CHAPTER TWO

HIKMAH IN TERMINOLOGICAL DICTIONARIES

ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān Literature

The word ʿālūm al-Qurʾān is analyzed in various lexically-oriented disciplines of exegesis such as the wujūh wa-al-nazāʾir and gharīb al-Qurʾān works that elucidate Qurʾānic vocabulary in detail. Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) argues that the word ʿālūm al-Qurʾān has five meanings (wujūh):

a. It means admonitions (mawāʾiz) that exist in the Qurʾān regarding commanding and prohibiting (min al-amr wa-al-nahy). This is the meaning of ʿālūm al-Qurʾān in 2:231, “And [remember] what He (God) has sent down on/to you of the Book (kitāb) and ʿālūm al-Qurʾān.” In this context, Muqātil explains the word kitāb as the Qurʾān, and ʿālūm al-Qurʾān as the admonitions in the Qurʾān regarding commanding (amr), prohibiting (nahy), the lawful (ḥalāl), and unlawful (ḥarām). He presents other exemplary verses from the Qurʾān in which the word ʿālūm al-Qurʾān is used in the sense of admonition, such as 4:113, “God has sent down on you the kitāb and ʿālūm al-Qurʾān;” 3:48, “he (God) will teach him (Jesus) the kitāb and ʿālūm al-Qurʾān;” 19:12, “we (God) gave him (John) ʿālūm [when he was] yet a little child (ṣabiyyan).” In this last Qurʾānic occurrence, Muqātil explains the word ʿālūm as understanding (fahm) and knowledge (ʿilm). Actually, this explanation fits more properly in the second category in which Muqātil explains both ʿālūm al-Qurʾān and ʿālūm as fahm and ʿilm.3

1 This branch of Qurʾānic sciences (ʿulūm al-Qurʾān) focuses on multivalent and synonymous words in the Qurʾān. More literally speaking, the wujūh explains semantical expansion of the same word having multiple meanings upon different occasions of mention in the Qurʾān, such as ḥudā (explanation, religion, belief, inviter . . .), ṣalāḥ (belief, well-being, gentleness . . .), ʿālūm (belief, a certain angel, Gabriel, revelation, Jesus), and the like. The nazāʾir, on the other hand, deals with different words having the same meaning in the Qurʾān, such as jahannam, nār, saqar, ṣaḥāmah, and ḥām, all of which mean hell. See for instance, Muqātil b. Sulaymān, Kitāb al-Wujūh wa-al-nazāʾir, ed. Ali Özek (Istanbul, 1993).

2 The gharīb al-Qurʾān literature elucidates uncommon or ambiguous words in the Qurʾān. See for instance, Ibn Qutaybah, Tafsīr gharīb al-Qurʾān, ed. Ahmad Saqr (Cairo, 1958) and al-Ḥāghib al-İsfahānī, Mufradāt alfāz al-Qurʾān, ed. Şafwān ʿAdnān Dāwūd (Damascus, 1992).

3 Muqātil, Kitāb al-Wujūh, 29; Muqātil b. Sulaymān, al-Ashbāb wa-al-nazāʾir fi al-Qurʾān al-Karim, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shahātah (Cairo, 1975), 112. In order to
b. The word .twitch—Muqātil uses the word  twitch rather than  twitch and apparently groups them together—means understanding (fahm) and knowledge (ʿilm). This occurs in verses 31:12, “Indeed, We (God) gave Luqmān the  twitch;” 21:79, “We (God) gave each of them (David and Solomon)  twitch and ʿilm;” and 6:89, “Those are they to whom We (God) gave the kitāb and  twitch.”

c. The word  twitch means prophethood (nubuwwah). Examples of this occurrence are in the verses 4:54, “We (God) gave the people of Abraham the Book and  twitch;” 38:20, “We (God) gave him (David)  twitch and decisive speech (faṣl al-khitāb);” and 2:251, “God gave him (David) kingship (mulk) and  twitch.”

d. The word  twitch means interpretation (tafsīr) of the Qurʾān as it comes in the verse 2:269, “Whoever is given the  twitch, he is indeed given much good.”

e. The  twitch means the Qurʾān, as it occurs in 16:125, “Call to the way of your Lord with the  twitch.”

In his work al-Taṣārīf, Yaḥyā b. Sallām (known also as Ibn Sallām) (d. 200/815) introduces a semantic categorization for the word  twitch very similar to that of Muqātil. He, too, says that the word  twitch has five meanings (wujūh):

a. It means [the notion or institution of] the prophetic practice (sunnah)—Ibn Sallām uses the word sunnah here instead of mawāʾiz, which is used by Muqātil—that exists in the Qurʾān with respect to commanding, prohibiting, lawful, and unlawful. Ibn Sallām cites the same verses that Muqātil does and concludes that in all these Qurʾānic instances the word  twitch is used in the sense of sunnah. Ibn Sallām notes also that the historical origin of this definition goes back to Qatādah (d. 118/736), who says that the words kitāb and  twitch mean the Qurʾān and sunnah, respectively.

b. The word  twitch means understanding (fahm) and intellect/reason (ʿaql); Ibn Sallām uses the word ʿaql instead of ʿilm, which is used by Muqātil. This is the case in verse 19:12, in which Ibn Sallām explains the word  twitch as fahm and ʿaql. Muqātil mentions this verse under the first category. Ibn Sallām provides a more reasonable classification by placing this verse under the second category. In addition to the

make sure that this is not an editorial mistake, I have checked two different editions of the book, but both editions available show the same categorization, thus an editorial mistake can be, presumably, ruled out.

4 Muqātil, Kitāb al-Wujūh, 28–29.

5 The word ʿaql has subtle and comprehensive connotations in early Muslim writings. Accordingly, throughout the book I will use various English translations of this word (intellect, intelligence, reason, rationality, mind, understanding, and the like) depending on the context.