

# A Contextual Interpretation of the Secrets of Surah al-Fatihah in al-Ghazali's *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*

**Elina Nurjannah**, UIN Sunan Ampel Indonesia, elinanurjannah@gmail.com

**Abdullah Hadani**, UIN Sunan Ampel Indonesia, hadaniabdullah@gmail.com

**Muhammad Akhdan Muzakki**, International Islamic Call College Libya,  
akhdanmu.kki@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study examines the contextual interpretation of Surah al-Fatihah in *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*, a work by al-Ghazali, through the lens of Abdullah Saeed's contextual hermeneutics. Al-Ghazali's approach to Surah al-Fatihah combines esoteric and philosophical dimensions, emphasizing its spiritual and transcendental messages. Unlike traditional interpretations, his thematic focus refrains from detailed grammatical analysis, instead highlighting its role as a reflection of a believer's spiritual journey. Employing a qualitative and library research methodology, this study contextualizes al-Ghazali's interpretations for modern relevance, particularly in addressing contemporary issues of servitude and obedience to Allah. The findings suggest that al-Ghazali's model of exegesis, rooted in Sufi thought, offers a dynamic framework for reinterpreting Qur'anic messages to maintain their applicability in contemporary life.

**Keywords:** *Surah al-Fatihah, al-Ghazali, Contextual Hermeneutics, Abdullah Saeed*

## Introduction

According to Naṣr Ḥāmid, Islamic civilization is fundamentally centered on texts, as Muslims regard the Qur'an as a primary reference for addressing emerging issues.<sup>1</sup> This textual foundation is evident in the extensive development of Qur'anic exegesis. Tafsir has become one of the most prominent pillars of Islamic scholarship, serving as a comprehensive interpretation of the sacred verses.<sup>2</sup> One of the prominent

<sup>1</sup>Naṣr Ḥāmid Abu Zaid, *Tekstualitas Al-Qur'an: Kritik Terhadap Ulumul Qur'an*, ed. Khoiron Nahdliyyin (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2016), 1. See also Islah Gusmian, "EPISTEMOLOGI TAFSIR AL-QUR'AN KONTEMPORER," *Al-A'raf* 12, no. 2 (2015): 21–32.

<sup>2</sup> This has sparked a difference of opinion among scholars, with some arguing that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) interpreted the entirety of the Qur'anic verses, while others believe

figures involved in the tradition of Qur'anic interpretation is al-Ghazali, a scholar with expertise in various fields, earning him the title *Hujjat al-Islam* (the Proof of Islam). With his scholarly inclinations as both a philosopher and a theologian, al-Ghazali also contributed to the tradition of Qur'anic exegesis through his work *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*.<sup>3</sup> In his interpretation within *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*, al-Ghazali goes beyond a literal understanding of Qur'anic verses, delving into their esoteric and spiritual dimensions.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Ghazali's *Jawāhir al-Qur'an* is not a comprehensive exegesis following the order of the Qur'anic chapters (*mushafī*), but rather a thematic commentary addressing specific discussions. In this work, al-Ghazali outlines 19 themes of interpretation, one of which pertains to the exegesis of Surah al-Fatiḥah. In al-Ghazali's perspective, Surah al-Fatiḥah represents the essence of Islam and serves as a gateway to a servant's spiritual journey.<sup>5</sup> He considers it the most significant chapter in the Qur'an due to its profound and multifaceted meanings.<sup>6</sup> Al-Ghazali's interpretation is distinctive, characterized by its *tafsir isyari* (allusive exegesis). He emphasizes that understanding the Qur'an requires not only an outward grasp of the text but also spiritual depth to uncover its inner meanings.<sup>7</sup>

This study will examine the interpretation of Surah al-Fatiḥah as presented in *Jawāhir al-Qur'an* by al-Ghazali. The research focuses on recontextualizing al-Ghazali's interpretation, employing a contextual hermeneutic approach to align his exegesis with contemporary relevance. Abdullah Saeed argues that a text inherently carries contextual value that relates both to its historical setting and modern-day application.<sup>8</sup> According to Saeed, interpretation must consider two dimensions: the

---

this is not the case, as Muslims still require interpretation to fully understand the Qur'anic verses. See Muḥammad 'Umar Ḥājī, *Mawsū'at Al-Tafsīr Qabla 'Ahd Al-Tadwīn* (Damaskus: Dar al-Maktabi, 2007), 49-56.

<sup>3</sup> A Elshimi, "Al-Ghazali's Integral Epistemology: A Critical Analysis of the Jewels of The Quran" (Master Thesis in American University Cairo, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Syamsuddin Sahiron, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2010), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Jawāhir Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Ulum, 1986), 15-17.

<sup>6</sup> Farida Umma, *Pemikiran Dan Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2010), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Abd Wahid, "Tafsir Isyari Dalam Pandangan Imam Ghazali" *Journal Ushuluddin* 16, no. 2 (2010): 123-135.

<sup>8</sup> Muhamad Yoga Firdaus and Khader Ahmad, "Telaah Atas Hermeneutika Kontekstual Abdullah Saeed," *Mashadiruna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2024): 31-40.

historical context and the modern context. Abdullah Saeed's contextual hermeneutic approach serves as the foundation for developing al-Ghazali's interpretative framework further. One distinctive aspect of al-Ghazali's methodology is his tendency to integrate his philosophical inclinations into his exegesis. This is evident in his interpretation of Surah al-Fatiḥah, where he titles the section "*al-Faṣl fī Asrār al-Fatiḥah wa Bayān al-Jumlah min Hikamillah*" (The Chapter on the Secrets of al-Fatiḥah and the Explanation of a Summary of Allah's Wisdom).<sup>9</sup> This title clearly reflects al-Ghazali's perspective, indicating that the meaning of al-Fatiḥah is not limited to its textual dimension but also encompasses profound, esoteric insights.

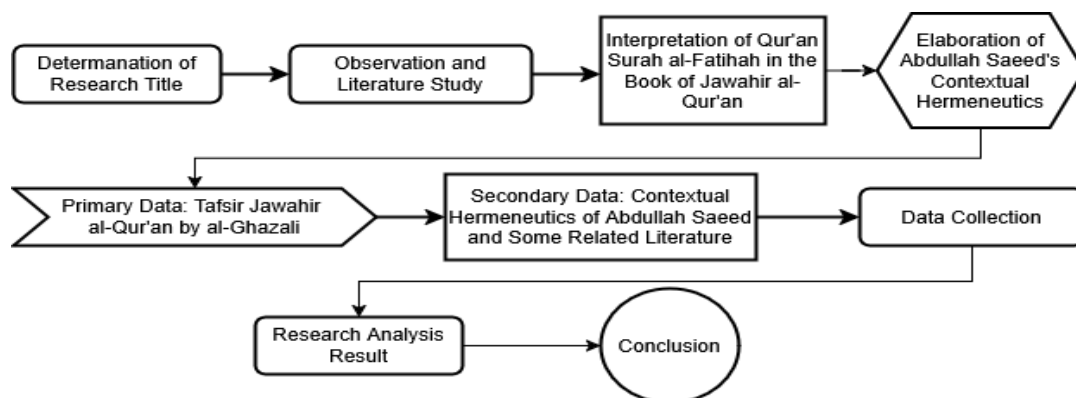
When the contextual hermeneutic approach is applied to analyze Imam al-Ghazali's interpretation of Surah al-Fatiḥah, it allows for a deeper understanding of the spiritual and philosophical meanings offered by al-Ghazali. These meanings can be rearticulated and adapted to contemporary realities. With his Sufi background, al-Ghazali viewed Surah al-Fatiḥah not merely as a prayer or supplication but as a reflection of the spiritual journey toward God. Such an interpretation, when placed within Abdullah Saeed's framework of contextual hermeneutics, creates opportunities for reinterpretation in a modern context, ensuring that the teachings of the Qur'an remain relevant amidst changing times.<sup>10</sup> This study seeks to explore how al-Ghazali's exegesis in *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*, particularly concerning Surah al-Fatiḥah, can be understood more comprehensively through Abdullah Saeed's theory of contextual hermeneutics. This approach goes beyond the textual meanings to uncover the spiritual and transcendental messages within the verses of al-Fatiḥah and examines how these messages can be reinterpreted for application in modern life.

---

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghazali was a prominent philosopher and mystic whose interpretations were deeply rooted in Sufism (*tafsir sufi*). According to al-Ghazali, the content of Surah al-Fatiḥah guides a servant toward the straight path leading to Allah through the way of *mahabah* (love). It emphasizes the importance of worshipping with sincerity, purifying oneself from all forms of polytheism, and firmly believing that none is worthy of worship except Allah Almighty. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Jawāhir Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Ulum, 1986), 64.

<sup>10</sup> H Rachmawan, "Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Kontekstual: Metode Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an Abdullah Saeed," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2013): 148–161. See also Wildan Imaduddin Muhammad and Yusuf Rahman, "The Quran and Muslim Minority Scholar's Perspective: A Comparative Study of Abdullah Saeed and Farid Esack," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 23, no. 2 (2022): 347–372.

This research employs a qualitative approach with a library research methodology. This method is relevant because the subject of study encompasses holistic data. The primary data in this research is derived from the interpretation of Surah Al-Fatiḥah as presented in Al-Ghazali's *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*. Additionally, the secondary data consists of various relevant information from books and reputable journals related to the research theme. The data collection model involves a thorough examination of Al-Ghazali's interpretation of Surah Al-Fatiḥah and the presentation of the theoretical framework, specifically the contextual hermeneutics of Abdullah Saeed. The analytical technique used in this study is descriptive-analytical, which integrates the collected data to present the analytical results based on the theoretical framework applied. By employing this methodology, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Al-Ghazali's insights and how they can be contextualized within contemporary discourse.



**Figure 1:** Methodology Flowchart

### General Overview of al-Ghazali and the Exegesis *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*

Al-Ghazali, born Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali in 1058 in Tus, Persia, is one of the most celebrated and influential figures in Islamic intellectual history. Known as "*Hujjat al-Islam*" (The Proof of Islam), al-Ghazali made profound contributions across various fields, including theology, philosophy, jurisprudence, and Sufism. His intellectual rigor and spiritual depth earned him an unmatched status in both the Islamic and Western intellectual traditions. His works, such as *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), revolutionized Islamic thought by

addressing the philosophical influences of his time and defending the orthodox Islamic worldview.<sup>11</sup>

Among al-Ghazali's contributions is his emphasis on the integration of Sufi mysticism into mainstream Islamic teachings, which he elaborated upon in *Ihya' Ulūm al-Dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). This text combines theology, ethics, and spirituality, aiming to reconcile the external practices of Islam with its internal spiritual dimensions. Al-Ghazali's influence was not limited to theology; his ideas also left a mark on education, ethics, and personal conduct, shaping the way Muslims understand the path to spiritual perfection.<sup>12</sup> One of his significant but lesser-known works is *Jawāhir al-Qur'an* (The Jewels of the Qur'an). This text does not offer a verse-by-verse commentary but instead approaches the Qur'an thematically, concentrating on its deeper, spiritual meanings. Al-Ghazali viewed the Qur'an not just as a legal text or a historical record, but as a profound guide for the spiritual journey toward God. He categorized certain verses as "jewels" or "treasures," indicating their immense significance for those seeking inner truth and closeness to the Divine.<sup>13</sup>

In *Jawāhir al-Qur'an*, al-Ghazali's interpretation of Surah al-Fatiha, for instance, exemplifies this esoteric approach. He considered this opening chapter not merely a prayer or a supplication but a roadmap for spiritual ascent, where each verse reflects key stages in the soul's journey toward God. His method of tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) moves beyond the literal to focus on the spiritual insights that can only be grasped through deep reflection and inner purification. This aligns with his broader vision of the Qur'an as a living text that demands engagement on multiple levels.<sup>14</sup> *Jawāhir al-Qur'an* stands out because of al-Ghazali's focus on both the exoteric (outward) and esoteric (inward) dimensions of the Qur'anic text. One example of this approach is his interpretation of Surah al-Fatiha, which he views as not merely a chapter for daily recitation, but as a reflection of the entire spiritual path a person must traverse. For al-Ghazali, each verse in Surah al-Fatiha signifies a stage in the soul's progression

<sup>11</sup> Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Eric Linn Ormsby, *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān: One Book Many Meanings By Martin Whittingham," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2008): 133–136.

<sup>14</sup> Habib Habib and Muslich Shabir, "Al-Ghazali's Qur'anic Sufi Hermeneutics: Study on the Story of Abraham In Search of God," *Kalam* 15, no. 2 (2022): 121-135.

toward divine proximity, making the surah a powerful tool for spiritual awakening and transformation.<sup>15</sup>

The relevance of al-Ghazali's work endures today, particularly in the fields of mysticism and Islamic philosophy. His ability to merge rational thought with deep spiritual insight provides a framework for understanding the Qur'an that speaks to both the intellect and the heart. *Jawāhir al-Qur'an* remains a testament to al-Ghazali's holistic approach to Islamic scholarship, offering modern readers a path to interpreting the Qur'an that is as much about personal transformation as it is about intellectual comprehension.

### **Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Hermeneutics**

The contextual hermeneutics theory developed by Abdullah Saeed is an approach to interpreting the Qur'an that aims to bridge the meaning of the text in its original context and its application in modern settings. This theory emphasizes the importance of considering the historical context in which the text was revealed, as well as its relevance to contemporary societal needs. Saeed argues that the Qur'an contains immutable dimensions (unchangeable) and flexible dimensions (changeable), allowing it to remain relevant across ages.<sup>16</sup> The first step in this hermeneutic process is to understand the original context of the text. Saeed underscores the importance of grasping the social, cultural, and political situations of the Arab society at the time of revelation. This includes analyzing societal structures, value systems, and the challenges faced by the community. Interpretation should begin by identifying the original intent of the text as understood by its audience during the Prophet Muhammad's time.

The second step is to identify the universal principles within the text. Saeed differentiates between teachings that are universal and applicable across time and space and those that are context-specific or local. For instance, values like justice, compassion, and peace are regarded as universal principles, while specific rules, such as technical details of punishments, may be viewed within their local context. The

---

<sup>15</sup> Mogamat Mahgadien Hendricks, "The Qur'ānic Sufi Hermeneutics of Shaykh Muṣṭafā'al-'Alāwī: A Critical Study of His *Lubāb Al-'Ilm Fī Sūrah Al-Najm*" (n.d.).

<sup>16</sup> MF Haq, Miyah Qudsia, "Revitalisasi Hermeneutika Sebagai Pendekatan Tafsir (Kajian Hermeneutika Abdullah Saeed)," *Miyah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 16, no. 1 (2020): 1–25.



third step involves analyzing the modern context. In this stage, interpreters must comprehend contemporary realities, including social, cultural, and technological challenges faced by Muslims today. Saeed emphasizes that understanding modern contexts is as crucial as understanding the text's historical context, ensuring the Qur'anic message remains relevant without losing its essence. The final step is to link the meaning of the text to the modern context. Interpretation should reconcile universal principles in the text with contemporary needs and challenges. Saeed advocates that interpretations should not rely solely on textual literalism but also consider *maqasid al-syariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) to ensure that the interpretations promote benefit and justice for humanity in the modern era.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Secrets of al-Fatiḥah in Al-Ghazali's Tafsir *Jawāhir al-Qur'an***

In his exegesis, Al-Ghazali explains Surah Al-Fatiha under two distinct titles: "*Faṣl Fī Asrār al-Fatiḥah Wa Bayānu Jumlah Min Hikamillah*" (Chapter on the Secrets of Al-Fatiha and an Explanation of Some of God's Wisdoms) and "*Faṣl Fī Kawn al-Fatiḥah Miftāḥan Li Abwāb al-Jannah*" (Chapter on How Al-Fatiha Serves as a Key to the Gates of Paradise).<sup>18</sup> These two main headings encapsulate the thematic focus of Al-Ghazali's discussion on Surah Al-Fatiha. Unlike other exegeses that often structure their analysis through lexical interpretation, parsing words and phrases before delving into the overall meanings of the verses, Al-Ghazali's approach centers on the substantive essence contained within the surah. In the first explanation, al-Ghazali outlines eight forms of wisdom that can be derived from understanding Surah al-Fatiha. These include spiritual and moral insights that reflect the profound nature of the surah. In the second explanation, al-Ghazali elaborates on how Surah al-Fatiha serves as a gateway to paradise. He explores its significance not only as a chapter of the Qur'an but as a divine key that unlocks deeper spiritual realms and blessings. This perspective ties the surah to its ultimate purpose in guiding believers toward eternal reward. Al-Ghazali's interpretation thus transcends a surface-level reading, offering a profound exploration of the metaphysical and theological meanings of Surah al-Fatiha. Here's the interpretation:

<sup>17</sup> Abdullah Saeed, "The Qur'an: An Introduction," *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (January 25, 2008): 1-268.

<sup>18</sup> Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Jawāhir Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Ulum, 1986), 64-72.

1. *Faṣl Fī Asrār al-Fatiḥah Wa Bayānu Jumlah Min Hikamillah*<sup>19</sup>

Surah al-Fatiḥah, according to al-Ghazali, encompasses eight principal aspects:

- a. The verse “Bismillah” highlights the narrative of the existence of Allah’s essence.
- b. The phrase “الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ” (the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful) elucidates one of Allah’s specific attributes. The uniqueness of these two attributes lies in their encompassing other qualities, such as knowledge, power, and others. These attributes pertain to Allah’s mercy toward His creation, symbolizing tranquility, fostering longing, and encouraging obedience. In contrast to the attribute of wrath (*gadab*), which serves as a substitute for mercy, wrath leads to sadness, fear, and constriction of the heart, rather than its expansion.
- c. The verse “الحمد لله رب العالمين” (All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds) conveys two key points:
  1. The foundation of praise is gratitude (*shukr*), and gratitude is the starting point for attaining *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (the straight path). Practically, faith consists of two elements: patience (*ṣabr*) and gratitude. The superiority of gratitude over patience is akin to the superiority of mercy over wrath. Gratitude engenders love and contentment, while patience often evokes fear and occasionally hardship. The path to *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* is the path of love (*maḥabbah*), based on the Prophet’s Muhammad saying: “The first of creation to be called to Paradise are those who frequently praise Allah at all times.”
  2. The notion of Allah being the sovereign of all realms signifies that every event occurring in the world, both outwardly and inwardly, originates from Allah.
- d. Fourth, regarding the second explanation of the phrase “الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ” (The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful), al-Ghazali asserts that this verse does not simply repeat the meaning found in the *basmalah*. Instead, the mention of *raḥmah* (mercy) after the phrase “العالمين” (the worlds) and before the verse “مالك يوم الدين” (Master of the Day of Judgment) contains two profound lessons regarding the operation of Allah’s mercy:

<sup>19</sup> Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Jawāhir Al-Qur’an*, 64-70.



1. Reflecting on Allah's creation: Allah has created everything with perfection, providing each creation with all necessary means to fulfill its purpose. For instance, consider the mosquito—one might not fathom how its body parts are intricately designed. Moreover, the body parts of the mosquito are similar in essence to those of an elephant in terms of having distinct and functional components. This signifies that all creations are crafted equally with precision and endowed with their respective roles.
2. The connection between this phrase and the subsequent verse: It signifies Allah's compassion and mercy on the Day of Judgment.

According to al-Ghazali, the Qur'an contains no redundancy, as each verse carries its unique and specific purpose.

- e. Fifth, the phrase “مالك يوم الدين” (Master of the Day of Judgment) signifies an indication of the Hereafter, the Day of Reckoning, or the Last Day. It also underscores the absolute sovereignty and dominion of Allah SWT, manifesting His majestic attributes.
- f. Sixth, regarding the verse “إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين”, al-Ghazali explains two foundational pillars contained within it:
  1. worshiping Allah SWT in total devotion while relying solely on Him, which is the essence of the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*).
  2. affirming that no one is worthy of worship except Allah SWT. This is a critical element of monotheism (*tawhid*) and reflects the belief that a servant cannot perform worship without Allah's assistance.
- g. Seventh, the verse “اهدنا الصراط المستقيم” (Guide us to the straight path) represents a plea and a hope, which forms the foundation of all acts of worship.
- h. Eighth, from the verse “صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم” to the end of the surah, there is a reminder of the blessings granted to Allah's chosen servants and a warning of punishment for His adversaries.

In summary, Surah Al-Fatiḥa encompasses eight meanings: the existence of Allah SWT, His attributes, His actions, a reminder of the Hereafter, an explanation of *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* from the perspective of purification and self-adornment, a description of the blessings bestowed upon

His beloved servants, a warning of punishment for His adversaries, and an elaboration on the Day of Judgment.

2. *Faṣl Fī Kawṇ al-Fatiḥah Miftāḥan Li Abwāb al-Jannah*<sup>20</sup>

In this section, al-Ghazali explains that Surah al-Fatiḥa serves as the key to the gates of Paradise. According to al-Ghazali, this is based on the fact that Surah al-Fatiḥa contains eight aspects, corresponding to the eight gates of Paradise. However, al-Ghazali further elaborates that the role of Surah al-Fatiḥa as the key to paradise requires several stages, all of which are encompassed in the firm belief in its truth.

### Contextualizing Al-Ghazali's Interpretation of al-Fatiḥah: A Hermeneutical Review

The first step in the process of contextualization is revisiting the original text of a verse. This requires an explanation of the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the verse (*asbāb al-nuzūl*).<sup>21</sup> Regarding Surah al-Fatiḥah, this chapter does not have specific circumstances of revelation. However, several points can serve as a foundation for understanding it. In his *tafsir*, Ibn Kathir quotes a narration about the significance of Surah al-Fatiḥah. At one time, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) called his companion Abi Sa'id Ibn al-Mu'alla, who was engaged in prayer. After the prayer was completed, the Prophet informed him that seven verses of the Qur'an had been revealed, known as *al-sab'u al-mathānī* (the seven oft-repeated verses).<sup>22</sup> Surah al-Fatiḥah is classified as a *Makkiyah* surah, meaning it was revealed in Mecca. In his book, al-Wahidi cites a narration from Ali Ibn Abi Talib, which asserts that al-Fatiḥah was revealed in Mecca. This is corroborated by a report from Ibn Abbas, who mentioned that the Prophet recited Surah al-Fatiḥah, and the disbelievers of Quraysh responded mockingly, saying, "may your Lord silence your mouth."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Jawāhir Al-Qur'an*, 71-72.

<sup>21</sup> M. Zia al-Ayyubi, "PENAFSIRAN KONTEKSTUAL ABDULLAH SAEED (Metodologi dan Aplikasi pada Ayat Jilbab)", *Rausyan Fikr* 19, no. 01, (2023), 53-80.

<sup>22</sup> Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi, *Asbabun Nuzul (Sebab-sebab Turunnya al-Qur'an)*, trans. Andi Muhammad Syahril and Yasir Maqasid (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2014), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Abu al-Hasan Ibn Ali al-Wahidi, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1411 H), 22.

The second stage of al-Ghazali's interpretive model is shaped by the Sufi inclination that he deeply engaged with. This is evident in his interpretation, as al-Ghazali does not provide a detailed explanation of Surah al-Fatihah. Instead, he elaborates on the interpretation in accordance with his expertise in Sufism. For example, in explaining the two attributes of Allah SWT in the third verse, al-Ghazali notes a distinction between these attributes and the same two attributes mentioned in the *basmalah*. Such an approach is not found in other tafsir works. This unique interpretive style marks one of the distinguishing characteristics of al-Ghazali's exegesis. Furthermore, al-Ghazali does not delve into the meanings of individual words or grammatical analysis, as is common in earlier classical tafsir works.

The third stage of al-Ghazali's interpretation employs his Sufi orientation not merely as an intellectual mastery but as a consistent framework evident in several of his works, such as *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*, *Kimiya al-Sa'adah*, and his tafsir. In these writings, al-Ghazali consistently elucidates matters from a Sufi perspective to counter rationalists who prioritize reason over spirituality in religious discourse.<sup>24</sup> The final stage of al-Ghazali's interpretation in a modern context can be understood as a form of *tadabbur* (deep contemplation) of the understanding of Surah al-Fatihah. In contemporary civilization, the understanding of Qur'anic verses tends to be stagnant, as evidenced by the emergence of tafsir works that often take the form of encyclopedias summarizing earlier interpretations. Within the field of Islamic studies, al-Ghazali's interpretive approach offers an alternative model by presenting new understandings of verses. In the modern context, al-Ghazali's thought remains applicable and capable of further development. For instance, in his explanation of verse 5, al-Ghazali distinguishes between different forms of servitude and obedience to Allah SWT, addressing an issue that is often overlooked in contemporary life.

## Conclusion

This study reveals the distinctive methodology employed by al-Ghazali in interpreting Surah al-Fatihah, highlighting its integration of Sufi principles and thematic insights. By focusing on the spiritual and philosophical aspects of the chapter, al-Ghazali provides a model that moves beyond traditional grammatical and

---

<sup>24</sup> Habib and Shabir, "Al-Ghazali's Qur'anic Sufi Hermeneutics."

lexical analyses. His interpretation serves as a bridge between classical exegesis and contemporary thought, underscoring the enduring relevance of Qur'anic teachings. Applying Abdullah Saeed's contextual hermeneutics demonstrates that al-Ghazali's insights can be extended to address modern challenges. The study highlights how al-Ghazali's focus on servitude and divine obedience, as exemplified in Surah al-Fatihah, addresses overlooked dimensions in today's religious and ethical discourse. Ultimately, this research affirms the potential for al-Ghazali's interpretative framework to inspire deeper engagement with the Qur'an, fostering both intellectual and spiritual growth in modern contexts.

### References

- Ayyubi (al), M. Zia. "Penafsiran Kontekstual Abdullah Saeed (Metodologi dan Aplikasi pada Ayat Jilbab)", *Rausyan Fikr* 19, no. 01, (2023), 53-80.
- Elshimi, Amani. "Al-Ghazali's Integral Epistemology: A Critical Analysis of the Jewels of The Quran" (Master Thesis in American University Cairo, 2017).
- Ghazali (al), Abu Hamid. *Jawāhir Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Ulum, 1986).
- Griffel, Frank. *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Gusmian, Islah. "Epistemologi Tafsir Al-Qur'an Kontemporer," *Al-A'raf* 12, No. 2 (2015): 21-32.
- Habib Habib and Muslich Shabir, "Al-Ghazali's Qur'anic Sufi Hermeneutics: Study on the Story of Abraham In Search of God," *Kalam* 15, no. 2 (2022): 121-135.
- Ḥājī, Muḥammad 'Umar. *Mawsū'at Al-Tafsīr Qabla 'Ahd Al-Tadwīn* (Damaskus: Dar al-Maktabi, 2007), 49-56.
- Hendricks, Mogamat Mahgadien. "The Qur'ānic Sufi Hermeneutics of Shaykh Muṣṭafā'al-'Alāwī: A Critical Study of His Lubāb Al-'Ilm Fī Sūrah Al-Najm" (n.d.).
- MF Haq, Miyah Qudsia. "Revitalisasi Hermeneutika Sebagai Pendekatan Tafsir (Kajian Hermeneutika Abdullah Saeed)," *Miyah: Jurnal Studi Islam* 16, no. 1 (2020): 1-25.

- Muhamad Yoga Firdaus and Khader Ahmad, "Telaah Atas Hermeneutika Kontekstual Abdullah Saeed," *Mashadiruna: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 3, no. 1 (2024): 31–40.
- Ormsby, Eric Linn. *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2007).
- Rachmawan, H. "Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Kontekstual: Metode Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an Abdullah Saeed," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2013): 148–161.
- Rizvi, Sajjad H. "Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'ān: One Book Many Meanings By Martin Whittingham," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2008): 133–136.
- Saeed, Abdullah. "The Qur'an: An Introduction," *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (January 25, 2008).
- Suyuthi, Jalaluddin. *Asbabun Nuzul (Sebab-sebab Turunnya al-Qur'an)*. Trans. Andi Muhammad Syahril and Yasir Maqasid (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2014).
- Syamsuddin, Sahiron. *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2010), 14.
- Umma, Farida. *Pemikiran Dan Metode Tafsir Al-Qur'an Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2010).
- Wahid, Abd. "Tafsir Isyari Dalam Pandangan Imam Ghazali" *Journal Ushuluddin* 16, no. 2 (2010): 123–135.
- Waḥidi (al), Abu al-Hasan Ibn Ali. *Asbāb al-Nuzūl al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1411 H).
- Wildan Imaduddin Muhammad and Yusuf Rahman, "The Quran and Muslim Minority Scholar's Perspective: A Comparative Study of Abdullah Saeed and Farid Esack," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 23, no. 2 (2022): 347–372.
- Zaid, Naṣr Ḥāmid Abu. *Tekstualitas Al-Qur'an: Kritik Terhadap Ulumul Qur'an*, ed. Khoiron Nahdliyyin (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2016).