



## Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (1027–1114 CE) and the *Māturīdiyyah* School (A Study of the Concept of *Īmān* in the Book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*)

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**Abstract.** This research analyzes the concept of *Īmān* (faith) according to Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (1027-1114 CE) in his work *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*. The study stems from the intellectual unrest and *Fitnah* that affected the *Māturīdiyyah* school in Mawarannahr, prompting al-Nasafī to become a key defender of the faith. The study utilizes library research with a descriptive-analytical and qualitative approach, analyzing both primary data from al-Nasafī's work and secondary theological literature. The findings reveal al-Nasafī's views on *Īmān*: First, faith is a conviction of truth (*Yaqīn*) established in the heart towards God. Second, verbal affirmation and actions are symbolic and necessary for Islamic law but do not represent the essence of faith, which lies in the heart. Third, he rejects equating faith with deeds (*'Amal*), asserting that deeds and conviction are distinct, with conviction being stable and permanent, unlike actions. Al-Nasafī critiques earlier views, like those of al-Raqashī and others, who equated faith with mere verbal affirmation, deeming such views as hypocritical (*Nifāq*). His approach integrates reason (*'Aql*) and revelation (*Wahy*), employing both *Qur'anic* texts (*Bayānī*) and rational arguments (*Burhānī*) to explain faith.

**Keywords:** *Fitnah*; *Īmān*; Intellectual Turmoil; Islamic Law; *Māturīdiyyah*.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The various instances of sedition (*Fitnah*) that emerged against the *Ḥanafī* school and *Māturīdiyyah* s in Mawarannahr (the region of Uzbekistan) at that time intensified the intellectual conflict concerning faith. However, a defending figure named Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (1027-1114 CE) emerged. In aspects of jurisprudence, he belonged to the *Ḥanafī* school, while in theological matters, he aligned with the *Māturīdiyyah* side (Hasanov A., 2015). His strong intellectual background and courage are considered to have contributed significantly to the development of the *Māturīdiyyah* school in Uzbekistan (Ugli Karimov, 2021). His thoughts on *Īmān* (faith) are contained in his monumental work, *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn aw Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawḥīd* (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006). In the context of this research, the author relies on the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, which was edited (*Taḥqīq*) by Ramaḍān al-Shaghūl (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 4). The issues discussed are not merely limited to the fundamentals of theology and religious sciences, but also incorporate a nuance of defense for *Māturīdiyyah* doctrines. The discussion will focus on al-Nasafī's concept of faith within this book, aiming to understand how he formulated the concept of *Īmān* in Islam. This makes the research highly compelling for further development.

Previous studies on Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī have focused on several main aspects: First, Hasanov's 2015 work, "*Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī– The Promoter Of Teaching Of 'Moturidiya'*" (Hasanov A., 2015) explains al-Nasafī and the doctrines of the *Māturīdiyyah* school, but this

research does not emphasize the concept of faith and does not focus on al-Nasafī's work *Al-Tamhīd*. Second, Sahodat Murtazova & Navfal Ashurov's "*Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī- The Continuator Of The Doctrine Of Moturudiya*" (Murtazova & Navfal Ashurov, 2024) explains how al-Nasafī continued the teachings of his predecessor, Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944 CE). Third, Muhammadamin Bakhtiyor Ugli Karimov's "*The Role Of Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī In The Doctrine Of Moturidia*" (Ugli Karimov, 2021) is similar to the previous study, discussing al-Nasafī's role in the *Māturīdiyyah* school. Building on prior research, the author intends to develop al-Nasafī's thoughts related to the concept of *Īmān*, which has not been the primary focus of previous scholars. Therefore, the author considers this research highly important to undertake.

This research rests on the hypothesis that the book *All-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn aw Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawhīd* is a foundational work for anyone seeking to understand the principles of *Tawhīd* (monotheism) in Islam, especially concerning the theology of the *Māturīdī* school, and particularly the concept of faith. Furthermore, through the book *Al-Tamhīd*, readers can better understand al-Nasafī's earlier work, *Tabṣīrat al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-Dīn 'alā Ṭarīqati al-Imām al-Māturīdī*. Given that the book *Al-Tamhīd* is a summary of the *Al-Tabṣīrat*, its contents strongly defend the *Māturīdī* doctrine. Consequently, both works can be considered two inseparable elements that contribute significantly to the *Māturīdī* doctrine and to Islam itself. By studying the book *Al-Tamhīd*, this research aims to investigate in depth how al-Nasafī formulated the principles of faith in Islam.

## 2. METHOD

The method employed in this research is library research, which is descriptive-analytical in nature, utilizing a qualitative approach (Kountur, 2007). The aim is to trace and analyze primary data taken from the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn aw Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawhīd*, the work of Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī. Secondary data are obtained from studying several literatures such as books and scholarly journals on *ʿIlm Kalām* (Islamic theology) relevant to the theme under discussion (S. Nasution, 2002). An in-depth study of the text of al-Nasafī's *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, harmonized with the use of this method, will allow the author to better understand the historical context of al-Nasafī's thought. This is done to observe the contribution of al-Nasafī's thought to the development of Islamic theology, especially for the *Māturīdiyyah* school itself.

This research seeks to analyze the concept of *Īmān* (faith) from the perspective of Muʿīn al-Nasafī in his work *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*. The work elaborates on the fundamentals of

*Tawhīd* (monotheism) and religious sciences (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006). Al-Nasafī's work serves as the most important primary source for the author in tracing the discussion related to the concept of *Īmān*. In this study, the author outlines several main topics, including: First, a discussion of Muʿīn al-Nasafī as a key figure of the *Māturīdiyyah* school. Second, a discussion regarding the content of the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* itself. Third, a discussion concerning the concept of *Īmān* according to Muʿīn al-Nasafī in his book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*. This mapping is intended to allow the reader to view al-Nasafī's thought more systematically.

This research also consists of several systematization instruments for studying the proposed theme (Muhadjir, 2011). The first step begins with the elaboration of secondary data descriptions, which consist of several literatures related to Muʿīn al-Nasafī and his *Māturīdiyyah* school. The second step involves summarizing the elaborated data to obtain the core essence of the topic being discussed. The third step is carrying out a data filtration process consisting of several sub-chapters. The fourth step, after the filtration process is complete, involves reflection, interpretation, critique, and comparison of the research findings with the ideas of other figures who elaborate on the concept of *Īmān*.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### The Development of the Concept of Faith in Islam

The emergence of knowledge is not sudden but proceeds through a demanding period marked by intellectual struggle (Haitham, 1998). Furthermore, the historical trajectory of Islamic theology is exceptionally dynamic, its dialectic testifying to philosophical and intra-religious developments often infused with political dimensions concerning the nature of God, occasionally resulting in violent conflict (Doko & Turner, 2023). Muslims in the early period, particularly during the time of the Prophet and his Companions, refrained from engaging in deep, speculative theological debates. This was attributed to the clarity of their faith. They relied solely on the *Qur'ān* and Prophetic teachings to substantiate the concept of monotheism (*Tawhīd*) and other core Islamic principles; during this era, *ʿIlm Kalām* (speculative theology) was not yet extensively developed (Ahmed, 1972). Treiger argues that the religious diversity in the Middle East created a competitive landscape for theological dominance. Consequently, the argumentative style of *ʿIlm Kalām* is intrinsically linked to the culture of religious polemics prevalent at that time, both preceding and following the Muslim conquests (Treiger, 2016).

The emergence of the *Mu'tazilah* is regarded as the school that most extensively defended Islamic beliefs on a rational-philosophical basis. As time went on, their arguments

faced opposition from the *Kalām* schools of the *Sunnī* side, namely the *Ash'ariyyah* and *Māturīdiyyah*. They sought to defend Islamic concepts with *Bayānī* reason (textual) and *Burhānī* reason (rationality) (Ahmed, 1972). *Māturīdiyyah* is often understood as a synthesis of the *Mu'tazilah* and *Ash'ariyyah* schools, however, they also had their points of disagreement; First, the *Māturīdiyyah* rejected the *Mu'tazilah* doctrine of "*Wujub al-Aslah wa al-Aslah*", which is the obligation for God to do good and to do what is best (Nasution, 2009); Second, they disagreed with the *Mu'tazilah* regarding the doctrine that "The *Qur'ān* is created." Because for the *Māturīdiyyah* and *Ash'ariyyah*, the *Qur'ān* is not created but rather is *Qadīm* (pre-eternal); Third, they disagreed with the *Ash'ariyyah* that verses describing God as having a physical form (anthropomorphism) must be taken literally; for the *Māturīdiyyah*, the hand and face of God must be interpreted by giving a metaphorical meaning, not the literal meaning of the verse (Abrahamov, 2018; Galli, 1982). Besides that, the *Māturīdiyyah* held a different idea from the *Ash'ariyyah* regarding the concept of God (Theology), which is that for them, humans possess sufficient rational capacity to grasp the basic principles of *Tawḥīd* (monotheism) (Pessagno, 1984).

Their debates were not only born in the form of mere opposition of ideas, but on several issues, they held almost similar concepts, such as the *Māturīdiyyah*'s concept they agreed with the thinking of both schools (*Mu'tazilah* and *Ash'ariyyah* doctrines) in a few ways: First, concerning "*Al-Wa'ad wa al-Wa'id*" (the promise and the threat) (Nasution, 1983). They agreed with the *Mu'tazilah* that God's promise and threat will definitely occur in the future; Second, concerning "*anthropomorphism*" (rejection of the literal meaning of anthropomorphic verses). However, regarding the issue of major sins, they agreed with the *Ash'ariyyah*, that a person who commits a major sin still remains a believer (Nasution, 1983). From the long description of the periods of Islamic theology mentioned above, the author agrees with what Oliver Leaman stated, that the first four centuries of Islamic theology were highly creative and extremely dynamic in their development (Leaman and Sajjad, 2008).

### ***Māturīdiyyah***

In the 9th to 10th centuries, fields such as theology, science, and philosophy flourished in the Middle East. All the works during this era were widely discussed, one of which was *ʿIlm Kalām* (theology) (Ugli Karimov, 2021). One of the schools that emerged in the 9th century was the *Māturīdiyyah*, first initiated by the great thinker in the theological field, Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Maḥmūd al-Ḥanafī al-Mutakallim al-Māturīdī al-Mutakallim (Rudolph, 2015; Nurhuda, 2024). Another version states that the *Māturīdiyyah* school emerged in the 10th century, realized with the founding of a school by Abū Manṣūr al-

Māturīdī. This school served as part of the theological movement in the Islamic world (Umbarovna 2023). Meanwhile, the birth of al-Māturīdī himself is not known for certain. Some literature estimates it was in 238 H / 852 CE in Maturid, a small town in the region of Samarkand in Central Asian Transoxiana (now known as the country of Uzbekistan). From the available data, he is reported to have lived during the time of the 10th Abbasid Caliphate led by Caliph al-Mutawakkil, who reigned from 232-274 H / 847-861 CE (Umbarovna, 2023). *Māturīdīyyah* then breathed his last in 333 H / 944 CE (Harvey, 2021; Karatyshkanova et al. 2017).

Talking about the debate on the concept of faith in Islam is closely related to the region of Transoxiana (Uzbekistan). It was there that a major stream in *'Ilm al-Kalām* (theology) was born, namely the *Māturīdīyyah* understanding. Its emergence is reported to have been in the 10th century, initiated by Abū Manşūr Muḥammad al-Māturīdī (d. 944 CE) (Watt, 1973). The way of thinking of this school emphasizes the integration between reason and revelation in understanding faith (Bilgin, 2020; Marg'uba 2021). Thus, it can be seen that the *Māturīdīyyah* thought system provides two emphases: the existence of a relationship between God and humans, and the existence of human freedom and responsibility (Kenzhetayev, et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the development of *Māturīdīyyah* in Transoxiana is reported to have been from the 8th to the 10th century CE. Although the period after the 9th to 10th centuries is often referred to as the "post-classical" period or a phase of decline (Griffel, 2021). the available data shows that from the 8th to the 12th century, several Islamic thinkers were born from the Transoxiana region (Muhammadiev 2020). One of the great thinkers who emerged at that time was Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī al-Māturīdī (Karimov, 2021).

It should be noted that the *Māturīdīyyah* has two groups: first, the Samarkand group led by Abū Manşūr al-Māturīdī (Nurhuda 2024). This group, in terms of thought regarding the attributes of God, leans more towards the *Ash'ariyyah*. Meanwhile, concerning human actions, they lean more towards the *Mu'tazilah* school. Second, the Bukhara (Iraq) faction led by Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, a figure who strongly defended the *Māturīdīyyah* school (J. Stewart, 2016). He was a follower of Abū Manşūr al-Māturīdī and a good successor to *Māturīdīyyah* thought. The Bukhara group, in their theological thought, leans more towards the *Ash'ariyyah* school (Abid Nurhuda, 2024). It should be emphasized that besides al-Bazdawī, there were several scholars who sheltered under the *Māturīdīyyah* school and certainly made great contributions to it, such as: First, Abū Yusr al-Pazdawī; Second, 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī; Third, Abū Ḥafş al-Nasafī; Fourth, Nūr al-Dīn al-Şabūnī; Sixth, the figure

currently being studied, namely Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (Hasanov A., 2015). Of course, there are many more figures who cannot be mentioned one by one.

### **Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (1027–1114 CE)**

Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī is a figure reported to have a major role in the spread of the *Māturīdiyyah* school (Uvatov, 2019). His name might not be too familiar to us, as he is a figure who is very rarely looked at in Indonesia. Researchers who study his thoughts mostly come from Uzbekistan. This is consistent with the birthplace of Mu'īn al-Nasafī himself, which was in Transoxiana (Uzbekistan) in the 11th century, specifically in 1027 CE (Saydullaev, 2021). His full name is Abū al-Mu'īn Maymūn bin Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Mu'tamid bin Muḥammad Maḥkūl Nasafī (Ugli Karimov, 2021). He has several epithets: First, " *Al-Makhūlī* " attributed to his grandfather's name; Second, " *Al-'Allāmah* " because he was a great Imam and legal scholar in the *Ḥanafī* school. In his career, al-Nasafī began his basic education in Nasaf, then continued his scholarly journey to the Samarkand region for some time, but due to political turmoil, he moved and settled for a long time in Bukhara for many years. Al-Nasafī is reported to have passed away in 508 H/1114 CE (Hasanov A. 2015 : Murtazova & Ashurov 2024).

Mu'īn al-Nasafī (1027-1114 CE) was a figure with a great thirst for knowledge. He once studied the teachings of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (873-935 CE), the founding figure of the *Ash'ariyyah* school from Baghdad (Iraq). He also studied the teachings of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (870-944 CE), the founder of the *Māturīdiyyah* school. However, al-Nasafī followed the *Māturīdiyyah* doctrine more (Bakhtiyor Ugli Karimov, 2021). Al-Nasafī was popular not only for being known as a great figure adherent of the *Māturīdiyyah* school who was an expert in *'Ilm Kalām* (scholastic theology), but he was also famous for being skilled in jurisprudence in his time. Thus, when the *Ash'ariyyah* school in Khurasan (Iran) dared to criticize the *Mutakallimūn* (theologians), including the *Māturīdiyyah*, Mu'īn al-Nasafī affirmed himself as a disciple of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, even though he was never taught directly. For him, Maturidi was a teacher whose knowledge was beyond doubt. His love for his teacher led him to develop the *Māturīdiyyah* school, and he even played a major role in spreading the *Māturīdiyyah* teachings, more specifically in the field of *'Aqīdah* (creed/dogma) (Hasanov, 2015: Saydullaev 2021:Uvatov 2019).

The slander hurled by the *Ash'ariyyah* against the *Ḥanafī* school in Mawarannahr (Uzbekistan region) at that time, with Mu'īn al-Nasafī being in the *Ḥanafī* ranks, made him very angry at the *Ash'ariyyah*. He was convinced that the slander indirectly also attacked his beloved teacher Mansur al-Māturīdī, who was essentially part of the adherents of the *Ḥanafī* school. This is because al-Nasafī greatly prioritized and valued al-Māturīdī more than the other

*Mutakallimūn* (theologians) (Hasanov A., 2015). Even after al-Nasafī had passed away, attacks against the *Māturīdiyyah* continued, yet there were no scholars defending the *Māturīdiyyah* at that time. Thus, it can be said that even though many scholars sheltered under the *Māturīdiyyah* school and contributed, such as Abū Yusr al-Pazdawī, 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Samarqandī, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī, and Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī, their contribution was not the same as Mu'īn al-Nasafī's (because he developed and disseminated the school of his teacher). Therefore, it is not surprising that orientalist view Mu'īn al-Nasafī as the figure who interpreted and reformed the doctrine of the *Māturīdiyyah* school (Hasanov A., 2015).

### **A Glimpse into the Book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn***

One interesting study regarding the figure Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī al-Māturīdī is contained in one of his books, namely *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn au Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawhīd*. This book discusses the fundamentals of religion, up to the issue of the doctrine of the principles of *Tawhīd* (monotheism) in Islam. The narrative and arguments put forward by Mu'īn al-Nasafī in his book tend to be concise. It is observed that each chapter is explained only spanning 3 pages or more. The doctrine outlined by Mu'īn al-Nasafī cannot be separated from *Māturīdiyyah* thought and even the doctrine of his *Ḥanafī* school. As stated by a *Muḥaqqiq* (verifier) who verified the book, namely Muḥammad Abd al-Fazlur Raḥmān al-Shaghoul, he is an adherent of the *Ash'ariyyah* school in *'Ilm Kalām* (scholastic theology) while following the *Shāfi'īyyah* in jurisprudence (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006, p, 4).

The book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* was originally stored in a library in the region of Egypt. The initial manuscript consisted of 59 folios compiled in a specific manuscript related to *'Ilm Kalām* (scholastic theology) with the number 172. Regarding the time of the manuscript's copying, the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* was copied in the year 874 H. Thus, comparing this, there is a gap of 69 years between the death of Mu'īn al-Nasafī and the time the book was copied. When the folios of the *Mushaf* (codex) of the book were in Egypt, they were read and preserved by Yūsuf Aḥmad al-Adhamī al-Ḥanafī (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, in the context of this research, the author relies on the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* which was verified (*Taḥqīq*) by Raḥmān al-Shaghūl (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006, p, 4).

The book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, which is the basis for this study, consists of 169 pages, and comprises 33 Chapters or *Uṣūl* (fundamentals) that are examined (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 167-168). Given that there are quite a few Chapters, the author will map out three Chapters to provide a general description related to some of the *Uṣūl* discussed in the book. The mapping consists of: first, the opening Chapter; second, the middle Chapter; third,

the closing Chapter. First, the opening Chapter discusses the verification of facts and knowledge. In this Chapter, Muʿīn al-Nasafī explains that the knowledge proven by a Messenger is commensurate with the knowledge required by religion. It is evident in this Chapter that he greatly admires reason (*'Aql*), with the statement that there is no basis to deny what is obtained through reasoning, because reason is one of the causes of knowledge ( Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 17).

Second, the middle Chapter, discusses the proof of the truth of seeing the One God. In that Chapter, al-Nasafī explains that believers will be able to see God. Regarding this issue, al-Nasafī disagrees with the argument offered by the *Mu'tazilah* group which states that seeing God in the realm of thought is fundamentally impossible, because a confrontation is required between the one seeing and the thing being seen. Meanwhile, there is a distance established between God and a servant, making seeing God an impossibility ( Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 64). To refute the thinking of the *Mu'tazilah* group, al-Nasafī elaborates on the story of Prophet Moses when he asked his Lord; for him, this is the correct proof showing that God can be seen. Thus, for al-Nasafī, whoever considers the story of Prophet Moses to be an act of ignorance has fallen into disbelief (*Kufr*). In this matter, al-Nasafī quotes (The *Qur'ān Sūrat al-Qiyāmah: 22:23*) indicating that God has promised that He can be seen by those who believe, not by those who oppose God as in the *Qur'ān Sūrat al-An'ām: 103* (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 64-65).

Third, the final Chapter, discusses the issue of *Imāmah* (leadership). In that Chapter, Muʿīn al-Nasafī states the necessity of a leader in life. A leader is needed to fulfill the desires of the community, establish boundaries, prepare an army during war, and so on (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 155). Furthermore, in this Chapter, al-Nasafī touches upon the dispute over the selection of a leader after the death of the Messenger of Allāh (Prophet Muḥammad) . In this regard, he agrees with the leadership of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq as the successor to the Prophet's leadership. For him, even though Abū Bakr was born into the *Quraysh* tribe, he was a righteous person, possessed competent knowledge, whether about religion, public policy, or acts of war. Furthermore, his steadfastness in religion following the Prophet made the Companions choose him as a leader ( Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 157). Meanwhile, al-Nasafī considers the *Shi'a* groups who demanded Sayyidunā 'Alī as the figure most deserving to replace the Prophet to be trapped in blindness, unable to distinguish right from wrong ( Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 160). Regardless of this debate, al-Nasafī still acknowledges that the best community after the Prophet's death are Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq, 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Uthmān bin 'Affān, and 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib ( Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 161).

### **The Concept of Faith in the Book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn***

The author observes that out of the thirty-three chapters Mu'īn al-Nasafī addresses in his book, *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn au Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawhīd*, there is one chapter that is particularly interesting to study, which is related to the concept of *Īmān* (Faith). Before entering the discussion, it should be noted that in this book, when explaining a problem, al-Nasafī often refers to the text of the *Qur'ān* (*Bayānī* reasoning) and also uses rational intellect (*Burhānī* reasoning), such as when explaining the concept of *Īmān*. For him, *Īmān* comes from a linguistic root meaning a conviction or truth. When someone trusts the news that has been conveyed to them, linguistically, they can also be called a *Mu'min* (believer) (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 146). The news referred to by al-Nasafī is related to the story of Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph), which is described in the *Qur'ān*, *Sūrat Yūsuf*, verse 43. This verse illustrates that the conviction/belief that resides in the heart is the essence of *Īmān* that a servant must instill towards Allāh ( Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 146).

To strengthen his *Bayānī* reasoning framework, al-Nasafī also linked the concept of faith (*Īmān*) with several verses of the *Qur'ān*, such as, first: "*The mosques of Allāh are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, establish prayer, give zakah, and do not fear except Allāh. For those it is expected that they will be of the [rightly] guided.*" (The *Qur'ān* *Sūrat al-Tawbah*, verse 18). Another text he quoted is: "*Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds their Lord will guide them because of their faith. [Rivers] will flow beneath them in the Gardens of Pleasure*" (The *Qur'ān* *Sūrat Yūnus*, verse 9). The verses literally explain the performance of righteous deeds such as establishing the command to pray (*Ṣalāt*) and paying obligatory charity (*Zakāt*). However, for al-Nasafī, these practices are part of the symbols of faith in God in order to implement Islamic law ( Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 146-147).

Worship as a symbol is reinforced by Mu'īn al-Nasafī, who stated that if a servant does not perform a command of God, for al-Nasafī, it will not eliminate or invalidate their faith (*Īmān*) and will also not lead them to disbelief (*Kufr*). As he expressed, whoever considers a deed (*'Amal*) to be faith, then that statement is invalid. In this matter, he appears to be using *Burhānī* (rational/intellectual) reasoning, as when he stated that if someone believes that deeds are faith, this would imply the nullification of a person's faith due to the absence of a deed (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 147). This is evidenced by God's promise that a person of faith receives a *privilege*, with the statement that whoever believes and is sincere, and then dies before performing one of the laws or acts of worship commanded by God, he is still recorded as a person of faith ( Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 148).

The steadfastness of faith (*īmān*) for Muʿīn al-Nasafī is a conviction or truth that neither increases nor decreases by itself. This means that when a person performs an act of obedience, their faith remains the same, and conversely, it will not change when a person commits an act of disobedience, because the conviction in these two states, for al-Nasafī, is the same as it was before they performed any deed. It must be underlined that faith for al-Nasafī is something that is fixed/constant (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 149). From the available data, even though he admired Abū Ḥanīfah, he held a difference of opinion with the narration brought by Abū Ḥanīfah regarding the concept of faith, which states that faith will increase, provided that there is a confirmation in the heart because a specific obligation from God has come, not just a conviction expressed purely through the tongue. Likewise, the interpretation from Ibn ʿAbbās states that a person's faith will increase based on their constancy at every moment (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 149).

Muʿīn al-Nasafī did not oppose the opinion of his idol (Ḥanafī). What he rejected was the idea brought forward by al-Raqashī, 'Abd Allāh bin Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān, and al-Karāmiyyah group, all of whom stated that faith (*īmān*) is sufficient with mere utterance (by the tongue). For them, faith only exists in verbal statement, not in confirmation within the heart. Al-Nasafī refuted this idea by stating that verbal faith is only evidence of faith in God, but the reality is the fixed conviction within the heart (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 150). If we follow the opinion of the group mentioned above, according to al-Nasafī, it would lead to hypocrisy (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, Mui150). This is similar to the words of previous people who verbally stated they believed, but in their hearts acted otherwise. In this regard, he referred to the text/narration: "*O Messenger (Muḥammad), let not those grieve you who hasten into disbelief, of those who say with their mouths, 'We have believed,' but their hearts have not believed, and among the Jews. (They are) listeners to falsehood, listeners to another people who have not come to you....*" (The *Qur'ān Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, verse 41).

Al-Nasafī affirmed that if there is no faith (*īmān*) in the heart, then verbal faith is useless (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 150). Again, al-Nasafī referred to a textual proof, namely the *Qur'ān*, describing the story of the Bedouin Arabs who came to the Prophet Muḥammad. The text is as follows: "*The Bedouins say, 'We have believed.' Say (to them), 'You have not believed; but say, 'We have submitted' [i.e., become Muslim] because faith has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allāh and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful.*" (The *Qur'ān Sūrat al-Hujurāt*, verse 14). In the text of that verse, they (the Bedouins) stated to the Prophet that they had truly believed,

but God asserted to the Prophet Muḥammad to instruct them to believe with their whole hearts, not just mere utterance and deeds (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 150).

The word *Kāfir* (disbeliever) is used by al-Nasafī as the antonym of *Īmān* (faith). If *Īmān* takes the form of a belief-truth, then *Kāfir* takes the form of a person who commits falsehood-denial against God (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 146-147). Therefore, from the various explanations that we have elaborated on above, in the author's opinion, al-Nasafī indirectly teaches us not to be quick to judge people as lacking faith, or even to condemn them as disbelievers (*Kāfir*), merely because they do not perform a righteous deed (*'Amal Ṣāliḥ*). This is because, for al-Nasafī, if a servant does not perform some deeds commanded by God, it will not lead to the loss of their faith or reach the level of disbelief. This is because faith is separate from deeds. It needs to be emphasized that faith is a fixed conviction-belief that resides in the heart. Whereas verbal declaration and righteous deeds serve as symbols or evidence of faith in God (Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 150).

### **Reflection on the Concept of Faith in Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī's View**

This research examines the concept of faith (*Īmān*) according to Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī in his book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn au Al-Tamhid li Qawa'id al-Tawhid*. The study process uncovered several of al-Nasafī's ideas related to the concept of faith, including: First, for him, faith takes the form of a conviction-truth enacted by a servant towards God. Second, al-Nasafī refuted several figures who stated that faith is sufficient with mere utterance-or-action. He asserted that faith by the tongue-and-action is merely a symbol and evidence of faith in God, for the purpose of implementing Islamic law. However, the essence of faith for al-Nasafī is the existence of a conviction established in the heart (*Al-Taṣdīq bi-al-qalb*). Third, he firmly refuted groups who state that deeds (*'Amal*) are the essence of faith.

For him, conviction in the heart is something different from faith (*Īmān*) expressed through words and deeds. This is because conviction in the heart is fixed/constant. Al-Nasafī asserted that if deeds (*'Amal*) and faith are considered the same, it would imply that a person who does not perform a deed will lose their faith. Therefore, conviction is separate from deeds, and deeds only serve as evidence of faith in God. Even though he idolized Abū Ḥanīfah, he held a different opinion from Abū Ḥanīfah regarding the issue of whether faith can increase and decrease, noting that he still respected him.

### **Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī and Criticism of Other Groups' Concepts of Faith**

The concept of *Īmān* (faith) from Mu'īn al-Nasafī is a critical response to the views of figures and groups he felt were still inaccurate, such as al-Raqashī, 'Abd Allāh bin Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān, and al-Karāmiyyah group, who stated that faith is sufficient merely by verbal utterance,

because belief only resides in spoken words, not in the heart's affirmation. According to al-Nasafī, if we follow their opinion, we will fall into hypocrisy towards God. He refers to this as mentioned in the *Qurʾān Sūrat al-Māʾidah* verse 41 (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 150). Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945 CE) in his exegesis, states that this verse describes hypocrites who are quick to show their disbelief. They only claim to believe with their tongues, but it is not in line with their hearts (Al-Marāghī, 1993).

Al-Nasafī also refers to the *Qurʾān Sūrat al-Hujurāt* verse 14, intending that we should not believe hypocritically, like the Bedouins (Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, 2006: p, 150). Al-Marāghī interprets this verse as God calling upon humans to be pious and not to believe in a weak manner like the Bedouins, who display their Islam but whose conviction in their hearts is still weak. This verse illustrates that the Bedouins wanted to ask the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) for charity, and then mentioned their good deeds to the Prophet. Thus, God called upon the Prophet regarding the conviction of their hearts, stating that they have not actually believed with true faith. This is because the faith on the tongue must be relevant to what is in the heart (Al-Marāghī, 1993).

Al-Nasafī's idea stating that faith (*īmān*) must be affirmed in the heart, while verbal expression and deeds are merely symbols of worship to Allāh, received responses from several figures and schools of thought, one of which came from the *Shi'a* figure, Mu (1903-1981 CE). Regarding the issue of faith, Ṭabāṭabāʾī highly emphasizes the level of its realization (practical experience), stating that the greater a servant's faith, the more their righteous deeds (*'Amal Ṣāliḥ*) are enhanced. He holds that if a servant truly loves their God, they must pay attention to all humans and animals in this universe (Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 2013) Another criticism came from the *Mu'tazilah* school. For them, faith must be bound by the affirmation of the heart, the tongue, and action (deeds). If these three components are not aligned, a person will fall into hypocrisy. Their extreme ideas were not only applied to humans but also attributed to God, with the expression, "God would not only become unjust if He did not carry out all His promises and threats, He would also fall into the trait of being a liar" (Fazlur Raḥmān, 1984). Their concept illustrates the importance of deeds in carrying out faith towards God.

A figure who holds a similar idea to al-Nasafī is Abū 'Abdullāh bin Khaffī (890-982 CE), quoted by al-Qushayrī, who states that faith is an affirmation made in the heart regarding what God has commanded concerning the unseen (Al-Qushayrī, 2006). A similar idea was put forward by Fazlur Raḥmān (1919-1984 CE) who views that faith in the heart is sufficient for a person to be called a Muslim, because the act of doing deeds is not essential (Raḥmān, 1984). Imām al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 CE) in his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* has a slightly different view from

these two perspectives. Although for him the certainty of faith must be confirmed in the heart, he directs that this conviction must still be actualized through the tongue and deeds. This is because if faith stops only at the heart and the tongue, and is not actualized by righteous deeds, then we will fall into hypocrisy or transgression (*Fāsiq*) (Al-Ghazālī, 2016). The same idea is expressed by Mehmet Fethullah Gülen (1941-2024 CE); for him, perfect faith must still be bound by the affirmation of the heart and its realization (deeds), such as not living life unless his soul and body are facing Allāh, not looking at anything other than Allāh, and not moving except towards righteous deeds for Allāh (Gülen, 2012). Based on the statements of both (Al-Ghazālī and Gülen), they view faith as still within the domain of the heart and the equilibrium of complete worship (deeds) towards God.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research examines the concept of faith according to Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī in his book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* or *Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawhīd*. The study process uncovered several of al-Nasafī's ideas related to the concept of faith, including: First, faith for him takes the form of a conviction-truth enacted by a servant toward God. Second, he underscores that faith expressed through the tongue-action is merely a symbol and proof of faith in God for the purpose of carrying out Islamic law. However, the essence for him is the conviction established in the heart (*Al-Taṣdīq bi-al-qalb*). Third, he states that there is a difference between deeds (*'Amal*) and conviction in the heart. This is because conviction in the heart is something constant. Meanwhile, deeds will not change a person's faith, whether through performing an act of obedience or committing a sin, because faith is something fixed, just as it was before. Thus, it can be seen from Mu'īn al-Nasafī's aforementioned thought that he attempts to integrate reason and revelation. The use of reason can be seen in his rational attitude, while the use of revelation is evident in al-Nasafī's frequent citation of the *Qur'anic* text when addressing a problem.

For further development of the research, the author recommends that subsequent studies explore the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* or *Al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawhīd* more deeply. Given that the book contains 33 chapters, not all of which could be covered by the author, as the focus of this study was Mu'īn al-Nasafī's concept of faith. Therefore, future research can select one of the existing themes or continue this research by comparing it with the thoughts of other figures. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for researchers not to stop only at the book *Al-Tamhīd fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, considering that this book can be said to be a summary of the first book, namely *Tabsirat al-Adilla fī Ushul al-Din ala Tariqati al-Imam al-Māturīdī*, which offers

a more comprehensive study regarding the foundations of Islamic religion. Then, to see how Muʿīn an-Nasafī fiercely defended the *Mātūrīdiyyah* school from the attacks of other schools, researchers need to examine his work, book *Baḥr al-Kalām*. By tracing these three books, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of Islamic theology in the future can be developed.

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