The Prophethood and the “*Khatam al-Nabiyyin*” Within the Qur’anic Perspective

M. Darwis Hude

*Direktur program pasca sarjana Institut PTIQ Jakarta
Hp. 0818113655*

Abstract: Both the term prophet and messenger are used in Al-Qur’an, either concurrently or respectively on its own. The two terms indeed have been long debated by Islamic scholars if there is any distinction between them. Some say there is a definite difference between the two, while some others insist they are a distinction without a difference but in meaning. Irrespective of the differences, the Islamic scholars agreed that all the prophets and messengers have one same message to convey from the beginning, that is the call to worship one God only. They are on the opinion that there is no human theological evolution ever happened like it was claimed by those who believe in the evolution theory. They assure human belief system remains the same from the day one the religion was known, that is monotheistic in concept. Should there be any difference from one to another, it is all about the syariah tenets that each messenger or prophet brought with them. Obviously, the tenets developed from time to time and came to its perfection under the era of the prophet of Muhammad peace be upon him. Thus, it is unanimously agreed among the Islamic scholar that Muhammad peace be upon him is the final prophet and messenger and the seal of the prophethood.

Keywords: *Prophet, prophethood, messenger, last/final/seal prophet, monotheisme*

A. The Distinction between the Prophet and the Messenger

The discussion among the Islamic scholars whether there is a distinction between the term of the prophet and the messenger has been going on for quite some time. Some say that the two are distinct, arguing that while both the

prophets and the messengers received God's revelation, it is only the latter who has the obligation to convey the message either to their own people or to all of the human beings, whereas such an obligation is negated from the prophets (due to their limited status in that regard, that is *istihbab* or only preferred to do so).¹ On the other hand, some others say that the two terms are a distinction without a difference² but in meaning. The prophet means the one who brings the news while the messenger is the one who brings messages from God (Allah).

Both the term prophet and messenger are used in Al-Qur'an whether each is respectively used on its own or both are used concurrently. The following verse, for example, mentions the term prophet which stands on its own.

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا (٣٠) [مريم: ٣٠]

He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He hath given me Revelation and made me a prophet." (QS Maryam [19] 30)

Whereas the verse below is the example that states the term messenger used on its own.

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١٢٩) [البقرة: ١٢٩]

"Our Lord! send amongst them an Messenger of their own, who shall rehearse Thy Signs to them and instruct them In Scripture and Wisdom, and sanctify them: for Thou art the Exalted In Might, the Wise." (al-Baqarah [2] 129)

However, there are some verses in Al-Qur'an which concurrently mention both terms, the prophet and the messenger, like the following verse.

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا (٥١) [مريم: ٥١]

also mention In the Book (the story of) Moses: for He was specially chosen, and He was an apostle (and) a prophet. (Maryam [19] 51)

¹ Shalih ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz Alu Syaikh, *Syarh Tsalatsah al-Ushul*, Beirut: Daar al-Kutub, 1428H p. 144.

² Abu Hilal al-'Askari, *al-Furuq al-Lugawiyah*, Cairo: Daar al-'Ilm wa al-Tsaqafah li al-Nasyr wa al-Tawzi', p. 531.

One interesting way to see if there is a distinction between the term prophet and the messenger is plainly explained in the book of *Syarh al-Thahawiyah*. It is suggested that to see the difference between the two terms one should look at the object or the target audience whom the prophets and the messengers were sent to. Should they were sent to the majority of people who were unbelievers and heavily involved in idolatrous practices, then they are the messengers. However, if their target audience were the believing people and their tasks were mainly to continue the previous teachings, then they are the prophets. Al-Thahawi makes it clear that the right way to differentiate between the prophets and the messengers is as follows: the messengers independently brought with them the teachings for those who were deviant from the previous teachings and need to be straightened up, irrespective of the fact that some of them received the teachings (and became believers) and some others rejected them (and remained unbelievers). Meanwhile the prophets are those who were sent with the only responsibility to strengthen the existing tenets. In other words, the prophets were specifically sent to those who are already the believers. To clarify, al-Thahawi gives an example that the prophets of the Children of Israel who came after the prophet Moses like David, Solomon, Jhon, and Zechariah were all the prophets and not messengers, since they were only sent to reaffirm the teachings of the prophet Moses and the messages contained within the Torah. He further elaborated that the next messenger sent after them was Jesus peace be upon him.³ In the same way, al-Thahawi also regarded Adam as only the prophet and not the messenger, considering that back then the society was still free from idolatrous practices with hardly unbelievers existed. The situation went on until the era before Noah peace be upon him when the society began to lose their faith. Thus, Noah, was regarded as the first messenger who was sent to the unbelievers and idolaters.⁴ Noah's task was to convey the message of God, although in reality there were only a few who turned to be the believers as the majority remained unbelievers.⁵ Al-Qur'an tells this story through Surah al-Syura/42 :13.

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ (١٣) [الشورى: ١٣]

The same Religion has He established for you As that which He enjoined on Noah - the which we have sent by inspiration to Thee - and that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain

³ Abd al-'Aziz, *Syarh 'Aqidah al-Thahawiyah*, Beirut: Daar al-Kutub, 1429H, p. 63.

⁴ Abd al-'Aziz, *Syarh 'Aqidah al-Thahawiyah*, ..., pp. 63-64.

⁵ Surah Nuh/71: 1-28, al-'Ankabut/29:14.

steadfast In religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which Thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him). (al-Syūrā [42] 13)

Obviously, some Islamic scholars criticize the definition of the prophets forwarded by some others who say that the prophets are not obliged to deliver the revelation they received from God as the messengers are. Walid ibn Rasyid al-Sa'idin has some reasons to say, among others, he argues that how is it possible that the prophets are negated from the obligation of delivering the message while it is surely obligatory for those with knowledge to convey the message, to teach those who are still ignorant, to give guidance for those who are lost, and to provide answers for their questions; If so, what are the benefits for people should the prophets just keep God's revelation for themselves, while God clearly threat those people who are reluctant to share the knowledge they have? If the obligation of delivering knowledge applies to *ahl al-ilm* (those with knowledge), it should be even more for the prophets who are regarded as the master of all those with knowledge.⁶

B. The Task and Function of The Prophets and Messengers

The main task of the prophets and the messengers –according to the Islamic scholars who regard them to bear the obligation of delivering the message (*tablig*)- is three: *tilawah* (reading), *tazkiyah* (purification), and *ta'lim* (instruction). This can be understood from the verses in Al-Qur'an found among others in Surah al-Baqarah/2 :129 and 151; Ali Imran/3: 164; and al-Jumu'ah/62 :2. The following is the verse 62 of Surah al-Jumu'ah,

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ (٢) [الجمعة: ٢]

It is He who has sent amongst the unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them In Scripture and Wisdom,- although They had been, before, In Manifest error;- (al-Jumu'ah/62: 2)

⁶ Walid ibn Rasyid al-Sa'idan, *Ittihaf Ahl al-Albab bi Ma'rifah al-Tawhid wa al-Aqidah fi Sual wa Jawab*, section 1, p. 129.

Meanwhile, the function of the prophets and the messengers is to give *tabisyir* (good news) for those who do good and tell *indzar* (warnings and threats) for those who do otherwise. There are two ways only are available: good and bad.⁷ And in their mission, all the prophets and the messengers do call their people for their own good to follow the good path that is blessed by God. It is said in surah al-Ahzab/33 :45-46 as follows,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (٤٥) وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ
وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا (٤٦) [الأحزاب: ٤٥-٤٦]

O Prophet! truly we have sent Thee As a witness, a bearer of glad tidings, and Warner,-and As one who invites to Allah's (grace) by His leave, and As a Lamp spreading light. (al-Ahzab [33] 45-46)

Accordingly, since God wants to see human being believe in Him in an eloquent way, no force is allowed to be used by all the prophets and messengers in doing their jobs. With the task to preach and call people to God's path and with the function to give good news and warnings, all the prophets strive to invite people to follow God's commandments which apparently is for their own good. That there are some people who are eventually immune and reluctant to accept the messengers' invitation, it is absolutely not the responsibility of those messengers any longer, so long as they have delivered all the revelation they received from God. An explanation on such an account is found in some verses in Al-Qur'an, among others in Surah al-Maidah/5 :99.⁸

مَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ (٩٩)
[المائدة: ٩٩]

The Messenger's duty is but to proclaim (the Message), but Allah knoweth all that ye reveal and ye conceal. (al-Maidah [5] 99)

One thing needs to be clarified, though, is that the message revealed by all the messengers from the very beginning until the end is the same, that is to worship one God only. The only different is that their teachings vary from one to another. In other words, it can be said that all the prophets were sent to spread the same monotheistic message, whereas the syariah tenets developed gradually

⁷ Refer to Surah al-Balad/90: 10, al-Muthaffifin/83: 7.

⁸ See also Surah Ali Imran/3: 20, al-Maidah/5: 92, al-Rad/13: 40, al-Nahl/16: 35, 82, al-Nur/24: 54, al-Ankabut/29: 18, Yasin/36: 17, al-Syura/42: 48, al-Tagabun/64: 12

from time to time until they reached the state of perfection under the prophet Muhammad era. In consequence, none of the messenger brought with him the teaching of polytheisme. Al-Qur'an confirms that should there be any party claiming that God is more than one (*taaddud al-ilah*), it is definitely a corrupt teaching. Notice the following verse that condemns such teaching.

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٧٣) [المائدة: ٧٣]

They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three In a Trinity: for there is no god except one Allah. if They desist not from their word (of blasphemy), Verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. (al-Maidah [5] 73)

Thus, it can be summarized that all the prophets and the messengers brought with them the same monotheistic tenets. There is no changes and even more the evolution on this subject, as it was suggested by the anthropologists and the experts of comparative religions in the West. As hinted by Mukti Ali they are a great number of scholars in comparative studies who stand by and are very much influenced by this anthropological evolution theory popularized by Charles Darwin.⁹ They are on the opinion that human search for God is through an evolution process before it came to perfection to reach the monotheistic understanding.

On the ground of this analysis, two views on human theological theory were established. First, the theory of human theological evolution that starts from dynamisme, animism, polytheism, henotheisme¹⁰, up to its peak of monotheisme. In general, this view is held by the scientists in the West. Second, the view that says that there has never been any evolution in human theological belief from the beginning until today. The followers of this view say that all the prophets and messengers, from Adam (some say from Noah) to Muhammad, conveyed the same monotheistic tenets; and contrary to the earlier view, they

⁹ Mukti Ali. *Asal Usul Agama*, Yogyakarta: Yayasan Nida, 1971, p. 10.

¹⁰ Henotheisme is the transition period from polytheisme to monotheisme. They believe in many gods which are different from those worshipped by polytheisme in that their gods are of the same level. In henotheisme, there are gods with local status, that are taken as symbols by local tribes. Then there are gods with national status that unite the tribes as a nation. And there are gods of international status which cover the whole universe and other gods below them. The ancient Arab believed in gods with this henotheistic model, in which each tribe had their own local gods, then there are gods of higher level such as Lata, Manat, and Uzza that unite them as tribes. Meanwhile the highest gods as the creator of the sky and earth and became the joint gods for all the human beings is Allah (see Surah al-'Ankabut/29 :61, 63; Luqman/31 :25; al-Zumar/39 :38; and al-Zukhruf 43: 9, 87.

assured that none of those prophets or messengers called their followers to believe in more than one God which shows the theological evolution process from dynamism to monotheism.

The true monotheism conveyed by all the prophets, known as oer-monotheism in the field of comparative religions, is never resulted from an evolution. In his other book, Ali Mukti, explains further: "Even though the theory of evolution is widely accepted by the experts of natural scientists, the scholars of religious studies do not always take the same stand. Alternatively, the oer-monotheism or primitive monotheism was established. This view explains that the birth of religion was not a result of an evolution from polytheism to monotheism, but instead, the religion remains the same from the beginning it was known, that is monotheism or one God."¹¹

The verses in Al-Qur'an related to human search for God always give them guidance to believe in true monotheism. Or it can even be said that it is of human nature to believe in one Supreme Being only. All the prophets sent by God to guide mankind consistently convey the monotheistic tenets. One of the verses in Al-qur'an that indicates this is found in Surah asy-Syura/42:13.

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ [الشورى: ١٣]

The same Religion has He established for you As that which He enjoined on Noah - the which we have sent by inspiration to Thee - and that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast In religion, and make no divisions therein: to those who worship other things than Allah, hard is the (way) to which Thou callest them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him). (asy-Syura [42] 13)

From this verse and other verses that are correlated it can be concluded that from the beginning all God's messengers have taught monotheism to human beings; and that the monotheism is not a result of an evolution process as it is believed by the evolutionism followers. The experts of al-Qur'anic interpretation unanimously state that the religion brought by all the messengers is the faith of monotheism. There is no different in their messages, from the first messenger to the last one, the prophet Muhammad. The command to straighten the religion

¹¹ Mukti Ali, *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama*, Yogyakarta: Nida, 1975, p. 24.

in the above verse is the command to straighten the monotheistic faith as it has been done by the previous messengers.¹²

Various researches conducted by many experts show that within primitive tribes anywhere in the world there have always been a tendency for them to acknowledge the concept of monotheism when they are talking about worshipping God. Wilhem Schmidt, who spent most of his time doing researches on primitives tribes, as quoted by Mukti Ali, concluded that many primitive tribes in Africa, North America, and Australis acquainted themselves with the concept of monotheism since the very early days. Likewise, the same conclusion has been drawn by M. Dubois from his research in Madagascar.¹³ In other words, it can be concluded that it is not only the prophetic information through the teachings of God's messengers which says that monotheism is the first and the last faith of human being, but it had been repeatedly confirmed by the findings of various experts researches. The fact that there are those who disbelieves in monotheism or completely rejects it is regarded as a deviation from the nature of human belief system.

C. The Interpretation of *Khatam al-Nabiyyin*

The term being discussed here is kha-ta-ma. In Al-Qur'an the term kha-ta-ma and its derivatives are found in some verses as follows:

1. Surah al-Baqarah [2] 7

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٧)
[البقرة: ٧]

Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty They (incur). (al-Baqarah [2] 7)

2. Surah al-An'am [6] 46

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ انْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ (٤٦) [الأنعام: ٤٦]

¹² See, for instance, Muqatil ibn Sulaiman ibn Basyir. *Tafsir Muqatil*, Beirut: Daar Ihya' al-Turats, 1423H., section 3, p. 206; Muhammad Asy-Syaukani, *Fathul Qadir*, Damascus: Daar Ibn Katsir, 1414H., section 6, p. 372 (www.altafsir.com); Abu Abdullah Al-Qurthubi. *Al-Jami' Li Ahkamil Qur'an*. Beirut: Maktabah Misykat Al-Islamiyah, 1372H, section 16, p. 10.

¹³ Mukti Ali, *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama*, ..., pp. 16-17.

Say: "Think ye, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up your hearts, who - a god other than Allah - could restore them to you?" see How we explain the Signs by various (symbols); yet They turn aside." (An'am [6] 46)

3. Surah al-Jatsiyah [45] 23

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٣) [الجاتية: ٢٣]

Then seest Thou such a one As takes As His god His own vain desire? Allah has, knowing (him As such), left Him astray, and sealed His hearing and His heart (and understanding), and put a cover on His sight. who, then, will guide Him after Allah (has withdrawn Guidance)? will ye not then receive admonition? (al-Jatsiyah [45] 23)

4. Surah Yasin [36] 65

{الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَنَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٦٥) [يس: ٦٥]}

That Day shall we set a seal on their mouths. but their hands will speak to us, and their feet bear witness, to all that They did. (Yasin [36] 65)

5. Surah al-Syura [42] 24

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِنْ يَشِإِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٢٤) [الشورى: ٢٤]

What! do They say, "He has forged a falsehood against Allah.? but if Allah willed, He could seal up Thy heart. and Allah blots out Vanity, and proves the truth by His Words. for He knows well the secrets of all hearts. (al-Syura [42] 24)

6. Surat al-Muthaffin [83] 25-26

يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ (٢٥) خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ (٢٦) [المطففين: ٢٥، ٢٦]

Their thirst will be slaked with pure wine sealed: The seal thereof will be Musk: and for This let those aspire, who have aspirations. (al-Muthaffifin [83] 25-26)

7. Surah al-Ahzab [33] 40

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٤٠) [الأحزاب: ٤٠]

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (He is) the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (al-Ahzab [33] 40)

The meaning of the infinitive word *kha-ta-ma* in Arabic among others are: (1) *Thaba'a* which means to stamp, close, cover, seal as in Surah *al-Baqarah*/2: 7 or other similar verses. The verse is translated: "... Allah has sealed their hearts and minds ..." so that no instruction and guidance can touch their hearts and minds any longer due to the seal. The same meaning apply to verse 24 of Surah Muhammad.¹⁴ (2) *Balaga akhirah*,¹⁵ which means comes to the final limit. That is why when someone has completed reading and reciting al-Qur'an, it is said that he has *khatam alqur'an*. (3) *A'radha* that means to deny. If you are told '*khatama alayka babahu*' it literally means that you are denied to pass someone's door.¹⁶ This very meaning is also used to show the sealing or denying activity indicating that the work is done and can no longer be reopened. (4). *Itmam al-syay* that means a finished and complete job.

أَنْ الْخَتَمَ يَنْبِئُ عَنْ إِتْمَامِ الشَّيْءِ وَقَطْعِ فَعْلِهِ وَعَمَلِهِ تَقُولُ خَتَمْتَ الْقُرْآنَ أَيَّ أَتَمَمْتَ حِفْظَهُ وَقِرَاتَهُ وَقَطَعْتَ قِرَاءَتَهُ...¹⁷

"Indeed the meaning of al-khatm is to express the completeness of something and that the work of that thing is finished or complete. You say, for example: 'I have khatam Al-Qur'an,' which means 'I have completed memorizing and reciting al-Qur'an and I have ceased from doing such an activity ..."

¹⁴ Ibn Manzhur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, Beirut: Dar Shadr, 1414H., section 12, p. 163.

¹⁵ Abu Abdillah Zainuddin al-Razi, *Mukhtar al-Shahhah*, Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Ashriyah, 1420H., section 1, p. 83.

¹⁶ Ibn Manzhur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, section 1, pp. 163-164.

¹⁷ Al-'Askari, *al-Furuq al-Lugawiyah*, ..., section 1, p. 212.

From this, comes the word *Ikhtatama* (the antonym of *iftataha*) that means to seal or to close something. Thus, the closing of series of events is said *ihktitam al-baramij*, then *al-khatim*, *al-khatam*, or *al-khaytam*, with the plural form *al-khawatim*. All those derivatis have the same meaning, that is, the end or the closing of something. Comprehensively, Al-Razi writes,

وَالْخَاتَمُ وَالْخَاتِمُ بِفَتْحِ التَّاءِ وَكَسْرِهَا وَالْخَيْتَامُ وَالْخَاتَامُ كُلُّهُ بِمَعْنَى الْجَمْعِ الْخَوَاتِيمِ. وَخَاتِمَةُ الشَّيْءِ آخِرُهُ. وَمُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَاتَمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ عَلَيْهِمُ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ.¹⁸

“And *al-khatam*, *al-khatim*, with the letter *ta*’ is pronounced ‘*aa*’ or ‘*ee*’, *al-khaytam*, *al-khatam*, all have one meaning, the plural of them is *al-khawatim*. *Khatimah* of everything is the final of it (the end or the edge of it). And the apostle Muhammad peace be upon him is the seal of the prophets.”

The experts of al-Qur’anic interpretation unanimously agreed to interpret the expression of *khatam al-nabiyyin* found in the verse 40 of Surah al-Ahzab as means the seal of all the prophets sent by God. There is no different interpretation coming from any of them in understanding the verse, that Muhammad is the last, final, sustainer, and penyempurna of all the messages of by the previous prophets.

Para ahli tafsir dalam menafsirkan ayat 40 dari Surah al-Ahzab sepakat memaknai bahwa ungkapan ‘*khatam al-nabiyyin*’ adalah penutup para nabi yang telah diutus oleh Allah sebelumnya. Tidak ada perbedaan pemaknaan dari mereka dalam memahami ayat tersebut, bahwa Nabi Muhammad adalah nabi terakhir, penutup, penyempurna risalah para nabi terdahulu.

According to Abu al-Hasan al-Khazin, the author of the Qur’anic interpretation book *Lubab al-Takwil fi Ma’ani al-Tanzil* the prophet Muhammad is the last and the seal of all the prophets. He quoted Ibnu Abbas as saying that Should God had ever wished another prophet or messenger after Muhamaad he would have given him a son as his successor¹⁹. Ibnu ‘Asyur writes in his book, *al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, that the negation of the prophet Muhammad as a farther of any mature and adult son happened contiguously to the confirmation that he is the final prophet of all the prophets and messangers strongly hinted that with no offspring he was indeed sent as the final prophet and messenger. Further, Ibnu ‘Asyur writes that Muhammads’ companions have agreed that Muhammad

¹⁸ Abu Abdillah Zainuddin al-Razi, *Mukhtar al-Shahhah*, ..., section 1, pp. 83-84

¹⁹ Abu al-Hasan al-Khazin, *Lubab al-Takwil fi Ma’ani al-Tanzil*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1415H, section 5, p. 198.

is the final prophet and messenger as it has been told by many from generation to generation. Whoever denies this fact, they are considered deviant from Islam. The knowledge of this agreement is absolutely compulsory, and there should not be any room for argument on the subject.²⁰

Meanwhile, according to Abdul Karim al-Khatib the above verse of chapter 40 (surah al-Ahzab) indicates that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is regarded as the farther of all believers of all the faiths as he is the heir of all the previous prophets and the sustainer of their true teachings. Thus, no more prophet to come after him until the end of the day.²¹ Meanwhile al-Zuhali is of the opinion that the verse is the definite postulate stressing that neither prophet nor messenger is to come after Muhammad (peace be upon him). The conclusion is also based on many hadeests mutawatir (hadeest narrated by many) from Muhammad companions,²² one of which that says as follows,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَثَلِي وَمَثَلُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مِنْ قَبْلِي كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ بَنَى بُنْيَانًا فَأَحْسَنَهُ وَأَجْمَلَهُ إِلَّا مَوْضِعَ لَبْنَةٍ مِنْ زَاوِيَةٍ مِنْ زَوَايَاهُ فَجَعَلَ النَّاسُ يَطُوفُونَ بِهِ وَيَعْجَبُونَ لَهُ وَيَقُولُونَ هَلَّا وُضِعَتْ هَذِهِ اللَّبْنَةُ قَالَ فَأَنَا اللَّبْنَةُ وَأَنَا خَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّينَ²³

“Abu Hurairah reported Allah’s messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: “The analogy between myself and other prophets before me is that like building a house, in which each and every builder tries their best to complete and beautify the house, unless that there is one corner of the house that is left without brick. Then people tour around the house and are amazed by its beauty. They then ask: ‘why is there a corner left without brick that could otherwise make the house perfect? The answer for this is I am the one who would put the brick, and I am the seal of the prophets.” (Hadis Number 22 by Muslim, from Abu Hurairah)

From the above mentioned verse and hadeeth and based on the interpretation by the experts of the Al-Qur’anic interpretation it could be concluded

²⁰ Muhammad Thahir ibn ‘Asyur al-Tunisi, *Tahrir al-Ma’na al-Sadid wa Tanwir al-Aql al-Jadin min Tafsir al-Kitab al-Majid*, Tunis: Dar al-Tunisiyah li al-Nasyr, 1984, section 22, p. 45.

²¹ Abdul Karim Yunus al-Khatib, *al-Tafsir al-Qur’ani li al-Qur’an*, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-‘Arabi, section 11, p. 726.

²² Wahbah ibn Mushthafa al-Zuhaili, *al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-‘Aqidah wa al-Syari’ah al-Manhaj*, Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1418H., section 22, p. 38.

²³ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj al-Naisaburi, *Shahih Muslim*, Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turats al-‘Arabi, chapter 7, section 4, p. 1791.

that the meaning of *khatam al-nabiyyin* is that Muhammad is the final prophet and messenger, and that there is no prophet or messenger after him, since he is the seal of prophethood and messengerhood until the end of the day. *God Knows best*.

References

- Ali, Mukti Ali, *Asal Usul Agama*, Yogyakarta: Yayasan Nida, 1971.
- , *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama*, Yogyakarta: Nida, 1975.
- Alu-Syaikh, Shalih ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, *Syarh Tsalatsah al-Ushul*, Beirut: Daar al-Kutub, 1428H.
- 'Asyur, Muhammad Thahir ibn, *Tahrir al-Ma'na al-Sadid wa Tanwir al-'Aql al-Jadin min Tafsir al-Kitab al-Majid*, Tunis: Dar al-Tunisiyah li al-Nasyr, 1984.
- Al-'Askari, Abu Hilal al-Hasan, *al-Furuq al-Lugawiyah*, Cairo: Daar al-'Ilm wa al-Tsaqafah li al-Nasyr wa al-Tawzi', n.a.
- Basyir, Muqatil ibn Sulaiman ibn. *Tafsir Muqatil*, Beirut: Daar Ihya' al-Turats, 1423H.
- Al-'Aziz, 'Abd, *Syarh 'Aqidah al-Thahawiyah*, Beirut: Daar al-Kutub, 1429H.
- Al-Khathib, Abdul Karim Yunus, *al-Tafsir al-Qur'ani li al-Qur'an*, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, n.a.
- Al-Khazin, Abu al-Hasan, *Lubab al-Takwil fi Ma'ani al-Tanzil*, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1415H.
- Manzhur, Ibn, *Lisan al-'Arab*, Beirut: Dar Shadr, 1414H.
- Al-Naisaburi, Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Shahih Muslim*, Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turats al-'Arabi, n.a.
- Al-Qurthubi, Abu Abdullah. *Al-Jami' Li Ahkamil Qur'an*. Beirut: Maktabah Misykat Al-Islamiyah, 1372H.
- Al-Razi, Abu Abdillah Zainuddin, *Mukhtar al-Shahhah*, Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Ashriyah, 1420H.
- Al-Sa'idan, Walid ibn Rasyid, *Ittihaf Ahl al-Albab bi Ma'rifah al-Tawhid wa al-Aqidah fi Sual wa Jawab*, n.a.
- Al-Syaukani, Muhammad, *Fathul Qadir*, Damascus: Daar Ibn Katsir, 1414H.
- Wahbah ibn Mushthafa al-Zuhaili, *al-Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Syari'ah al-Manhaj*, Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1418H.