

MODERN ISSUES IN QUR'AN AND SUNNAH STUDIES

NOOR MOHAMMAD OSMANI



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Errors in the Interpretation of the Qur'ān: General Overview on Malaysian Muslim Society*

Dr Ammar Fadzil**

Abstract

The article seeks to examine the sources of error in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and to produce some examples of erroneous interpretation that occur in Malaysia. Study of errors in the interpretation of the Qur'ān is one of the important aspects in Qur'ānic studies. These errors often occur in the interpretation of the Qur'ān in the context of Malaysian Muslim society. The article aims to examine the causes of erroneous interpretation and to furnish some examples to show how the errors happen. It will limit the examples to those who interpret the Qur'ān with good intention. The article concludes that the errors are due to deficiency in Arabic language and ignorance of the context of the verse.

Keywords: Qur'an, tafsir, errors, Arabic language, Malaysian society

Introduction

Interpretation of the Qur'ān seeks to explain the purpose, the laws and lessons that could be inferred from verses of the Qur'ān. It is well accepted that such effort is of good value as it deals with the most honorable heavenly book. However, if the interpretation is based on the understanding and the opinion of a commentator, naturally it is not free from error. Ibn Taymiyah is reported to have said that each word has a right to be heard then it would be accepted or rejected, except the words from the Qur'ān and the Prophet. Thus, a commentator of the Qur'ān (*mufasssir*) is regarded among those who are not free from error although the error is likely very relative. The Prophet has shown to his companions how misunderstanding of interpretation has occurred in his time. Muslim scholars normally use two examples, one of which is the issue related to the interpretation of the words *ẓulm* in the verse 82 of chapter al-An'ām, and the phrase *khayṭ al-abyaḍ wa-l-aswad* in the verse no 187 of chapter al-Baqarah.

* This article is adapted from a paper presented at the National Conference at USIM in September 2011.

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