed. Badeen, 2008); *al-Masālik fī bayān al-madhāhib li al-Ḥumamā’ wa al-Mutakallimūn wa al-Ash‘arīyya wa al-Māturīdīyya* by ‘Abdullāh ibn Osmān ibn Mūsā Mesteizāde (d. 1737) (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi İstanbul, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa 402); *Sharḥ al-Khilāfiyyāt bayna al-Ash‘arī wa al-Māturīdī* by Muḥammad ibn Velī ibn Resūl al-Kırşehirī (d. 1752) (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi İstanbul, Şehit Ali Paşa 1650); and *Risāla Tata‘allaqa bayna Kalām al-Māturīdī wa al-Ash‘arī* by Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Ḥasan al-Jawharī (d. 1768-1769) (Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, İstanbul, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> His treatise *Af‘āl al-‘Ibād wa al-‘Irādāt al-Juz’iyya* is described in detail by Şamil Öçal. See “Osmanlı Kelamcıları Eş‘ari miydi?: Muhammed Akkirmanı’nın İnsan Hürriyet Anlayışı”, *Dini Araştırmalar*, 2/5 (September-December 1999), p. 225-234.

<sup>6</sup> *Risāla fī Baḥth al-‘Irādāt al-Juz’iyya*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul, Esad Effendi 01180.

<sup>7</sup> *Risāla fī Bayān Mas‘alat al-Ikhtiyārāt al-Juz’iyya wa al-‘Idrākāt al-Qalbiyya*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, İstanbul, Serez 1422.

<sup>8</sup> See: Cemil Akpınar, “Davud-i Karsi.”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, Ankara 1994, IX/29-32.

In its broad theological outlines, Turkish Neo-Māturīdism can be classified as an heir of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Islamic theological modernism, a theological movement traced usually to the works of Jamaluddin al-Afghani (d. 1897), Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), Afghani's disciple Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), and Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938). The most prominent representative of this school of thought in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988). Islamic modernism refers to the general theological premise that there is an important distinction between 1) the eternal theological truths of Islam and 2) how these truths are actualized in actual practices and institutions. Thus, according to modernist theology, concrete practices and institutions can and sometimes need to be changed in order to better actualize and serve the actual truths of religion, which are understood to be distinct from changing social conditions. This theological project grew out of a number of important social and intellectual concerns in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the need to define Islamic identity over and against Western imperialism and missionary activity, or the desire to reform certain social arrangements, most especially gendered social norms, in Muslim societies.<sup>9</sup> Islamic theological modernism became very influential among many late Ottoman *ulema* and maintained its influence in the Turkish divinity faculties through the great popularity of works by Fazlur Rahman, who was widely read in Turkish divinity faculties toward the middle and end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

Only a century after the Ottoman *kalām* controversy over Māturīdī's theory of human action, Ottoman interest in Māturīdī was again revived, but this time it took place in the context of the utilization of Islamic theology in broader Ottoman debates on modernization of the state and society. Due to its respect for human freedom and human reason, Māturīdī's theology was thought to contain the potential to solve many of the current intellectual problems afflicting the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Many Ottoman intellectuals felt that Māturīdī's rationalist approach to theology would serve as an ideal theological framework for modernist reform in Ottoman society. During this same period, some Ottoman intellectuals and political activists such as Ali Suavi (d. 1878) and Mehmed Seyyid Bey (d. 1925) also argued that Māturīdī himself was ethnically Turkish, and therefore part of the religious heritage of the Turkish nation.<sup>12</sup> In other words between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ottoman Empire, Māturīdī went from being studied in a classical *kalām* intellectual context to being a part of debates over modernization of the Ottoman state and society and debates over how to define Turkish national identity. Māturīdī came to be seen as

<sup>9</sup> For important summaries of Islamic theological modernism, see Fazlur Rahman, "Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method, and Alternatives", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1/4 (October 1970), p. 317-333; Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Islamic Modernism", in *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore, and Martin van Bruinessen, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, UK 2009, p. 237-260; and on Islamic Modernist hermeneutics, see Aysha A. Hidayatullah, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK 2014, p. 27-36.

<sup>10</sup> Recep Şentürk, "Islamic Reformist Discourses and Intellectuals in Turkey: Permanent Religion with Dynamic Law", in *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, ed. Shireen T. Hunter, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, NY 2009, p. 236.

<sup>11</sup> Rıdvan Özdiñç, *Akıl, İrade, Hürriyet: Son Dönem Osmanlı Dini Düşüncesinde İrade Meselesi*, Dergah Yayınları, İstanbul 2013, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> Özdiñç, *Akıl, İrade, Hürriyet: Son Dönem Osmanlı Dini Düşüncesinde İrade Meselesi*, p. 110.

both theologically valuable to modern Muslim thought, and as an integral member of the cultural heritage of Turkish Islam. These two developments paved the way for Māturīdī's important role in the development of Turkish Islamic theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The first writer in the modern Turkish language to classify Māturīdī as a Turk was probably Mehmed Şerefettin Yaltkaya (d. 1947), a highly influential and politically progressive member of the late Ottoman *ulema* and the early administration of the Ministry of Religious Affairs under the Turkish Republic. In 1932, just a few years after the alphabet reform that abolished the Ottoman script, Yaltkaya published an article titled simply "Turkish Theologians" (*Türk Kelamcıları*).<sup>13</sup> Yaltkaya included Māturīdī in his list of Muslim religious thinkers who he classified as being "Turkish." Though it is unclear exactly how Yaltkaya understood Māturīdī's "Turkishness," i.e., whether he was part of a certain ethnic community or whether he was a part of an historical religious heritage that was formative in the development of the Islamic practice of Turkic peoples, the understanding of Māturīdī as in some sense "Turkish" has increased the visibility and perceived legitimacy of his work among modern Turkish Islamic intellectuals.

Finally, Māturīdism became a key component of modern Turkish theology due to important institutional changes that occurred at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As with a number of other social institutions in the late Ottoman Empire, higher educational institutions became a major site of reform. Reformed Islamic educational institutions in the late Ottoman period were, however, eventually supplanted by divinity faculties founded at modern Turkish universities, most especially the divinity faculty at Ankara University (founded 1949). Due to these faculties' connection with late Ottoman theology (in the case of Ankara, for instance, their founding faculty members were simply transferred from late Ottoman institutions such as the *Darülfünun*), the earliest systematic theologians to write in modern Turkish inherited the late Ottoman interest in Māturīdī. Thus, divinity faculties, now part of the national education system, became the home of systematic Islamic theological projects that often included detailed consideration of Māturīdī's theology.

### ***Turkish Neo-Māturīdism in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

One of the most influential figures in the history of the divinity faculty system in Turkish universities, Yusuf Ziya Yörükan (d. 1954), was deeply interested in Māturīdī and considered his theology to be an important component in both the elaboration of Turkish national identity and the development of modern Turkish Islamic practice.<sup>14</sup> Like Yaltkaya, Yörükan was a prominent example of the progressive wing of late Ottoman Muslim intellectuals who also taught at the first divinity faculty in Turkish history, the divinity faculty at the *Darülfünun* (which was closed in 1933). Yörükan was also an important member of the first group of faculty at the divinity faculty at

<sup>13</sup> Mehmed Şerefettin Yaltkaya, "Türk Kelamcıları," *Darülfünun İlahiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası*, 23 (1932), p. 1-19.

<sup>14</sup> For a general summary of Yörükan's life and work, see: Hilmi Ziya Ülken, "Yusuf Ziya Yörükan," *AÜİF*, 3/1 (1954), p. 88-95; Zekariya Akman, "Yusuf Ziya Yörükan'ın Hayatı, Eserleri, ve İslam Tarihiçiliği", *Turkish Studies- International Periodical For The Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, 82/2 (2013), p. 1-17.

Ankara University, the first of its kind to be established in the Turkish Republic. His ideas, therefore, had a lasting impact on academic theology in the modern Turkey.

Yörükân's theology is in general very pan-Sunni and Qur'an-focused. He argued for the necessity of reorienting Islamic toward the Qur'an and also emphasized the broad unity of Sunni Muslim Islamic identity.<sup>15</sup> His theological method is also highly rationalist. In his view, human reason is the primary method used to elaborate Islamic thought and interpret revelation: "in Islam, human reason is counted as the proof of proofs."<sup>16</sup> Like many other progressive Muslim theologians of the late Ottoman and early Republican period, he advocated religious reform and *ijtihād*:

The principles that religion is facilitating [*kolaylatıcı*-i.e., that it is meant to facilitate positive benefits and not be simply a burden], that it is a wide and lenient road, demonstrate the importance that is given in religion to the general good, custom, and needs of the time. These general needs (*maslahatlar*) ensure that rules are changed according to the needs of the time and the conditions of the environment.<sup>17</sup>

Yörükân sees the essential truth of Islam as distinct from its implementation in the world: while the former is not subject to change over time, the latter can be reformed in order to better express and protect the former in ever-changing social circumstances.

Yörükân also saw the study of Māturīdī as very important to the development of Islamic thought in modern Turkey. He cited Māturīdī as one of his most important theological influences, and he argued that Māturīdī was more theologically rationalist and more in harmony with the tradition of the *salaf* than Ash'arī.<sup>18</sup> He also identified the Ḥanafī-Māturīdī school as an important component of Turkish Islamic heritage, and argued that Abū Ḥanīfa combined faithfulness to the sacred texts with a rationalist approach to their interpretation.<sup>19</sup> Yörükân's legacy is thus very important for the development of Neo-Māturīdism in Turkey. Yörükân was the first Muslim theologian writing in modern Turkish who combined an appreciation for Māturīdī with theological modernism and progressivism. His interest in theological rationalism, Turkish Islamic religious heritage, and the theological value of Māturīdī laid the ground work for the development of the rediscovery of Māturīdī in modern Turkey. His combination of ideas and interests began the process of the elaboration of a distinctly Turkish interpretation of Māturīdī in the following decades.

The one disadvantage of studies of Māturīdī in the early Republican period (from roughly the 1930s-the 1960s) was their inability to access Māturīdī's original writings. Commentators on Māturīdī such as Yaltekaya and Yörükân of necessity based their opinions of his theology on the vast commentary literature on Māturīdī's works and other systematic texts of the Māturīdī school that were popular in the Ottoman period. Following Fethullah Kholeif's pioneering edition of Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* in the 1970s, however, Muslim theologians for the first time in perhaps centuries gained access to the words of Māturīdī himself. This caused a renewed

<sup>15</sup> Yusuf Ziya Yörükân, *Müslümanlık* (1957), Doğu Matbaacılık, Ankara 1993, p. 11, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Yörükân, *Müslümanlık* (1957), p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Yörükân, *Müslümanlık* (1957), p. 147.

<sup>18</sup> Yusuf Ziya Yörükân, *İslam Akaid Sisteminde Gelişmeler* (1952), Ötügen Neşriyat, İstanbul 2006, p. 173.

<sup>19</sup> Yörükân, *İslam Akaid Sisteminde Gelişmeler* (1952), p. 131.

interest in Mātūrīdī in Turkey in the 1970s. Articles and books written during this period by scholars such as Ahemet Vehbi Ecer (d. 2014), a professor at Kayseri Erciyes University, urged Muslim thinkers in Turkey to reexamine Mātūrīdī and his works as part of Turkish Islamic history.<sup>20</sup>

At the same university, another professor in the same divinity faculty, Hasan Şahin, published important systematic theological reflections on Mātūrīdī's thought in his 1987 book *Mātūrīdī'ye Göre Din* (Religion According to Mātūrīdī).<sup>21</sup> In this text, Şahin began to explore some of the key themes that would later become part of more fully developed systematic theological projects in the 1990s and 2000s. Şahin stressed the importance that Mātūrīdī could have for thinkers in the contemporary Muslim world.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps most significantly, Şahin detected in Mātūrīdī's theology a distinction between *din* (religion) and *şeriat* (Sharia), and argued that the former term refers to the timeless theological truths of Islam (the doctrine of *tevhid* and its corollary propositions such as prophecy) while the latter term refers to systems of practice that are subject to change over time. Again, this theological proposition is following in the footsteps of the theological modernism and progressivism of late Ottoman and early Republican thinkers such as Yörükân. It is also based on a distinction made in works attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa himself, most notably the 9<sup>th</sup> century text *Kitāb al- 'ālim wa-l-muta 'allim*.<sup>23</sup>

Beginning in the early 1990s and continuing to the present day, interest in Mātūrīdī's works as the basis for systematic theological projects has increased dramatically in Turkey. Hanifi Özcan's works have explored the theological implications of Mātūrīdī's epistemology. Through an analysis of Mātūrīdī's combination of rationalism and empiricism, and his insistence on grounding religion in knowledge and evidence, Özcan insightfully describes Mātūrīdī as a kind of "moderate realist" (*orta bir realist*).<sup>24</sup> Özcan also builds on Mātūrīdī's distinction between *din* and *şeriat* as a way to make an argument for the Islamic acceptability of religious pluralism and for changes in religious practice over time.<sup>25</sup> Özcan uses these theological insights to outline a powerful religious philosophy of change. As he wrote in 2007, "today's true will be tomorrow's false. Every generation is responsible for the period in which they live."<sup>26</sup>

Hülya Alper's theology has explored the details and consequences of Mātūrīdī's epistemology. Her studies provide the most thorough available evaluation of Mātūrīdī's discussion of the relationship between reason and revelation. She points to the complex and mutually constructive relationship between human reason and the sanctity of revelation:

<sup>20</sup> Ahmet Vehbi Ecer, "Ebu Mansur el-Matürîdî," *İslam Medeniyeti*, (March 1973), p. 10; Mehmed Aydın, "Türk Kelamcılarında İmam Matürîdî," *İslam Medeniyeti*, (August 1973), p. 28; *Büyük Türk Alimi Matürîdî* (1978), Yesevi Yayıncılık, İstanbul 2007, p. 31-34.

<sup>21</sup> Hasan Şahin, *Mātūrīdī'ye Göre Din*, Yeni Matbaa, Kayseri 1987.

<sup>22</sup> Şahin, *Mātūrīdī'ye Göre Din*, p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> See: Zāhid al-Kawtharī's edition of *Kitāb al- 'Ālim wa-l-Muta 'allim*, al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya, Cairo 2001, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Hanifi Özcan, *Matürîdî'de Bilgi Problemi*, M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakıf Yayınları, İstanbul 1993, p. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Hanifi Özcan, *Matürîdî'de Dini Çoğulculuk*, M. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakıf Yayınları, İstanbul 1999, p. 65-66.

<sup>26</sup> Hanifi Özcan, "Modern Çağda Dinin Birey ve Toplum için Anlamı," *Akademik Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 32 (2007), p. 139.

Reason, which at first certifies the truth of religion as a whole, when it enters into the domain of the religious, is able to speak authoritatively on the understanding and evaluation of religious laws. Revelation gives new existence to reason, as it were, through the meeting of reason and religion after the existence of revelation is established with reason.<sup>27</sup>

Alper's works are important for the nuance they introduce into the contemporary understanding of Māturīdī's epistemology. She demonstrates that Māturīdī's epistemology operates in multiple directions that proceed from the complex relationship between human reason and the absolute truth claims that are a natural part of divine revelation.

Sönmez Kutlu's writings have contributed to the integration of Māturīdī's theological legacy into discussions of Turkish religious Islamic identity. He points out that Māturīdī's theological elaboration of Ḥanafism helped establish Ḥanafī theological concepts as crucial components of the Turkish religious heritage. In this way, Kutlu demonstrates that the classical Ḥanafī flexible, rationalist approach to *fiqh* and the classical Ḥanafī distinction between *din* and *şeriat* have helped enable the modernist approach to Islamic thought that has been so influential in modern Turkey.<sup>28</sup> Kutlu, like Özcan and other proponents of a progressive theological modernism, also argues for reform in religious practice in accordance with changing social circumstances. This argument is, again, rooted in the basic theological and epistemological distinctions found in Māturīdī's work.<sup>29</sup> Constructive theological projects based on Māturīdī's works are also being pursued by many other important academics in Turkey, including Saffet Sarıkaya, Mehmet Evkuran, and Şükrü Özen. Indeed, this conference itself seems to be an important step in furthering these promising theological projects.

### ***Directions in Neo-Māturīdism***

As a final example of the importance of these theological projects, I would like draw attention to a point made by Kutlu in a number of his writings. One of the most important contributions of Turkish Neo-Māturīdī writings is that they call attention to specific passages in Māturīdī's work that hint at highly significant theological premises often overlooked by other scholars. One example of this is Kutlu's meditations on Māturīdī's discussion of Sūrat al-Tawba 60 in his *Tā'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*.<sup>30</sup> This verse prescribes payments to groups hostile to the Muslims at the time in order to "conciliate their hearts." However, it is widely attested that the Caliph 'Umar abolished this command due to the expiration of the conditions that originally produced the rule: this payment was necessary when the Muslims were a weak and small

<sup>27</sup> Hülya Alper, "Matürīdī'nin Akıl ve Vahiy Algısı," in Şaban Ali Düzgün, ed., *Matürīdī'nin Düşünce Dünyası* T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Ankara 2011, p. 179.

<sup>28</sup> Sönmez Kutlu, *Türkler ve İslam Tasavvuru*, İSAM Yayınları, İstanbul 2011, p. 144-145.

<sup>29</sup> Sönmez Kutlu, "Matürīdī Akılcılığı ve Bunun Günümüz Sorunları Çözmeye Katkısı", in *Büyük Türk Bilgini İmam Matürīdī ve Matürīdilik: Milletlerarası Tartışmalı İlmi Toplantı, 22-24 Mayıs 2009*, M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı, İstanbul 2012, p. 570-575.

<sup>30</sup> See: Kutlu, "Matürīdī Akılcılığı ve Bunun Günümüz Sorunları Çözmeye Katkısı", p. 562; and his article "The Differentiation Between Religion (Diyānet) and Politics (Siyaset) According to Al-İmam Al-Maturīdī", in *Secularity and Religion in Muslim Countries: Searching for a Rational Balance*, ed., Z.I. Munavvarov and R.J. Krumm Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Tashkent 2005, p. 4.

group, and was no longer necessary once they became strong and numerous. This incident is a rather striking example of one of the Companions, even one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, contextualizing explicit rulings in the Qu'an. This incident implies that some commands in the Qur'an may no longer be valid since they were based on past historical conditions. This incident is attested in such reliable sources as Ibn Sa'd (d. 845), al-Jaṣṣaṣ (d. 981), al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066), and as-Suyūṭī (d. 1505).<sup>31</sup>

As Kutlu points out, Māturīdī also discusses this incident in some detail and derives a theological and practical principle from it: "In this verse is evidence for the permissibility of abrogation by means of *ijtihād* (*an-naskh bi-l-ijtihād*), due to the cessation of the [original] reason due to which [the original rule] came to be."<sup>32</sup> Kutlu rightly explains that Māturīdī's interpretation suggests a number of important theological distinctions upon which might be built an impressive systematic project. These include a distinction between Quranic verses and their context, a distinction between the general principle of Quranic injunctions and their application in practice, and a general distinction between theological principles and social conditions. The implications of Māturīdī's argument might form a strong theological basis for rethinking religious practice based on these distinctions.<sup>33</sup> One of the major contributions of modern Turkish theologians' discussions of Māturīdī is this kind of rediscovery and development of such important, but under-researched, potentialities in Māturīdī's theology.

I would like to conclude this presentation by asking a few questions that I think might be important for the study of Māturīdī in general, and for the future directions of Turkish Neo-Māturīdism specifically. According to Mehmet Zeki İŝcan, "It may be necessary to develop the system of thought that belongs to Māturīdī, which is suitable for implementation today, as 'the New Māturīdism.'"<sup>34</sup> I would like to ask: is it possible to have a New/Neo-Māturīdism? Is this an important task for Turkish Muslim theologians today? Further, is this a project that is important for the wider Muslim world? What is the significance of *kalām* in Muslim thought in Turkey today? I believe that the sophisticated engagement with Māturīdī's theology that has grown out of Turkey's experience of modernization is an overlooked, but extremely important, moment in the history of Islamic thought in general. I think perhaps the most important question now is: if we take Māturīdī's theological insights seriously, what impact might it have on Muslim society? And what is the current relevance of Māturīdī in Turkey today, and the Turkish understanding of religion?

<sup>31</sup> Ahmad Hasan, "Early Modes of Ijtihād: Ra'y, Qiyās and Istihṣān," *Islamic Studies* 6/1 (March 1967), p. 50, n. 14 and 15; Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Tā'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, ed. Bekir Topalođlu, Dar al-Mizan, İstanbul 2005, VI/392, n. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Tā'wīlāt al-Qur'ān*, VI/392, n. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Kutlu, "Matüridi Akılcılığı ve Bunun Günümüz Sorunları Çözmeye Katkısı", p. 22-24.

<sup>34</sup> Mehmet Zeki İŝcan, "Türk Basımında Matüridi ve Matüridilik,," in *Büyük Türk Bilgini İmam Matüridi ve Matüridilik: Milletlerarası Tartışmalı İlimi Toplantı, 22-24 Mayıs 2009*, M.Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı, İstanbul 2012, p. 492.

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