

TAUHID HERMENEUTICS OF FAHRUDDIN AL-RĀZI: A STUDY ON THE INTERPRETATION OF SURAH AL-IKHLĀS IN *THE MAFĀTIḤ AL-GAĪB*

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Abstract

The Qur'ān is a way of life that is always mined and studied to answer the complex and dynamic problems of life. The works of interpretation are one of the proofs of interpretation products dedicated by interpreters of the ulama to succeed in the effort to understand the Qur'ān so that it can be guided and truly become the way of life. Efforts to understand the Qur'an are carried out with a variety of approaches and methods, one of which is the hermeneutic method. The Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb interpretation by Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi is a representation of interpretation that applies hermeneutic elements. This paper aims to explore the elements of hermeneutics in Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb's interpretation by Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi by taking a sample of Al-Ikhlās's letter. The research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method, the authors attempt to examine and describe the data that exists. The findings in this study indicate that the hermeneutic elements used by Al-Rāzi in the interpretation of Al-Ikhlās include munāsabah, asbāb an-nuzūl, and esoteric meanings. The three components are used to find out the meaning of an objective and comprehensive text from Surah Al-Ikhlās. So that it concludes that the essence of God referred to in Surah Al-Ikhlās includes His *ẓat*, *ṣifat*, and *aʿal*.

Keywords: *Essence of God, Tauhid Hermeneutics, Surah Al-Ikhlās, Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb*

Abstrak

Al-Qur'ān merupakan *way of life* yang selalu digali dan dikaji dalam rangka menjawab problem-problem kehidupan yang kompleks dan dinamis. Karya-karya tafsir merupakan salah satu bukti dari produk penafsiran yang didedikasikan oleh para ulama tafsir dalam rangka mensukseskan upaya memahami al-Qur'ān, sehingga dapat dipedomani dan benar-benar menjadi *way of life*. Upaya memahami al-Qur'ān dilakukan dengan pendekatan dan metode yang bermacam-macam, salah satunya adalah metode hermeneutika.

Kitab tafsir *Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb* karya Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi menjadi representasi tafsir yang menerapkan unsur-unsur hermeneutik. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi unsur-unsur hermeneutika dalam kitab tafsir *Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb* karya Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi dengan mengambil sampel surat Al-Ikhlās. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah metode kualitatif-deskriptif, yaitu penulis berupaya untuk meneliti dan mendeskripsikan data-data yang ada. Adapun hasil temuan dalam kajian ini menunjukkan bahwa unsur-unsur hermenutika yang digunakan oleh Al-Rāzi dalam tafsir surat Al-Ikhlās meliputi munāsabah, asbāb an-nuzūl, dan makna esoterik. Ketiga komponen tersebut digunakan dalam rangka mengetahui makna teks yang objektif dan komprehensif dari surat Al-Ikhlās. Sehingga sampai pada kesimpulan bahwa esensi Tuhan yang dimaksud dalam surat Al-Ikhlās meliputi zat, sifat, dan af'al-Nya.

Kata kunci : *Esensi Tuhan, Hermeneutika Tauhid, Surat Al-Ikhlās, Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb*

Introduction

The Qur'ān is a holy book as well as a way of life for Muslims. As a great revelation and miracle that was revealed to the great man, Muhammad PBUH, the position of the Qur'ān are very noble and high for his adherent (Muslims). There is no doubt that Muslims should believe in the Qur'ān and make it a way of life. Believing alone is not enough, making the Qur'ān a way of life requires a good and accurate understanding process of the Qur'ān itself, so that with a good understanding, the Qur'ān will truly be present and live in a dynamic life process. One of the efforts to understand the Qur'ān is the presence of interpretive works that have been dedicated by scholars, both interpretive scholars from the classical era, the medieval era, and the contemporary era.

Each Qur'anic interpretation literature in each period has its characteristics. This is of course inseparable from the life background of an interpreter both from the educational aspect, the scientific aspect, the school or school aspect, and so on. Besides, the work of interpretation is also inseparable from the historical setting or the context in which the work of interpretation was written. This argument is based on the ideal assumption that the Qur'ān *shāliḥ likulli zamān wa makān* (the Qur'ān is always relevant to every time and every condition), so it is only natural that the Qur'ān is always mined and studied to answer life's problems.¹ The logical consequence is the various variants of the style and characteristics of the interpretive works produced by the interpreters. One of the tafsir works that represents a style and character is the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb* commentary by the medieval tafsir scholar, Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi.

Studies on Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi's hermeneutics have been carried out by many previous researchers, including Mustapa who wrote about the hermeneutic elements of

¹ Muh Yusuf, "Memahami Weltanschauung Alquran," *Sulesana: Jurnal Wawasan Keislaman* 9, no. 2 (2 September 2014): 93, <https://doi.org/10.24252/v9i2.1304>.

Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi,² Anas Shafwan Khalid who wrote about the methodology of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi's exegesis,³ Yuyun Zunairoh wrote about the philosophical interpretation of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi,⁴ and so on. In contrast to previous research, this study wants to see how the hermeneutic performance of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi in interpreting the surah Al-Ikhlās which is known as the surah tauhid. Meanwhile, Al-Rāzi's method of interpretation is the *bi al-ra'yi* method, which is known among the mufassirs as philosophical interpretation. Also, Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi in his commentary work (*Mafātiḥ al-Gaib*) has a unique epistemological and systemic concept in interpreting the Koran. The setting of Al-Rāzi's life was shrouded by heated debates between rationalist and traditionalist groups. At the same time, he also appeared and was involved as a critical-rationalist figure in debates with the figures of his contemporaries.⁵

Seeing this, the author is interested in investigating by examining the hermeneutics of tauhid Al-Rāzi on the surah Al-Ikhlās in the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib*. The reason the author examines the surah Al-Ikhlās in the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib* by Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi is to know the concept of monotheism or the unity of God. Besides, the author's reasons are also based on a hadith which says that the surah Al-Ikhlās is one of the surahs that has great virtue, even the surah Al-Ikhlās is the light of the Qur'āni and whoever reads the Al-Ikhlās letter is as if he has read a third from the Qur'āni as described in the hadith;

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ قَالَ: (أَيَعْجزُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَقْرَأَ فِي لَيْلَةٍ ثُلُثَ الْقُرْآنِ؟)، قَالُوا: وَكَيْفَ يَقْرَأُ ثُلُثَ الْقُرْآنِ؟ قَالَ: (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ تَعْدِلُ ثُلُثَ الْقُرْآنِ)

Translation: “From the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, he said: "Is someone of you unable to read in one night (alone) a third of the Koran?" They said: "And who (among us) can read a third of the Alqu (in one night)?" Rasulullah *Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam* said: “قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ” comparable to one-third of the Koran.” (Narrated by Muslim).

Based on this phenomenon, to focus on the discussion in this study the authors formulate the following problems; First, how is the brief profile of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi? Second, how is the paradigm of *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib's* interpretation? Third, how is the hermeneutic of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi in the interpretation of the surah Al-Ikhlās in the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib*? This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, in which the author

² Mustapa, “Elemen-Elemen Hermeneutika Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi Dalam Kitab Mafatih Al-Gaib (Studi Surat al-Kausar)” (Tesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2011), <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/6889/>.

³ Anas Shafwan Khalid, “Metodelogi Tafsir Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi: Telaah Tafsir QS. Al-Fatihah dalam Mafatih al-Ghayb,” *Al-Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 3, no. 01 (7 Juni 2018): 97–115, <https://doi.org/10.30868/at.v3i01.257>.

⁴ Yuyun Zunairoh, “Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Dengan Filsafat: Telaah Kitab Mafatih Al-Ghayb Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi,” *Empirisma* 24, no. 1 (1 Januari 2015): 121–30, <https://doi.org/10.30762/empirisma.v24i1.13>.

⁵ Khalid, “Metodelogi Tafsir Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi: Telaah Tafsir QS. Al-Fatihah dalam Mafatih al-Ghayb,” 99.

seeks to describe and describe the object of study by tracing existing data. The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data source in this study is the book of interpretation of *Mafātiḥ al-Gāib* by Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi. Meanwhile, the secondary data source is in the form of supporting data such as articles, scientific works, books, etc. which are considered relevant to this study.

Brief Biography of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi

The full name of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi is Abu Abdillah ibn Umar ibn al-Husein ibn al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Tamimi al-Bakry al-Qurasyi al-Tabarashtani Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi. The popular nickname of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi was a title (*laqab*) pinned to him. Besides that, he is also known as Ibn Khatib al-Ray, this name is attributed to his father who is well known as a preacher in the al-Ray area. He was born on the 25th day of Ramadan, 543/544 AH in the city of al-Ray, while he died on 1 Shawwal 606 AH at the age of 63 in the city of Herat.⁶

Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi grew and developed in an educated family environment. His father, Diyāuddin Umar, was a figure as well as a scholar of the Syafi'i school, he was also a scholar of kalam from the Asy'ariyah school of thought. Almost Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi did not learn from anyone else except his father. The depth of knowledge and the character of his father became Al-Rāzi's main mine to gain knowledge. There is also some truth in the proverbial term which says that 'the fruit does not fall far from the tree. It was as if the proverb term represented Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi who grew up as a *Syafi'iyah-Asy'ariyah* following in his father's footsteps. Then after his father died, he studied from Majduddin Ajjili (Imam Al-Ghazali's student) and Kamaluddin As-Simnani (Imam Al-Baqillani's student).⁷

Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi is also well-known as a scholar who has worked and is an expert in various scientific fields, such as *usul fiqh*, the science of kalam, *fiqh*, linguistics, interpretation, philosophy, medical science, and so on. Learning in the field of kalam, when viewed from the aspect of the sanad lineage, starts from his father (Diyāuddin Umar) to his teachers up to Abu al-Hasan al-Asy'ari.⁸ His persistence in cultivating and studying various scientific fields resulted in several productions of his works.

Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi's works cover several scientific fields, namely; First, in the field of tafsir he wrote *Mafātiḥ al-Gāib* or *Tafsir Al-Kabīr*, *Tafsir Al-Fatīḥa*, and *Asrār Al-Tanzīl wa Anwār Al-Ta'wīl* or also called *Al-Tafsir Ash-Shagīr*. Second, in the field of kalam and philosophy, he produced *Nihāyah Al-'Uqūl*, *Al-Tañqah fī Al-Jadal*,

⁶ “Elemen-Elemen Hermeneutika Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi Dalam Kitab Mafatih Al-Gaib (Studi Surat al-Kausar),” 65.

⁷ Khalid, “Metodelogi Tafsir Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi: Telaah Tafsir QS. Al-Fatihah dalam Mafatih al-Ghayb,” 99.

⁸ “Elemen-Elemen Hermeneutika Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi Dalam Kitab Mafatih Al-Gaib (Studi Surat al-Kausar),” 66–68.

Zabdah Al-Afkār wa 'Umdah Al-Nazar, Mabahiṣ Al-Jadāl, and Mabahiṣ Al-Wujūd wa Al-'Adām. Third, in physics and medicine he wrote *Muntakhab Tinklusya, fi Al-Raml, Al-Nabd fi Al-Handasah, and Masā'il Al-Tibb.* Fourth, in the field of wisdom, he wrote *Lubab Al-Isyārah, Syarh Al-Isyārah, Al-Mathalib Al-Aliyah fi Al-Hikmah, Al-Akhla, and Siraj Al-Qulub.* Fifth, in the field of ushul fiqh and fiqh science he wrote *Al-Ma'alim fi Al-Ushūl Al-Fiqh, Tanbih Al-Isyārah Al-Ushūl, Al-Mahsūl fi 'Ilm Ushūl Al-Fiqh, and Al-Mahsūl fi Al-Fiqh.* Sixth, in the field of *tauhid* he wrote *Al-Ma'ālim fi Al-Ushūl Al-Dīn, Tafsir Asmā'i Allah Al-Husna, Al-Arba'in fi Al-Ushūl Al-Din, Al-Qada' wa Al-Qadr, and Lawāmi 'Al-Bayyināt fi Tafsir Asmā'i Allah wa Al-sifāt.*⁹

The Mafātiḥ al-Gaib Paradigm

Mafātiḥ al-Gaib's commentary book is one of the magnum opus works of Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi which he wrote at the end of the fourth century Hijriyah. The book is also known as *Tafsir Al-Kabīr*, the term *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib* itself has the meaning and meaning desired by Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi. The reason for naming *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib* refers to the purpose of Al-Rāzi's hopes, namely that the vast content of the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib* is expected to be knowledgeable to reveal and know the keys to the hidden secrets of the word of Allah Almighty.¹⁰

The book of *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib* as a whole consists of 16 volumes, but Al-Rāzi did not finish until it was finished.¹¹ Ibn Hajar said that Al-Rāzi wrote his commentary only up to Sura Al-Anbiya'. After the writing of the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib* interpretation was continued by two scholars, namely Sheikh Syihabuddin Al-Khaubi in Damascus Syria in the year 639 hijriyah and Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abi Al-Hazm Makky Najamuddin Al-Makhzumi Al-Qammuli, he is an Egyptian scholar who died in 727 hijriyah. Although Al-Rāzi's exegesis was continued by two different scholars, the *manhaj* and exegetical methods used were the same as the method of interpretation used by Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi. By using the same method so that there are almost no differences between the three scholars, this is because Sheikh Syihabuddin Al-Khaubi and Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Abi Al-Hazm follow Al-Rāzi's style of writing.¹²

According to tafsir scholars, *Mafātiḥ al-Gaib's* tafsir book is included in the category of *bi tafsir al-ra'yi*. *Tafsir bi al-ra'yi* is a method of interpretation or the process of explaining the Qur'an through reason or based on an interpreter's rational

⁹ Khairunnas Jamal, Najamuddin Siraj Harahap, dan Derhana Bulan Dalimunthe, "Warna Dalam Al-Qur'an Perspektif Fakhr Al-Din Al-Rāzi," *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality* 5, no. 2 (4 Desember 2020): 156, <https://doi.org/10.30984/ajip.v5i2.1368>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Sjamsoeri Joesoef, "Kitab Tafsir Mafatih Al-Ghaib (Studi Pemikiran Al-Rāzi Tentang Nasakh Al-Qur'an)" (Disertasi, Yogyakarta, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2011), 11, <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/14307/>.

¹¹ Zunairoh, "Penafsiran Al-Qur'an Dengan Filsafat: Telaah Kitab Mafatih Al-Ghayb Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi," 126.

¹² Muhammad Azhari, "Konsep Pendidikan Sains Menurut Al-Rāzi (Telaah Terhadap Tafsir Mafatih al-Ghayb)," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 13, no. 1 (1 Agustus 2013): 46, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v13i1.571>.

understanding.¹³ The *bi al-ra'yi* interpretation itself is divided into two, namely the *bi al-ra'y al-mahmūd* interpretation, namely the interpretation based on commendable reason, and the *bi al-ra'y al-mazmūm* interpretation, namely the interpretation based on the despicable reason or rationality.¹⁴ And in this case, also *Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb* is included in the category of interpretation *bi al-ra'y al-mahmūd*, because the interpreter, Al-Rāzi, does not interpret the al-Qur'ān recklessly, but he holds fast to sound and commendable reasoning.

Based on the various scholarships that Al-Rāzi was engaged in, scientific disciplines gave color to the characteristics of his interpretation, so he also used the perspective of various branches of science in the interpretation process. In addition, the basis of his characterization with the *Syafi'iyah-Asy'ariyah* school of thought also colored the *Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb* commentary book.

The method of interpretation in the book *Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb* is classified as the method of interpreting *tahlīli*. The method of interpreting the *tahlīli* is a method of interpretation that tries to explain the verses of the Qur'āniic an analysis of various aspects related to the verses of the Koran. These aspects include; First, the aspect of *asbābun nuzūl* (context of the passage of the verse). Second, the *munāsabah* aspect (linkage between one surah and another, or the link between one surah and another, or the relationship between themes, and so on). Third, the *balāghah* aspect includes rhetoric and the beauty of language, and so on. The method of interpreting *tahlīli* is generally used by many commentators. They interpret the verses of the Qur'ān according to the *tartīb* of the *Mushafī* from Surah al-Fatiha to Surah al-Nas.¹⁵

Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi's Hermeneutics in Surah Al-Ikhlās in the Mafātiḥ al-Gaīb

Before stepping into the discussion of Al-Rāzi's hermeneutic analysis in surah Al-Ikhlās, the author will provide a brief understanding of the term hermeneutics itself. Etymologically or linguistically, the root word hermeneutics comes from Greek, namely from the verb *hermeneuein* which means "to interpret" and literally comes from a noun *hermeneia* which means "interpretation". The term is then identified with a Greek mythological figure named Hermes, he is a messenger who is tasked with delivering and translating God's messages to mankind.¹⁶

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hermes was the prophet Idris whose task was to convey God's messages both from the *ma'rifah* aspect and the *al-hikmah* or theosophical aspect.¹⁷ Narrowly, Sahiron Syamsuddin defines hermeneutics as the

¹³ Ade Jamarudin, "Tafsir Al-Baidlawi: Kitab Induk Di Antara Berbagai Kitab Tafsir," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 17, no. 1 (1 Juni 2011): 67, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v17i1.683>.

¹⁴ M. Quraish Shihab, *Kaidah Tafsir: Syarat, Ketentuan dan Aturan yang Patut Anda Ketahui dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat al-Qur'an* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2013), 368.

¹⁵ Abdul Mustaqim, *Metode Penelitian Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2019), 18.

¹⁶ Zaprul Khan, "Wacana Hermeneutika Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Teks Keagamaan," *Tawshiyah: Jurnal Sosial Keagamaan Dan Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 1 (6 Juni 2016): 99.

¹⁷ 99.

science of interpretation methods.¹⁸ If it is related to the interpretive activities of classical scholars, the process of interpreting the text can also be said to be a hermeneutical activity (interpretation), but at that time the term hermeneutics was not yet known.

The hermeneutic method developed by contemporary interpreters is actually not single, but diverse. This diversity arises not only because the Muslim community is more open to ideas from outside, but because of the dynamics and awareness of the deficiencies of existing methods and approaches.¹⁹ Besides, hermeneutics as a new methodological offer in the study of the interpretation of scriptural texts cannot be separated in the study of the holy Qur'an. The use of hermeneutics in contemporary exegetical literature as a variable in the method of understanding the Qur'an provides great appeal. The reason is, hermeneutics is not just a theory of understanding and a method of interpretation alone, it also works to explain the acceptance of revelation from the transmission of oralities to the world level. From something abstract to the real, or from something divine to touching the reality of human life. Therefore, it can be said that the performance of hermeneutics with the science of interpretation has similar functions in the process of text interpretation. This refers to the hermeneutical practice that has been carried out by previous Muslim scholars in understanding the Qur'an in several aspects, namely :

1. Hermeneutic problems are always experienced in the study of the Qur'an, although definitively it did not exist at that time. Hermeneutic problems, for example, such as studies on *asbāb an-nuzūl* and *nasakh mansukh*.
2. Differences regarding actual comments on the Qur'an (tafsir) with the rules, methods, or theories of interpretation have existed since the emergence of standardized interpretive literature in the form of exegesis.
3. Classical or traditional interpretations are always formed by categorization, such as legal interpretation, philosophical interpretation, *mu'tazilah* interpretation, *syi'ah* interpretation, and so on. This shows an awareness of certain periods, certain ideologies, certain groups, and certain social horizons of interpretation.²⁰

Based on the three aspects above, it clearly shows an awareness of the historicity of understanding which has implications for the plurality of interpretations. Therefore, although hermeneutics is not defined definitively, it can be said that the hermeneutic style of practice actually has its seeds in classical '*ulūm al-Qur'ān*'.²¹ Thus, based on the definition and performance of hermeneutics, Fahrudin Al-Rāzi has also presented hermeneutic practices. In this study, the author focuses on the study of the surah Al-

¹⁸ Kurdi dan dkk, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2010), v.

¹⁹ Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2012), 62.

²⁰ Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an: Tema-Tema Kontroversial* (Yogyakarta: Kalimedia, 2015), 13–15.

²¹ Faiz, 15.

Ikhhlās in the book *Mafātiḥ al-Gāib* to explore and reveal about Al-Rāzi's hermeneutics in it.

After the author explored Al-Rāzi's interpretation of the surah Al-Ikhhlās in his book entitled *Mafātiḥ al-Gāib*, it was found that there were several elements of his interpretation method including *munāsabah*, *asbāb an-nuzūl*, and esoteric meaning (the inner meaning). Besides that, Al-Rāzi also explained some of the *faḍā'il* or virtues contained in the surah Al-Ikhhlās. However, before we move on to Al-Rāzi's hermeneutic analysis in surah Al-Ikhhlās, we need to know in advance about the elements above.

First, *munāsabah*. In the context of reading the holistic message of the Qur'ān, one of the theoretical-methodical instruments to find such a message is ' *Ilm al-munāsabat*. In the *munāsabah* perspective, the entire text in the Qur'ān is a structural unit whose parts are interrelated. The entire text of the Qur'ān produces a complete world view.²² Etymologically, the word *munāsabah* according to As-Suyuthi means *al-musyākalah* (similarity) and *al-muqārabah* (closeness). Whereas in terminology, the definition of *munāsabah* is very diverse, for example as expressed by Mannā Al-Qaṭṭan, *munāsabah* is the side of the attachment between several expressions in one verse or between verses in several verses or between surahs in the Qur'an.²³

Munāsabah is divided into several forms, including; first, the *munāsabah* between the *surahs* and the previous *surahs*, which serves to explain and perfect the expressions in the previous *surah*. second, *munāsabah* between the name of the *surah* and the purpose of the *surah*. Third, inter-section *munāsabah*. This form of *munāsabah* is often expressed in a *tadhat* (resistance) pattern. Fourth, *munāsabah* between sects that are located side by side. This form of *munāsabah* is often clearly visible or not clearly visible. *Munāsabah* between clearly visible surahs usually uses the pattern of *ta'kid*, *tafsir*, *i'tiradh*, and *tasydid*. Fifth, *munāsabah* between groups of verses with groups of verses beside them. Sixth, *munāsabah* between *fashilah* (separator) and the contents of the *surah*. This *munāsabah* has the function of strengthening (*tamkin*) the meaning contained in a verse. Seventh, *munāsabah* between the beginning of the *surah* and the end of the same *surah*. Eighth, *munāsabah* between the closing of the *surah* and the beginning of the next *surah*.²⁴ So in general, it can be understood that *muḥasabah* is a rule of interpretation of the Qur'ān that functions to reveal meaning through the correlation of surahs, meanings, and so on.

Second, *asbāb an-nuzūl*. Etymologically, *asbāb an-nuzūl* comes from the plural word “*asbāb*” from “*sababa*” which means causes, “*nuzūl*” means going down. *asbāb an-nuzūl* can be understood as the reasons behind the revelation of the verse in

²² Ahmad Zainal Abidin dan Ahmad Saddam, “Munāsabah Between Chapters on Qur'an in the Al-Biqa'i Perspective,” *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (11 Desember 2020): 346, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v5i2.1480>.

²³ Najibah Nida Nurjanah, “Urgensi Munāsabah Ayat dalam Penafsiran al-Qur'an,” *Al-Fath* 14, no. 1 (29 Juni 2020): 110, <https://doi.org/10.32678/alfath.v14i1.1215>.

²⁴ Rudi Suryadi, “Signifikansi Munāsabah Ayat Al-Qur'an dalam Tafsir Pendidikan,” *Ulul Albab Jurnal Studi Islam* 17, no. 1 (25 Mei 2016): 74, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v17i1.3331>.

response to an event.²⁵ The science of *asbāb an-nuzūl* occupies a vital position in the study of 'ulūm al-Qur'ān. This basic assumption is based on at least two things. First, historically some of the verses of the Qur'ān that came down were preceded by certain causes. In other words, some of the verses of the Qur'ān have *asbāb an-nuzūl* and some do not. *Asbāb an-nuzūl* is a science that shows and reveals the relationship and dialectics between text and reality. Second, to borrow Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid's term, the science of *asbāb an-nuzūl* will equip readers with new material that views the passage of text as a response to reality while at the same time emphasizing the existence of a dialogical relationship between text and reality.²⁶

Knowledge about *asbāb an-nuzūl* has several benefits, among others: First, knowing the wisdom of the promulgation of a law and *syara'* attention to the public interest in dealing with all events, because it was concerned for the people. Second, to specialize (limit) the law which was derived from the causes that occur, if the law is stated in a general form. Third, if the pronouncement that is derived is general and there are arguments for its specificity, then the knowledge of *asbāb an-nuzūl* limits the specialization to other than causal forms. Fourth, knowing *asbāb an-nuzūl* is the best way to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān and to reveal the hidden obscurities in verses that cannot be interpreted without knowing the cause of the revelation. al-Wahidi explained that "it is impossible to know the interpretation of the verse without knowing the history and the explanation for the reasons for it." Fifth, *asbāb an-nuzūl* can explain who the verse was revealed to be so that the verse is not applied to other people because of enmity and dispute.²⁷ Also, the importance of the study of *asbāb an-nuzūl* in the study of Qur'anic interpretation, experts and observers of the study of the Qur'an formulate it into several points, including; first, knowing the wisdom of a law (*Hikmatu Tasyri 'al-Hukm*). Second, ascertain the meaning of the Qur'ān and eliminate confusion (*al-Wuqūf 'alā al-ma'nā wa izālat al-syak*). Third, eliminate confusion from legal restrictions (*daf'u tawahhum al-hasr*).²⁸ Therefore, knowing the reasons for the revelation of the verses is the best way to understand the Qur'ān and to reveal the hidden obscurity in the verses that cannot be interpreted without knowing the cause of the revelation.²⁹

Third, the inner meaning (esoteric meaning). The term esoteric comes from Greek, namely (*εις: eis* and *ηρικός-terikos*), which means it refers to something internal, which can only be understood by certain people. Or it could also be

²⁵ Pan Suaidi, "Asbāb an-nuzūl: Pengertian, Macam-Macam, Redaksi dan Urgensi," *Almufida: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 1, no. 1 (2016): 111.

²⁶ Syamsul Bakri, "Asbāb an-nuzūl : Dialog Antara Teks Dan Realita Kesejarahan," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v1i1.30>.

²⁷ Nunung Susfita, "Asbāb an-nuzūl Al-Qur'an Dalam Perspektif Mikro Dan Makro," *Tasamuh* 13, no. 1 (1 Desember 2015): 76.

²⁸ Munawir dan Musta'in, "Arah Baru Pengembangan Ulumul Qur'an: Telaah Metodologis Ilmu Asbāb an-nuzūl," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 1 (30 Juni 2020): 81, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v5i1.1221>.

²⁹ Manna Al-Qaththan, *Pengantar Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2014), 98.

interpreted as a metaphysical aspect and the internal dimension of religion. This esoteric meaning is also intended to reveal essential or substantial aspects in religious texts.³⁰

Reading Islamic texts, especially the Qur'ān which stops at the outward aspect, is basically against the Islamic scientific tradition which pays great attention to the inner (esoteric) aspect. Stopping at the outward aspect has narrowed the breadth of key concepts of the teachings of the Koran, including the teachings of jihad. According to Imam al-Ghazali the exoteric interpretation is not sufficient to explain the contents of the Koran. Meanwhile, according to the Quraish Shihab exoteric interpretations often cause problems or obstacles in thinking, when faced with social realities, scientific or religious nature. This requires us to examine the esoteric dimension of the Koran. In history, it is explicitly stated that "Verily, the Qur'ān has physical and mental dimensions, while the mind has up to seven minds."³¹ Meanwhile, Imam al-Faraby narrated with the sanad from Hasan of the Prophet. That the Prophet said:

لكل آية ظهر وبطن ولكل حرف حد ولكل حد مطلع

Translation: "Each of these verses has a physical meaning and an inner meaning. And every letter has a limit and every limit has an introduction."

The same thing was narrated by al-'Iraqi in al-Mugni, which states that the meaning of this hadith suggests that the verses of the Qur'ān have a dual capacity of meaning: physical and mental, exoteric and esoteric, there is an external meaning, *harfiyāh*, there is also a deep meaning, substantial meaning. One scholar said, "For every verse (of the Qur'ān) there are sixty thousand understandings (*al-Fahm*), and what can be understood is more than that."³² Thus, it can be seen that there are two kinds of levels of meaning in the Qur'an, namely: physical and mental, exoteric and esoteric, there is an outer meaning, *harfiyāh*, there is also an inner, substantial meaning, which is then known as exoteric interpretation and esoteric interpretation.

Apart from the three elements of the method above, Al-Rāzi also described some of the *fadā'il* or virtues contained in the surah Al-Ikhlās. Actually, the explanation of *fadā'il* or this virtue is to enrich the interpretation as well as being a compliment or addition which has relevance to the esoteric aspect. Some of the elements or methods that the author describes above are then used as a loan for Al-Rāzi's interpretation in the surah Al-Ikhlās as in the following analysis.

³⁰ Kunawi Basyir, "Makna Eksoteris Dan Esoteris Agama Dalam Sikap Keberagamaan Eksklusif Dan Inklusif," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 1 (Juni 2018): 223.

³¹ Darmawan, "Interpretasi Esoteris Jihad dalam Tafsir Ibn 'Arabi (Ta'wīlāt al-Kasyani)," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 9, no. 1 (30 Juni 2020): 26, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v9i1.15244>.

³² Baihaki dan Faridatunnisa Nor, "Telaah Tafsir Sufistik: Studi Atas Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Tentang Nur dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azhim Karya Sahal Al-Tustari," *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 19, no. 2 (2020): 8.

Al-Rāzi's Hermeneutic Elements in the Surah Al-Ikhlās

Munāsabah (internal aspects of the text)

The *Munāsabah* conducted by Al-Rāzi on the interpretation of the surah Al-Ikhlās was used as an internal study of the text. This can be detected by the author where Al-Rāzi interpreted the surah Al-Ikhlās by seeing a strong connection between verse one and the last verse in the surah. According to him, the meaning of each verse in the surah Al-Ikhlās has a closely related meaning, so that by doing this *munāsabah* we can get to know the essence of God (Allah) properly and correctly.

In his interpretation, he explained that the term 'الله الصمد' means that Allah does not want a shomad (dependent place/place to ask for everything) except Him. The term ash-shomad also denies the existence of allies and no one is equal to Him. The verse or term indicates that there is no God but the One, namely Allah, and the term ash-shomad supports or confirms the first verse, namely the term *أَحَدٌ اللهُ* which shows that the essence of Allah is one. He is most holy of number and order.³³ The point is that the essence of Allah is not composed and has no formation of components. Furthermore, the third verse *لم يلد ولم يولد* (He is neither childless nor begotten) and the fourth verse *ولم يكن له كفوا أحد* (And there is nothing equal to Him), is closely related to the previous verse and affirms that in the essence of the oneness of Allah is shown by His *dzat*, *sifat*, and *af'al*.³⁴

In the process of interpreting the *munāsabah*, Al-Rāzi tried to look at several aspects that build the reason Allah sent down surah Al-Ikhlās, namely to calm *Rasullullah* over the questions of the polytheists who cornered or excommunicated Muhammad's God (Allah) as well as teaching about the essence of His. Apart from that, Al-Rāzi also explained that the surah Al-Ikhlās talked about the nature of Allah as well as the surah Al-Kautsar which talked about the nature of the Prophet. However, the Quraish disbelievers blasphemed and denounced the Messenger of Allah because he was considered *abtar* (cut off due to his dead son named 'Abdullah) so that no one would replace him. Whereas in the context of the surah Al-Ikhlās it is because unbelievers think that Allah has children. As it is well known that a childless man will be a disgrace to Him, and the existence or possession of a child towards Allah will make Him a disgrace.³⁵

Asbāb An-nuzūl (external aspects of the text)

Asbāb an-nuzūl is an important aspect in interpreting. This aims to determine the initial context of the surah and of course also to find out the original meaning. Likewise Faḥruddin Al-Rāzi, pays great attention to the aspects of *asbāb an-nuzūl* in his interpretation, especially in the surah Al-Ikhlās.

³³ Thalhas dkk., *Tafsir Pasé: kajian Surah Al-Fatihah dan surah-surah dalam Juz'Amma: paradigma baru*, Cet. 1 (Jakarta: Bale Kajian Tafsir Al-Qur'an Pasé, 2001), 72.

³⁴ Fakhruddin Al-Rāzi, *Tafsir Al-Fakhr Al-Rāzi Al-Musyahir bi Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir wa Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, Al-juz Al-Tasni wa Al-'Isyrun (Beirut: Darul Fikr, 1981), 182.

³⁵ Al-Rāzi, 185.

Al-Rāzi's main focus from the aspect of *Asbāb an-nuzūl* regarding the verse **قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ** in understanding the word **أَحَدٌ**. To explain this, he quoted several narrations including; Once upon a time some Jews came to Rasulullah with them Ka'ab bin Asy'raf, they said while asking Rasulullah 'O Muhammad, Allah who created creatures, then who created Allah?'. Then the Prophet was angry at their questions and Jibril (as) descended to calm him down saying 'Humble yourself, Muhammad!' Then the verse **قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ** was sent. After the Prophet (PBUH) recited the verse to them, they said 'tell us, how and what his arm looks like!'. Hearing this, the Prophet was angry the second time beyond his first anger, and Jibril came, saying **وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ** (and they did not glorify Allah with proper praise).³⁶

In another narration, it is stated that once the Christians said to Rasulullah “tell us whether your Lord is from emerald, yaqut stone, gold, or from silver?” Rasulullah replied my Lord is not created from anything, because He is the creator of everything, then the verse **قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ** came down. Then the Christians said again “He is one, you are one too”, Rasulullah replied, 'He has no equal'. The Christians asked “what is his nature?” Rasulullah replied, “الله الصمد”, they asked, “what is الصمد?” Christians say 'continue?', Then come down the verse (لم يلد) “He has no childlike Maryam”, (ولم يولد) “He is also not begotten like Isa”, (ولم يكن له كفوا أحد), “and no there is something equal to Him.”³⁷

From some of the narrations of the *asbāb an-nuzūl* above, Al-Rāzi wanted to emphasize that the surah Al-Ikhlās explained the unity of Allah including the essence (*zat*), *sifat*, and *aʿal*. This also shows that the essence of the oneness of Allah is different from the divine concepts adhered to by religions other than Islam. As Al-Rāzi's argument regarding the word **أَحَدٌ** refutes the belief of the *tsanawiyah* sect (dualism), the Christian belief about the trinity, and the beliefs of the *shabi'in* people regarding *falak* and necroma (*nujum*). Then the second verse refutes the belief of those who believe in a creator other than Allah and they believe that they can fulfill all their needs. The third verse refutes the belief of the Jews about Uzair the son of Allah, refutes the belief of the Christians about Jesus the son of Allah, and disputes the belief of the polytheists that angels are part of the children of Allah. Meanwhile, the fourth verse denies the polytheists who believe that *asnam* is equal to Allah.

Based on the above, the author assumes that Al-Rāzi seeks to explore and investigate the objective meaning or original meaning of a text. From the search for the original meaning, he emphasized that the oneness of Allah cannot be compared with anything. And whoever believes in the existence of a God other than Him is a false error.

³⁶ Al-Rāzi, 175.

³⁷ Al-Rāzi, 175.

Esoteric meaning (the meaning behind the text)

The esoteric meaning referred to here is the inner meaning behind the text.³⁸ In this case, Al-Rāzi tried to explore the implied meaning, namely the inner meaning hidden behind the text. Understanding the hidden aspects of meaning is intended so that readers can comprehensively know and reveal the meaning of the surah Al-Ikhlās. As previously explained, Al-Rāzi's esoteric approach shows the features and peculiarities of his interpretation. This is reflected in the naming of his book, namely *Mafātih al-Gāib* which means 'hidden secret keys', meaning that Al-Rāzi wanted to represent his tafsir book to reveal and know hidden or implied words.

In the context of the interpretation of Surah Al-Ikhlās, especially in the first verse of lafadz *هُوَ اللهُ أَحَدٌ* according to Al-Rāzi, there is an inner meaning that is spiritual in nature. Al-Rāzi explained that the three *lafadz* in *هُوَ اللهُ أَحَدٌ*, each *lafadz* has a *maqam* level. First, *Maqam Al-Muqarrabin*, this first *maqam* is the highest *maqam*. *Maqam Al-Muqarrabin* is the station of a servant who travels to Allah. They are servants who believe that the essence of everything visible is *tajalli* from Allah Almighty. Because this form is the essence of Allah's creation. Second, *Maqam Ashhabul Yamin*, this *maqam* is different from the first *maqam*. At this level, they are those who testify to the existence of the nature and existence of Allah's creation, but this is not enough for them to get to the core of all essence. So they tend to distinguish between what is visible (*tajalli*) and the essence of Allah. Third, *Maqam Ashhabul Yamin*, this *maqam* is the lowest *maqam*. This group is those who believe in the existence of a God other than Allah, or those who believe in the existence of a God who is not the only one.³⁹

Faḍā'il or the virtue of Surah Al-Ikhlās

Apart from describing several aspects in his interpretation, Al-Rāzi also explained the virtues of the surah Al-Ikhlās. As for the virtues of the surah Al-Ikhlās, namely; First, the surah Al-Ikhlās is very famous as it is narrated in the hadīṣ that reading the surah Al-Ikhlās is equivalent to reading a third of the Qur'ān. According to him, this virtue is nobler than all the *shari'a* and worship, because Surah Al-Ikhlās can know the essence of Allah including His essence (*ẓat*), *sifat*, and *af'al*. Second, the argument of *dalil 'aqli* surah Al-Ikhlās shows the degree of glory of a servant who makes his heart shine with the nur of Allah, and it cannot be found except in the surah Al-Ikhlās. Surah Al-Ikhlās is the greatest surah, if someone says that the attributes of Allah are also mentioned in other surahs, please also note that the surah Al-Ikhlās has a specificity or specialty. Because the surah Al-Ikhlās is easy to memorize by the heart and easy to remember by the mind, therefore we will always remember the majesty of Allah. Also, a deep understanding of the surah Al-Ikhlās becomes the main basis for

³⁸ Salman Faris, "Metode Takwil Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid (Studi Atas Potensi Tafsir Esoterik Dalam Merespon Problem Tafsir Era Modern)," *Kordinat: Jurnal Komunikasi Antar Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam* 17, no. 1 (19 November 2018): 5, <https://doi.org/10.15408/kordinat.v17i1.8104>.

³⁹ Al-Rāzi, *Tafsir Al-Fakhr Al-Rāzi Al-Musytahir bi Al-Tafsir Al-Kabir wa Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, 179–80.

doing all the deeds in daily life, so that the values of monotheism (*tauhid*) that are embedded in one's soul become *ubudiyah* characters.⁴⁰

Conclusion

After conducting the study in this paper, as explained above, it can be seen that Al-Rāzi was a scholar of interpretation with the *Syafi'i-Asy'ari* school of thought with various interdisciplinary scientific fields. As a rationalist *Syafi'i-Asy'ari* character, his educational background and thoughts also colored his philosophical interpretation. Likewise, the hermeneutical elements which include *munāsabah*, *asbāb an-nuzūl*, and esoteric meanings can provide a comprehensive interpretation, in the context of the interpretation of the surah Al-Ikhlās.

Al-Rāzi pays a lot of attention to the *munāsabah* aspect (as an internal aspect of the text) to find out the relationship between one verse and another so that it can reveal the full meaning. Besides that, the exploration of meaning is also seen from the initial context of the verse (*asbāb an-nuzūl*) to find out the original meaning. While the aspect of esoteric meaning (the meaning behind the text) he tries to explore the implied meaning. So that it comes to the conclusion that the essence of God in the perspective of Al-Rāzi's hermeneutics includes His essence (*ẓat*), *sifat*, and *aḥal*. Broadly speaking it can be said that Al-Rāzi was a medieval interpreter who had applied hermeneutical elements, only at that time it was not definitively known.

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⁴⁰ Masunah, “Implementasi Pemahaman Surat Al-Ikhlās Dalam Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Tauhid Pada Anak Usia Dini,” *Studia Didaktika* 10, no. 02 (2 Desember 2016): 105.

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