

HERMENEUTICAL ELEMENTS OF IMAM AHMAD BIN MUHAMMAD AL-SHAWI IN *TAFSIR AL-SHAWI*

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji elemen-elemen hermeneutika yang digunakan oleh Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi dalam menafsirkan Surah Al-Fatihah dalam *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya memahami metodologi penafsiran mufasir klasik yang tidak hanya berfokus pada analisis tekstual, tetapi juga mencakup dimensi kebahasaan, kontekstual, historis, dan spiritual. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis elemen-elemen hermeneutika yang mendasari penafsiran Imam Ash-Shawi terhadap Surah Al-Fatihah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (*library research*). Sumber data primer berupa *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*, sedangkan sumber data sekunder diperoleh dari berbagai literatur klasik dan kontemporer yang berkaitan dengan tafsir Al-Qur'an, hermeneutika, dan kajian ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode penafsiran Ash-Shawi mengintegrasikan beberapa elemen hermeneutika, meliputi analisis kebahasaan, penggunaan riwayat (*tafsir bi al-ma'thūr*), argumentasi rasional, penafsiran kontekstual, serta pendekatan *isyārī* dan tasawuf. Keseluruhan elemen tersebut dipadukan secara harmonis sehingga menghasilkan penafsiran yang komprehensif dengan tetap berlandaskan pada otoritas Al-Qur'an, Sunnah, dan pendapat para ulama klasik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kerangka hermeneutika Ash-Shawi bersifat integratif karena memadukan pendekatan tekstual, kontekstual, dan spiritual dalam memahami Surah Al-Fatihah, sehingga tetap memiliki relevansi bagi pengembangan studi tafsir Al-Qur'an dan hermeneutika Islam kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Hermeneutika, Tafsir Ash-Shawi, Surah Al-Fatihah

Abstract

This study examines the hermeneutical elements employed by Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi in interpreting Surah Al-Fatihah in *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*. The research is motivated by the importance of understanding the interpretive methodology of classical Muslim exegetes, which extends beyond literal textual analysis to encompass linguistic, contextual, historical, and spiritual dimensions. The study aims to identify and analyze the hermeneutical elements underlying Ash-Shawi's interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah. A qualitative approach with a library research design was adopted. The primary data source was *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*, while secondary data were obtained from classical and contemporary works on Qur'anic exegesis, hermeneutics, and related scholarly literature. The findings reveal that Ash-Shawi's exegetical method integrates several hermeneutical elements, including linguistic analysis, transmitted traditions (*tafsir bi al-ma'thūr*), rational argumentation, contextual interpretation, and *isyārī* (spiritual) as well as Sufi perspectives. These elements are harmoniously synthesized to produce a comprehensive interpretation while remaining grounded in the authority of the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the opinions of classical scholars. The study concludes that Ash-Shawi's hermeneutical framework is integrative, combining textual, contextual, and spiritual approaches in interpreting Surah Al-Fatihah, thereby demonstrating its enduring relevance for the advancement of contemporary Qur'anic exegesis and hermeneutical studies.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, Ash-Shawi's Exegesis, Surah Al-Fatihah

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an constitutes the primary source of Islamic teachings and is believed to be the divine revelation of Allah transmitted to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the Angel Jibril. As the ultimate source of guidance (*hudan li al-nās*), the Qur'an serves not only as a foundation for Islamic creed, worship, and morality but also as a comprehensive source of values that remains relevant across different times and places (Departemen Agama RI, 2019; al-Qattan, 2000). The universality of the Qur'anic message necessitates a continuous process of interpretation so that its meanings can be comprehensively understood in response to evolving social, cultural, and scientific developments. Consequently, the tradition of Qur'anic exegesis has undergone significant methodological development, ranging from *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (transmitted interpretation) and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (reason-based interpretation) to multidisciplinary approaches that seek to bridge the relationship between the revealed text and contemporary realities (Baidan, 2012).

The complexity of modern society has generated numerous emerging issues that are not explicitly addressed in the Qur'anic text. This situation requires interpretive approaches that extend beyond literal meanings by incorporating historical, linguistic, social, and purposive dimensions of revelation. Within this context, hermeneutics has attracted increasing scholarly attention as an interpretive framework that facilitates dialogue among the text, the interpreter, and the context of interpretation (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 1976). Hermeneutics views textual understanding as a dynamic process shaped by the interpreter's intellectual horizon, the historical background of the text, and the ongoing interaction between the two. This perspective encourages the view that the meaning of a religious text is not confined to its linguistic dimension but remains open to deeper interpretation in accordance with the changing circumstances of human life.

Within Qur'anic studies, however, the application of hermeneutics continues to generate considerable debate. Some Muslim scholars regard hermeneutics as a methodological tool capable of enriching the discipline of Qur'anic exegesis because it pays close attention to historical context and the moral objectives of the Qur'an (Rahman, 1982, 2009; Saeed, 2006). Conversely, other scholars argue that hermeneutics originated within the Western philosophical tradition and should therefore be employed cautiously to avoid undermining the foundational principles of classical Qur'anic interpretation (Husaini, 2007). Arkoun (1994) further contends that the renewal of Islamic thought requires an intellectual dialogue between the Islamic scholarly heritage and modern interpretive approaches without compromising the authority of divine revelation. These debates demonstrate that hermeneutics should not merely be viewed as a Western methodology but rather as an interpretive approach that deserves critical examination within the broader framework of Islamic intellectual tradition.

The discourse on Qur'anic hermeneutics has been significantly influenced by Fazlur Rahman's emphasis on understanding the historical context of revelation before actualizing the Qur'an's moral message in contemporary settings through his theory of the *double movement* (Rahman, 1982, 2009). Similarly, Abu Zayd (1990, 2005) argues that the Qur'an should be

understood as a text interacting with social reality, making its interpretation inseparable from historical and cultural dimensions. These perspectives resonate with Gadamer's (2004) concept of the *fusion of horizons*, which posits that meaning emerges through the interaction between the horizon of the text and that of the interpreter. Nevertheless, the Islamic exegetical tradition has long embodied principles comparable to hermeneutics through its emphasis on *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), linguistic analysis, intertextual interpretation, and the objectives of Islamic law, as elaborated in the discipline of *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (al-Qattan, 2000; Ash-Shabuni, 1997). Accordingly, the incorporation of hermeneutics into Qur'anic studies should not be regarded as the wholesale adoption of a Western paradigm but rather as an effort to reinterpret the Islamic exegetical tradition through a broader methodological perspective.

One of the classical Qur'anic commentaries that merits investigation from this perspective is *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* by Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi. This work has been widely studied in Islamic boarding schools and other Islamic educational institutions because it integrates *tafsir bi al-ma'thūr* with rational argumentation and Sufi insights presented in an accessible style (Ash-Shawi, n.d.). In interpreting the Qur'anic verses, Ash-Shawi does not limit his analysis to linguistic explanations but also relates them to theological, spiritual, and ethical dimensions, thereby producing an integrative exegetical framework. Such characteristics indicate the presence of interpretive elements that closely correspond to hermeneutical principles, even though the term "hermeneutics" itself was not formally recognized during the period in which the commentary was composed. Consequently, investigating the hermeneutical elements embedded in *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* is essential for understanding how the relationships among the text, the interpreter, and the interpretive context are constructed within the classical Islamic exegetical tradition.

This study specifically focuses on the interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah because of its central position as *Umm al-Kitāb* (the Mother of the Book), encapsulating the fundamental principles of Islam, including the concepts of divine unity, servitude, divine guidance, and human spirituality (Nasr, 1987; Shihab, 2007). Despite consisting of only seven verses, Surah Al-Fatihah embodies profound theological, linguistic, and philosophical dimensions that have attracted the attention of nearly every Qur'anic exegete. In *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*, the interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah demonstrates a careful consideration of linguistic structures, contextual meanings, intertextual relationships, and spiritual dimensions, all of which can be examined through a hermeneutical lens. Such an analysis enables researchers to identify how the process of interpretation is constructed and how meaning emerges through the interaction between the Qur'anic text, the Islamic scholarly tradition, and the intellectual horizon of the exegete.

Although studies on Qur'anic hermeneutics have expanded through the contributions of Rahman, Abu Zayd, Saeed, and Syamsuddin (2017), scholarly investigations specifically examining the hermeneutical elements within *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*, particularly its interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah, remain scarce. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the general methodology of Ash-Shawi's exegesis or its epistemological and interpretive characteristics without systematically analyzing the interaction among the text, the interpreter, and the context as the principal components of

hermeneutics. This limitation indicates a significant research gap that necessitates a more comprehensive investigation into the hermeneutical construction underlying this classical commentary. Accordingly, the present study offers a novel contribution by integrating modern hermeneutical theory into the analysis of a classical Qur'anic commentary in order to identify the hermeneutical elements employed by Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi in interpreting Surah Al-Fatihah. The findings are expected not only to enrich the methodological discourse of Qur'anic exegesis but also to strengthen the academic dialogue between the classical Islamic exegetical tradition and contemporary hermeneutical theory, thereby contributing conceptually to the advancement of Qur'anic and tafsir studies in the modern era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research design to investigate the hermeneutical elements embedded in Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi's interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah in *Tafsir Ash-Shawi*. Library research was considered appropriate because the primary object of investigation consisted of written texts requiring systematic interpretation rather than empirical field observations. The study adopted the *tafsir tablili* method, which examines Qur'anic verses sequentially according to the order of the *mushaf* while comprehensively exploring their linguistic, theological, historical, and contextual dimensions (Shihab, 1992). This method was selected because it provides a comprehensive analytical framework for identifying the interaction between textual meaning, interpretive reasoning, and contextual considerations within Ash-Shawi's exegetical discourse. Furthermore, the *tablili* approach facilitates a detailed examination of lexical analysis, syntactic structures, intertextual relationships, *asbab al-nuzul*, and the opinions of earlier Muslim scholars, thereby enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the interpretive process.

The research adopted a descriptive qualitative orientation with a hermeneutical perspective to examine how meaning is constructed through the interaction between the Qur'anic text, the exegete, and the socio-intellectual context surrounding the interpretation. Hermeneutics was employed not merely as a method of textual interpretation but as a theoretical framework for understanding the dynamic relationship among language, historical consciousness, and the interpreter's horizon of understanding (Palmer, 1969). Accordingly, the interpretation presented in *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* was examined by considering its linguistic features, theological orientation, scholarly background, and intellectual tradition in order to identify the hermeneutical principles underlying the exegetical process. This analytical perspective is consistent with contemporary Qur'anic studies, which emphasize that interpretation cannot be separated from the historical, cultural, and epistemological contexts influencing the exegete (Mustaqim, 2010).

The primary data source of this study was *Tafsir Ash-Shawi 'ala Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, with particular emphasis on its interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah. Secondary data consisted of scholarly books, journal articles, and other academic publications related to Qur'anic exegesis, hermeneutics, and qualitative research methodology. Data were collected through documentation techniques involving intensive reading, careful examination, note-taking, and systematic classification of textual materials relevant to the research objectives. Particular attention was given to passages reflecting

linguistic interpretation, contextual explanation, theological reasoning, and interpretive strategies employed by Ash-Shawi. The collected data were subsequently organized into thematic categories to facilitate systematic interpretation and comparison across the identified hermeneutical elements (Moleong, 2017).

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis, which seeks to uncover the explicit and implicit meanings embedded within textual materials through systematic categorization and interpretation (Bungin, 2015). The analytical process involved three interconnected stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, textual evidence relevant to the hermeneutical dimensions of the commentary was carefully selected and organized. The categorized findings were then presented descriptively to reveal recurring interpretive patterns before being interpreted through the selected hermeneutical framework. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing Ash-Shawi's interpretations with authoritative works on Qur'anic exegesis and hermeneutical theory. This procedure ensured analytical consistency while strengthening the validity of the interpretations produced throughout the research process (Moleong, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Elements of *Fawa'idh* Hermeneutics in Ash-Shawi's Exegesis: A Study of Surah Al-Fatihah

The hermeneutics of *fawa'idh* in Ash-Shawi's commentary on Surah al-Fāṭiḥah demonstrates an interpretive approach that transcends textual explanation, aiming to connect Qur'anic verses with practical, moral, and spiritual dimensions of life. Ash-Shawi frequently employs expressions such as *yu'kbadzu minhu* (it can be taken from it), *fibi dalil* (there is evidence in it), and *fā'idah* (benefit), indicating that each verse contains lessons to be derived by the reader (Ash-Shawi, 2010). Thus, his tafsir is not merely descriptive but reflective and applicative.

In the verse *Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm*, Ash-Shawi emphasizes that the letter *bā'* in *bismi* signifies *isti'ānah* (seeking help). This interpretation teaches that every human activity depends on God's power, and the basmalah serves as a means of liberation from arrogance and self-reliance (Ash-Shawi, 2010). Furthermore, he asserts that any significant action not begun with the name of God loses its blessing, which is measured not only by material success but by goodness and benefit (Ash-Shawi, 2010). Thus, the basmalah functions as a spiritual mechanism linking worldly endeavors with eschatological orientation. It also embodies the principle of *adab*, as invoking God's name before action reflects acknowledgment of His greatness and instills spiritual courtesy. The mention of God's attributes *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm* underscores the balance between fear and hope, cultivating a spiritual awareness that avoids extremes of rigidity or laxity.

The verse *Al-Ḥamdu Lillāhi Rabbil 'Ālamīn* is interpreted as affirming that all praise ultimately belongs to God, the source of perfection. This teaches humility, reminding humans that their knowledge, wealth, and power are divine gifts. Praise also implies gratitude, which requires a positive outlook on life. In modern contexts, this verse serves as spiritual therapy against

dissatisfaction and greed, even amidst material abundance. The term *Rabb* conveys ownership, governance, and nurturing, affirming that life is not random but divinely orchestrated (Ash-Shawi, n.d., p. 26). Meanwhile, *al-‘ālamīn* encompasses all creatures, fostering inclusive ethics and rejecting narrow sectarianism.

The verse *Maliki Yaumiddin* affirms the principle of divine sovereignty, where worldly power loses significance on the Day of Judgment. This critique of worldly authority highlights its temporary nature. Belief in the afterlife also functions as a moral foundation, as awareness of divine accountability surpasses human law in regulating behavior (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964). The verse encourages proportional *zuhd*, viewing the world as a means to the hereafter rather than an end (Ash-Shawi, 2010). Moreover, it instills *muraqabah* (awareness of divine oversight), urging believers to purify intentions and avoid hidden sins such as pride and envy (Ibn Kathir, 1999).

The verse *Iyyāka na‘budu wa iyyāka nasta‘in* emphasizes *tawḥīd ulūhiyyah* through its syntactic exclusivity, affirming worship solely for God (Ash-Shawi, 2010). The close relationship between worship and seeking help illustrates that humans cannot worship correctly without divine assistance (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001). The use of plural forms *na‘budu* and *nasta‘in* underscores the collective nature of Islamic spirituality (Ash-Shawi, 2010). This verse also teaches humility, reminding believers that successful worship is a divine gift, not personal achievement.

The verse *Ibdinā al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* is interpreted as a plea for divine guidance in steadfastness, not merely entry into Islam (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006, p. 228). Guidance is continuous, as humans perpetually need divine support (Ibn Kathir, 1999, p. 128). The plural form *ibdinā* highlights the communal dimension of faith, promoting solidarity and collective responsibility. Its repetition in every prayer emphasizes the unending human need for guidance (Al-Razi, 1999).

The verse *Ṣirāṭallaḥīna an‘amta ‘alaihim* clarifies that the straight path is the concrete path of prophets, the truthful, martyrs, and the righteous (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006). The greatest blessing is guidance, not wealth or power (Al-Razi, 1999). This verse underscores the importance of collective religious life, requiring righteous communities and exemplary figures. It also conveys ethical readiness to endure trials, as exemplified by those granted divine favor (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

In conclusion, Ash-Shawi’s hermeneutics of *fawā’idh* in Surah al-Fātiḥah presents a tafsir rich in practical, moral, and spiritual dimensions. Each verse is not only explained linguistically but also connected to life realities, producing lessons on monotheism, gratitude, etiquette, social solidarity, moral awareness, and spiritual steadfastness. This interpretive approach remains highly relevant for cultivating deeper and more applicable religious consciousness in contemporary life.

Elements of Lathaif Hermeneutics in Ash-Shawi’s Exegesis: A Study of Surah Al-Fatihah

The hermeneutics of *lathāif* in Ash-Shawi’s commentary on Surah al-Fātiḥah demonstrates a layered interpretive method that moves from linguistic analysis to spiritual symbolism. The term *lathāif* (لطائف), derived from *lathifah* (لطيفة), refers to subtle, hidden meanings that transcend the literal text. In Sufi tradition, these meanings are linked to the inner dimensions of the human soul, where divine light manifests. Ash-Shawi’s approach does not reject the

outward meaning (*ẓāhir*), but rather deepens it, integrating linguistic, theological, and spiritual insights (Al-Qusyairī, n.d.; Ibn ‘Arabī, n.d.).

In بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (*Bismillāh-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*), Ash-Shawi begins with grammatical explanations of the letter *bā’* as a particle of supplication, then moves into symbolic interpretation. The *bā’* is seen as an indication of detachment from ego (براءة من النفس), symbolizing reliance upon God. Sayid Bakari al-Makki explained that divine knowledge is embedded in the *bā’*, as it represents the primordial covenant: "Allah entrusted all knowledge in the letter *bā’*."

This interpretation situates basmalah as a spiritual act of humility, reminding humans that existence itself is sustained by divine will. Furthermore, the names *Ar-Raḥmān* (الرحمن) and *Ar-Raḥīm* (الرحيم) are interpreted as universal and particular mercy, respectively. *Ar-Raḥmān* encompasses all creation, while *Ar-Raḥīm* is reserved for believers (Ash-Shawi, n.d.). This duality reflects divine inclusivity and exclusivity, while also serving as an ethical imperative: believers must embody mercy in social relations, rejecting exclusivist claims to divine favor.

In الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (*Al-Ḥamdu Lillāhi Rabbil ‘Ālamīn*), Ash-Shawi interprets praise (*ḥamd*) as both verbal acknowledgment and existential recognition of God’s sovereignty. Praise is seen as the highest spiritual station, attainable only by those who truly know God. The Qur’an affirms that all creation glorifies Him:

تَسْبِيحٌ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ

The seven heavens and the earth and all within them glorify Him. There is nothing that does not glorify Him with praise, but you do not understand their glorification (Qur’an 17:44).

This verse underscores the universality of worship, situating human praise within a cosmic chorus. Ash-Shawi emphasizes that *Rabb* (رب) signifies divine nurturing (تربية), framing life’s trials and blessings as stages of spiritual education. Thus, suffering is not merely punishment but divine training, while worldly pleasures are not necessarily signs of divine favor.

In مَالِكِ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (*Mālikī Yaumiddīn*), Ash-Shawi highlights God’s absolute ownership on the Day of Judgment, dismantling human illusions of power. Ibn Kathir (1999) affirms this by citing:

لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

To whom belongs sovereignty today? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (Qur’an 40:16)

This verse critiques worldly arrogance and reminds humans of ultimate accountability. Ash-Shawi connects divine mercy with justice, showing that after God introduces Himself as merciful, He asserts His role as judge. This balance prevents mercy from being misused as justification for sin while ensuring justice is tempered by compassion. The hermeneutics of *lathā’if* here expose the subtle interplay between divine attributes, guiding believers toward moral responsibility.

In إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (*Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nasta'in*), Ash-Shawi interprets the grammatical emphasis on *iyyāka* (إِيَّاكَ) as exclusivity, affirming worship solely for God. The shift from third-person reference to direct address signifies intimacy between servant and Lord. Worship and reliance are inseparable, encapsulating the essence of servitude: humility sustained by divine assistance.

In conclusion, Ash-Shawi's hermeneutics of *lathā'if* in Surah al-Fātiḥah present a spiritual-humanistic approach that uncovers subtle meanings inspiring ethical transformation, spiritual awareness, and existential humility. By balancing outward and inward readings, Ash-Shawi situates the Qur'an as both a linguistic text and a spiritual guide. His emphasis on mercy, praise, divine lordship, justice, and servitude offers a holistic vision of faith that remains profoundly relevant for contemporary religious consciousness.

The verse اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (*Ihdinā al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*) is interpreted as a continuous plea for guidance. Ash-Shawi emphasizes that guidance (هُدَايَا) is not limited to entering Islam but extends to steadfastness and spiritual progress. Al-Qurṭubī explains:

وَالْهُدَايَةُ هُنَا التَّوْفِيقُ وَالتَّيَاتُ عَلَى الدِّينِ

Guidance here means divine enablement and steadfastness upon religion.

This interpretation highlights that believers constantly need divine support, as intellect and experience alone cannot guarantee perseverance. Ibn Kathir (1999) reinforces this by stating:

فَالْعَبْدُ مُحْتَاجٌ فِي كُلِّ سَاعَةٍ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَنْ يُثَبِّتَهُ عَلَى الْهُدَى

The servant is in need at every moment of Allah to keep him firm upon guidance."

The plural form *ihdinā* (اهدنا) underscores the communal dimension of faith, reminding believers that salvation is not individualistic but collective. Ash-Shawi's hermeneutics here encourage solidarity, compassion, and shared responsibility in the pursuit of divine guidance. In صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ, Ash-Shawi identifies the path of those blessed with divine favor—prophets, the truthful, martyrs, and the righteous—as mentioned in Qur'an 4:69. Al-Razi (1999) affirms:

اعْلَمْ أَنَّ أَعْظَمَ النِّعَمِ هِيَ الْهُدَايَةُ إِلَى الدِّينِ

Know that the greatest blessing is guidance to religion.

This interpretation shifts the concept of success from material achievements to spiritual steadfastness. The verse also emphasizes the importance of community and exemplars, as believers are urged to follow the path of those who have already attained divine favor. Ash-Shawi's hermeneutics here highlight the ethical readiness to endure trials, as divine favor often comes with tests of faith and perseverance.

Finally, in غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ, Ash-Shawi interprets the verse as a warning against two spiritual deviations: those who incur divine wrath through deliberate rejection of truth, and those who go astray through ignorance or negligence. This dual warning functions as a moral compass,

guiding believers to avoid arrogance and heedlessness. The subtle meaning (*lathīfah*) here is that true guidance requires both knowledge and sincerity. Ash-Shawi's hermeneutics critique religious extremism and moral laxity, urging balance between intellectual pursuit and spiritual humility. The verse thus becomes a safeguard against both rigid dogmatism and careless deviation.

In conclusion, Ash-Shawi's hermeneutics of *lathā'if* in Surah al-Fātiḥah reveal a profound spiritual-humanistic approach. Each verse is unpacked not only linguistically but also symbolically, uncovering subtle meanings that inspire ethical transformation, communal solidarity, and existential humility. By situating mercy, praise, divine lordship, justice, servitude, guidance, and moral vigilance within a spiritual framework, Ash-Shawi presents the Qur'an as both a text of divine revelation and a guide for inner transformation. His approach remains deeply relevant for contemporary religious consciousness, offering a vision of faith that is compassionate, balanced, and spiritually enriching.

Elements of Hermeneutics of Signs in Ash-Shawi's Exegesis: A Study of Surah Al-Fatihah

The findings of this study indicate that the interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah in *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* extends beyond a purely textual reading by demonstrating a hermeneutical construction that integrates the text, context, and the intellectual horizon of the exegete. This finding suggests that Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi employed an interpretive approach that combines *tafsir bi al-ma'thur* (transmitted exegesis) and *tafsir bi al-ra'y* (reason-based exegesis), while enriching both approaches with a spiritual (*isyrā'i*) dimension without neglecting the literal meaning of the Qur'anic verses. Consequently, the exegetical process does not end with linguistic analysis but develops into theological, ethical, and mystical interpretations. This demonstrates that *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* possesses a strong hermeneutical character because it treats the Qur'anic text as a source of meaning that continuously interacts with the intellectual and spiritual realities of the exegete.

The analysis of the *Basmalah* reveals that Ash-Shawi does not merely explain the linguistic meaning of each expression but also develops a symbolic interpretation of the letter *bā'* in the word *bismi*. He understands this letter as representing the total dependence of human beings upon Allah, thereby moving the interpretation from its phonetic dimension toward a profound spiritual meaning. Furthermore, the divine names *Allah*, *al-Raḥmān*, and *al-Raḥīm* are presented as the foundation of *tawḥīd* consciousness, emphasizing that all human activities are carried out under the mercy and compassion of God. This interpretive pattern demonstrates that language is treated not merely as a grammatical system but as a medium through which transcendental meanings are disclosed.

Another significant finding emerges from Ash-Shawi's interpretation of the verse *al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabb al-'ālamīn*. He explains that the use of the definite article (*al-*) in *al-ḥamdu* signifies *istighrāq* (comprehensiveness), indicating that every form of praise ultimately belongs to Allah as the source of all perfection. From this interpretation arises a hermeneutical dimension

that internalizes the values of gratitude, humility, and the recognition that all human abilities and achievements originate from divine grace. In the contemporary context, this interpretation remains highly relevant because it offers a critical response to the modern tendency to measure success solely through material accomplishment while neglecting the spiritual foundations underlying every blessing.

The interpretation of the verse *īyyāka na'budu wa īyyāka nasta'in* further demonstrates that Ash-Shawi establishes a dialectical relationship between worship and dependence upon Allah. The precedence of the word *na'budu* over *nasta'in* signifies that worship constitutes the primary purpose of human existence, whereas seeking divine assistance functions as the means through which this purpose can be fulfilled. Moreover, the use of plural pronouns in both expressions reflects the communal nature of Islamic spirituality rather than an individualistic orientation. This interpretation generates ethical implications by fostering solidarity, humility, and the awareness that successful worship ultimately depends upon divine assistance.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the verse *ībdinā al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* reveals the dominant presence of *isyārī* hermeneutics. Ash-Shawi interprets the straight path not merely as Islam in its normative sense but also as a spiritual journey toward *ma'rifatullah* (the knowledge of God). While preserving the outward (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the verse, he expands its significance through an inward (*baṭin*) spiritual dimension, thereby presenting Islamic law (*sharī'ah*) as the beginning of the spiritual journey and ultimate reality (*ḥaqīqah*) as its destination. Consequently, Ash-Shawi successfully synthesizes the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the Qur'an without creating any contradiction between them.

When examined through the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, this interpretive pattern corresponds closely to Gadamer's (2004) concept of the *fusion of horizons*. The meaning of the Qur'anic verses emerges through the encounter between the horizon of the Qur'anic text and the intellectual as well as spiritual horizon of Ash-Shawi as a scholar deeply influenced by the Sufi tradition. Within this framework, interpretation is understood not as a mere reproduction of the original meaning but as an ongoing dialogical process that generates renewed understanding while preserving the authority of the sacred text. Likewise, this interpretive approach resonates with Ricoeur's (1976) concept of the *surplus of meaning*, which asserts that a text possesses an inexhaustible potential for meaning as long as its interpretation remains methodologically accountable. Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrate that the hermeneutical characteristics found in *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* do not represent a direct adoption of modern Western hermeneutical theory but rather reflect the richness of the classical Islamic exegetical tradition, which had already developed contextual, linguistic, and spiritual modes of interpretation long before the emergence of contemporary hermeneutics. The principal contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that *Tafsir Ash-Shawi* successfully integrates textual authority, spiritual depth, and contextual awareness into a coherent interpretive framework, thereby enriching the methodological discourse of Qur'anic exegesis while fostering a productive dialogue between the classical Islamic exegetical tradition and contemporary hermeneutical theory.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Ash-Shawi's interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah reflects a distinctive hermeneutical framework that integrates textual, theological, spiritual, and contextual dimensions within a coherent exegetical methodology. His interpretation extends beyond the literal meaning of the Qur'anic text by incorporating *isyārī* (spiritual) insights while remaining firmly grounded in the principles of classical Qur'anic exegesis, thereby maintaining harmony between transmitted (*tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*) and reason-based (*tafsīr bi al-ra'y*) approaches. The hermeneutical elements identified in *Tafsīr Ash-Shawi* include the dynamic interaction among the Qur'anic text, the exegete, the Islamic scholarly tradition, the socio-intellectual context, and the spiritual horizon that shapes the interpretive process. The analysis further demonstrates that Ash-Shawi's interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah presents the chapter as a comprehensive spiritual roadmap, emphasizing the integration of theological understanding, ethical values, and moral refinement in guiding believers toward complete devotion to Allah. Although developed prior to the emergence of modern hermeneutical theory, Ash-Shawi's interpretive model exhibits dialogical characteristics comparable to contemporary hermeneutical thought while preserving the absolute authority of divine revelation as the primary epistemological foundation. Consequently, this study affirms that Ash-Shawi's hermeneutics represents a comprehensive and balanced interpretive paradigm that enriches the methodology of Qur'anic exegesis and contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by demonstrating the enduring relevance of the classical Islamic exegetical tradition in addressing present-day intellectual and spiritual challenges.

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