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**A STUDY OF THE FEATURES OF *TAFSĪR FATHUL-QADĪR*  
OF MUHAMMAD ALI ASH-SHAWKANI (d.1834)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines Ash-Shawkani's approach to the interpretation of the Glorious Qur'an contained in his well-known exegetical work *Fathul-Qadir al Jamiubayna fanny r-Riwayahwa-d-Dirayah min 'ilmi-t-Tafsir*. With a view to identifying the features of the Tafsir, the researcher examines his style of presenting introductions to the Qur'anic chapters, comments, and issues raised in selected verses from chapters of the Qur'an. In an attempt to have in-depth study of Ash-Shawkani's exegetical work, the researcher makes use of relevant *Tafsir* literature, books on jurisprudence issues, *Ahadith* literature and related works on Qur'an science (*Ulumul Qur'an*) as well as Journals and information from internet. It is our assumption that this will help a lot to have a critical view about Ash-Shawkani's submissions and initiate the audience with his ideas on Qur'an interpretation. It is our conclusion in this paper that the value of Ash-Shawkani's exegesis stems from his preference for authentic traditions as a basis for exegetical scholarly exercise.



## **Introduction**

It is an incontestable fact that *Tafsir* literatures play significant role in the comprehension of Islamic message embedded in the Quranic scripture. Scholars of Islam have no small measure, continued to intensify efforts to make the information contained in the Qur'an lucid and clear. While some scholars exegetical work such as *Tafsir Manar* of Muhammad Abdu' are characterized with prolixity and largeness of volume, other scholars prefer brevity and conciseness, as observed in the work of *Tafsir Jalālayn*. The two approaches despite their varying style of interpretation have a common goal of ensuring understanding the word of Allah to enhance its application to the daily life.

However, this book of *Tafsir*, known as *Fathul-Qadir* written by Ash-Shawkani could be described as an intermediate position between the two approaches adopted by the exegetes mentioned above. With its five volumes it is presumed that the information contained therein could not be scanty thereby falling short of its goal to quench the thirst of curious readers or having plethora of information that may distract their attention from its main objectives. Similarly, the author attaches much importance to authoritative sources. This invariably motivates us to make *Tafsir* work of Ash-Shawkani a focus of our study. The fact that many jurists, historians, and contemporary authors on exegesis and Islamic law make use of Ash-Shawkani's exegetical work as a reliable source lends credence to the assertion that his work on *Tafsir* serves a compendium of knowledge.

## **Objectives of the Study**

- (i) To identify the methods employed by Imam Ash-Shawkāni in his work on the Qur'anic exegesis.
- (ii) To analyses Imam Ash-Shawkāni's approach to commentary of the Qur'ān as contained in his work *Fatul-Qadir*.



- (iii) To give a biographical sketch of Imam Ash-Shawkāni in order to provide information about his life for the benefit of the readers.
- (iv) To examine his approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān and identify his unique styles of presenting the contents of his work, *fathu al-Qadir*.
- (v) To examine his uses of ahadith in the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'ān in his book of *Tafsīr* known as *Tafsīr Bil-Mathūr*.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is very important to as it will helps in drawing the attentions of the people to this book of *at-Tafsīr* under study which contains contemporary issues that will be beneficial to the youth and the nation in general. The researcher therefore, observes that, it was the wish of the author of the book, to make the book full of information. However, so many people are not aware of the content of the book. It is against this backdrop that this work chooses to shed more light on it for the benefit of the readers; most especially the English readers who do not have access to Arabic language.

### **Biographical Sketch of Imam Ash-Shawkāni**

Imam Shawkāni is Muhammad bn<sup>o</sup>Ali bn Muhammad bn Abdullah ash-Shawkāni as-San<sup>o</sup>ani (Abdul-Mawjood, 2006). He was called Ash-Shawkāni in affiliation to his birth place, called Shawkāni (Abdul-Mawjood 2006). Shawkāni is a small town and of a distance of a day journey from San<sup>o</sup>ā, Yemen. He is also known as as-San<sup>o</sup>ani as an attribution to San<sup>o</sup>ā where he grew up, studied and held the position of *Qādī al-Qudāt* under the Qāsimi Imāmī ruler. (Haykal, 2003p. 93).

Imam Ash-Shawkāni was born in 1760 C.E in San<sup>o</sup>an known today as Yemen (Shawkāni 2010). In his early years, he studied under his father <sup>o</sup>Alibn Muhammad ash-Shawkāni (d. 1797)



who was a judge in San'ā. He was well read, educated in both Sunni traditions and Qur'anic exegesis (Haykal, 2003).

Hence, Imam Ash-Shawkāni studied from the renowned scholars of his time in having the knowledge of the glorious Qur'ān, mastering the rules of Arabic language, Science of the Qur'ān, Islamic law, *Ahadith* of the Prophet and the knowledge of abrogated verses in the Qur'ān. (Adh-Dhahabi 1976). With his mastery of numerous sciences, Imam Ash-Shawkāni claimed that by the age of thirty, he had dispensed with *Taqlid* and became a *Mujtahid Mutlaq*, and dedicated his life to issuing *fatāwa* (Islamic legal judgement). Abdul-Wajood (2006).

Imam Ash-Shawkāni was known for his modesty, humility and diligence (Abdulmawjood 2006). He was an author, Imam, a Qādi and teacher who had started his teaching and writing careers at the age of twenty (20). It was reported that the Imam used to stay indoor except for occasional and religious purposes. He wore simple clothes with turban, slim in nature with beard as part of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (Haykal 2003).

Ash-Shawkāni was an adherent of Hambali school of thought. He was credited with developing a series of syllabi for attaining various ranks of scholarship and used a strict system of legal analysis based on Sunni thought. He insisted that any jurist who wanted to be a *mujtahid filmadhab* (a scholar who is qualified to exercise *Ijtihād* within a school of Islamic law), is required to do *Ijtihād* which stemmed from his opposition to *Taqlid* in the interpretation of Islamic which he deemed to be a vice with which the *Shari'ah* had been inflicted (Bernard Haykal 2003). Some of the works written by Imam Ash-Shawkāni include:

- a. *Naylul-Awtār min Ahadith sayyid al-Ahkyār* (Attainment of the Objectives from 5 the Hadith of the Chief of Righteous).
- b. A commentary on *muntaqa al-Ahbār of Ibn Taymiyyah*.
- c. *Irshād al-Fuhūl ilā tahqiq-l-haqq min 'ilmil-usūl*. (Guiding the eminent to the verification of the truth in the science of *'Usūl*). A works on *Usūl al-fiqh*.
- d. *Adab-ut-Tulabwa Muntaha al-Arab*



e. *Al-Qawlu-Mufīd fi Hukm Taqlid* (The statement of the ruling regarding blind followership (*Taqalid*))

Beyond Yemen, his works are widely used in Sunni Schools. Abdulwajood Salahudeen, (2010). He also influenced the *Ahl al-Hadith* in the India subcontinent, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq Saudi Arabia and across the globe profoundly (Patricia et al 2013) Imam Shawkāni died in the year 1250 A.H. equivalent with 1834 C.E.

### Provision of Introduction to Quranic Chapters in *Fathu'l-Qadir*

The way Qur'anic chapters are prefaced in Ash-Shawkāni's work is very important to be mentioned in this paper. Similarly, in the preface Imam Shawkāni has notified the readers of his work about reasons behind, the compositions and inclusion of some Quranic chapters and even *Basmalah*. Such notification is made by him, for instance, while explaining the uses of *Basmalah* stating his opinion whether Allah revealed it together with *Suratul-Fatihah* or with all the chapters of the Qur'ān. The Imam said thus:

اختلف أهل العلم بأن هل هي آية مستقلة في أول كل  
سورة كتبت في أولها، أو هي بعض آية من أول كل سورة  
أو هي كذلك في الفاتحة فقط دون غيرها، أو أدبها ليست  
بأية في الجميع وإنما كتبت للفصل؟ والأقوال وأدلتها  
مبسوطة في موضع الكلام على ذلك وقد اتفقوا على أنها  
بعض آية في سورة النمل. وقد جزم قراء مكة والكوفة بأنها  
آية من الفاتحة ومن كل سورة. وخالفهم قراء المدينة والبصرة



والشام فلم يجعلوها آية لا من الفاتحة ولا من غيرها من  
السور قالوا: وإنما كتبت للفصل وللتبرك.  
(Ash-Shawkāni 2010 p. 22)

Men of knowledge hold divergent opinion with regard to *Basmalah* whether it is an independent verse at the beginning of each chapters or part of the verse at the beginning of all chapter or such is restricted to *Suratul Fatihah* alone or that it is not a verse in all the chapters of the Qur'an but for mere separation. Evidences upon it are laid down on its discourse. The scholars are unanimous that it is part of the verse *Suratul Naml*. Makkan and Kufa reciters aver that it is a verse in *Suratul Fatha* and all other *Surah*. Madinah, Kufa, Basrite and Sham reciters hold different view that it is neither part of the verse of *Suratul Fatihah* nor other *Surah*. Rather, it is written for mere separation of chapters from one another and for the purpose of seeking blessing.

وقد أخرج أبو داؤد بإسناد صحيح عن ابن عباس أن رسول  
الله (صلعم) كان لا يعرف فصل السورة حتى يتزل عليه بسم  
الله الرحمن الرحيم

(Ash-Shawkāni 2010 P. 23)

Abu Dawud extracts the hadith from Ibn Abbas with valid chain of narrators that the Prophet (S.A.W) could not distinguish between the *Surah* till *Basmalah* was revealed.

From the above question of Imam Ash-Shawkāni, the divergent opinions of scholars over *Basmalah* can be categorized into the following:

Is *Basmalah* a separate verse at the beginning of every chapters of the Qur'an?

Or is it part of a verse at the beginning of every chapter? Or is it so only in *Fatiha* without other chapters? Or is it not a verse in all (chapters of the Qur'an) but only written separately?



It should however be started that if there is no significant account for the revelations of a particular *Surah*, nothing in that regard will be said in the preface of the *Surah*. It has also been observed that the *Tafsīr Fathil-Qadir* contains brief introduction on each chapter and the circumstances surrounding the revelation, the pronunciation of each chapter according to the famous recitation centre of the Qur'ān such as Kufa, Basrah Makkah and Madinah. Imam Shawkāni proves his erudition and scope in the knowledge of *Ahadith* of the Prophet by supporting all his sayings with *Ahadith* throughout his book. This shows that he mastered traditions of the prophet and applied them where necessary.

#### **Areas of Stylistic Introduction of Chapters**

- (i) Place of revelations, such as Makkah or Madinah as read thus:

الحمد لله رب العالمين، وكان ذلك قبل الهجرة وأخرج أبو  
بكر بن الأنباري في المصاحف عن عبادة قال: فاتحة  
الكتاب نزلت بمكة فهذا جملة ما استدللّ به من قال إنها  
نزلت بمكة واستدلّ من قال إنها نزلت بالمدينة بما أخرجه أبي  
شيبه في المصنف " (Shawkāni 2010 P.19)

The revelation of *Suratul Fatiha* was prior to the Hijrah. Abubakr bn Anbarī reported from the scripts of *Ubadah* that he said: The opening chapter was revealed in Makkah. This is the summary evidence of those who assert that the revelation of *Suratul Fatiha* was in Makkah. While those who mention of that the revelation of the *Surah* was in Madinah make up their evidence with the report of Ibn Abi Shaybah from *Al Musannaf*.

- (ii) The preface or introductory passage in chapter as used in Imam Shawkāni's work. All these can be seen in the book of *Fathil-Qadir* by giving each chapter and its verses a brief





introduction regarding the law therein and relevant hadith with reporters of such hadith. This shows that the Qur'ān explains the hadith while hadith also does the same.

(iii) Time of revelations, such as a particular year, night day or period of an event when the *Surah* was revealed. This can be seen in explanation of *Suratul-Fatihah*.

قال: أنزل الله سورة الفاتحة قبل الهجرة

Imam Shawkāni said: Allah (SWT) revealed *Suratul-Fatihah* before the *Hijrah* of the prophet (SAW).

*Tafsīr fathil-Qadir* is unique compared with other books of *Tafsīr* as it gives the important of the *Surah* of the Qur'an, number of verses in the *Surah* and causes or circumstances surrounding the revelations of the *Surah* and verses. Below is an example:

(وأيدناه) قال: قوّيناه.

"وأخرج ابن جرير و ابن المنذر وابن أبي حاتم عنه قال. روح من القدس الاسم الذى كان عيسى يحيى به الموتى، وعن جابر عن النبي (صلعم) قال: روح القدس جبريل، وقد ثبت فى الصحيح أن النبي (صلعم) قال: أَللّهُمَّ أيد حسان بروح القدس " (Imam Shawkāni 2010 p. 144)

Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al Mundhir and Ibn Abi Hatim reported that the holy spirit refers to efficacious Name through which Prophet Isa revived dead. Jabir also reported from the Prophet that the Holy Spirit is in reference to Angel Jibril. It is indeed firmly established in authentic narration that the Prophet said (as a prayer for Hasan bn Thabit) "Oh Allah! Strengthen Hasan with the holy spirit.



## **Some chapters without preface title and some with preface composition in *Fath al-Qadir***

Preface of Qur'anic chapters is often included in most of the chapters in the *Tafsīr al-Fathil-Qadīr*. However, some prefaces of some of chapters carried the title *Tafsīr* of that particular chapter such as *Tafsīr Suratul-Furqān*. Similarly, he gives the number of verses contained in each chapter and whether the *Surah* is of Makkah or Madinah chapters as well as the verses. These are the methods and styles he uses from the beginning of *Suratul-Fatihah* to the last chapter, *Suratul-Nas*.

More so, Imam Shawkāni shows his conversance with the Makkan and Madinah verses, which are interwoven in most of Quranic chapters.

For example, Imam Shawkāni says:

تفسير سورة الفرقان هي سبع وسبعون آية وهي مكية كلها إلا  
ثلاث آيات منها نزلت بالمدينة.

Ash Shawkani's comment:

This is *Suratul-Furqan's* commentary. It has 77 verses, all of which are Makkah verses except three verses that were revealed in Madinah.

There are some chapters which do not contain place of revelation nor the cause of revelation nor the number of verses, they include those of *Surah An-Nisai*, (chapter 4). *Suratul-Māidah* (chapter 5) *SuratulAn'ām* (chapter 7) *Suratul-Namul* (chapter 27), and *Suratul-Ahqāf* (chapter 46). The preface of these chapter *Surahs* contains only the significance of the chapters. On the other hand, preface of *Suratul-Nur* (chapter 24) contains only the place of revelation and the importance of the *Surah*, while *Suratul-Yusuf* (A.S) contains only the place of revelation as it was stated that *Suratul-Yusuf* was revealed in the *Hijrah* period as a affirmed by Imam Ash-Shawkāni that:



وهي مكة كلها، وقيل نزلت ما بين مكة  
والمدينة وقت الهجرة

All are Makkah verses but some agreed that, it was revealed  
in between Makkah and Madinah in the Hijrah period.

### **The use of Arabic poems in *Tafsīr Fathil-Qadīr***

Rhetoric has a great influence and impact in the knowledge of Arabic language. It has a section called *al-Iqtibas* which means borrowing of Qur'anic words to support poems. This is very common among the Arabic poetry, prose and in the books of *Tafsīr*. Majority of Qur'anic exegetes adopted the system of using poems to buttress the Quranic verses such as; Al-Qurtubi in his work *Jāmiul-Ahkām*, Fah'rud-Din ar-Razi, Az-Zamakhshari in his work titled: *Al-Kashāf*, Imam Jalaluddin Sayuti and Al-Mahalli in their book of *Tafsīr* titled: *Tafsīr Jalālyni, Sofwat-at-Tafsīr* of Muhammad 'Ali As-Sobuni, Abdullah ibn Fodiyo in his book titled: *Kifayatud-Duhafā'us-Sudan fi bayanit-Tafsīril-Qur'ān*, Imam Shawkāni in his work titled: *Fathil-Qadir al-Jāmiubaynar-Riwayyat wad-Dirayyah min 'Ilmi-Tafsīr* to mention but few.

Several Arabic poems are cited in the *Tafsīr Fathil-Qadir* to elucidate the meaning of a particular Qur'anic word. The use of a particular word in the poem enables scholars to understand the meaning of the verse(s) being explained. On some examples of the application of the knowledge of Arabic poems to the understanding of the meaning of the Qur'ān by the exegetes he says that:



عن أنس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم "من قرأ  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ثم قرأ فاتحة الكتاب ثم قال آمين لم  
يبق ملك السماء مقرب إلا استغفره" (Shawkāni 2010 P.95)

From Anas who said Prophet Muhammad (SAW) says  
"Whoever reads Bisimlahir-Rahmanir-Rahim, then read  
*Suratul-Fatiha*, then he says (Amin), Nothing will remain  
for high rank angel of the sky except seeking forgiveness  
for him.

To explain Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) statement on this meaning, Imam Shawkāni  
quotes the following poems without mentioning the name of the composers.

بلرب لاتسلبنى حبها أبداً \*\* ويرحم الله عبدا قال آمينا

Oh my lord do not ever snatch away her love from me And  
may Allah have mercy on a servant that says Amin

آمين آمين لا أرضى بواحدة \*\* حتى أبلغها ألفين آمينا

Amin Amin I will never be pleased with one utterance until  
I reach two thousand times of its utterance.

The prophet Muhammad (SAW) was reported to have said:

إذا قرأ يعنى الإمام غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين. فقولوا آمين يحبكم الله " أخرجه

البخارى ومسلم (Shawkāni, 2010 p. 33)

Whenever the Imam recites the word *Gayrul-Maqdubi*  
*Alayim Walādhālin* the followers should say (Āmīn) Allah  
will love you all. (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim).



However, there are other Qur'anic exegetes who give different meanings to the word (Amin) as Imam Shawkāni cited in his book of *Tafsīr*. He quoted Ibn Abbas to have explain the word "Āmīn" as contained in Qurtubi thus:

قال القرطبي في تفسيره معنى آمين عند أكثر أهل العلم. اللهم استجب  
لنا وضع موضع الدعاء.

Qurtubi says in his book of *Tafsīr*; meaning of the word Amin according to the majority of scholars is: O Allah answer our prayer, it was placed in position of prayer.

عن ابن عباس قال: قلت لرسول الله: ما معنى آمين؟ قال: رب افصل"

On the authority of Ibn Abbas who said: I said Oh Messenger of Allah! What is the meaning of Āmīn? He (The Prophet) said: My Lord judge the matter!

To this effect, it is observed that the word Amin that is said immediately after the recitation of *Suratul-Fatihah* has specific meaning irrespective of the uses.

Another Quranic word interpreted through the use of Arabic poem is the word "اشتروا" as contained in Qur'ān 2: 16 where Allah says:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبِحَت تِّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ

These are they who have bartered Guidance for error. But their bargain is profitless, and they have lost true direction.

Imam Shawkāni asserts that the word "*Ishtarū*" is the meaning of the word “



"استبدلوا" or "المعاوضة" which are made by other scholars on the ground of the connotation of the Qur'anic statement اشترُوا . Imam Shawkāni confirms the word اشترُوا (buying) to be the meaning of word "استبدلوا" . It is to this effect that he quotes an Arabic poem of Abu Dhuaibu

فإن ترعمني كنت أجهل فبكموا \*\* فإن شريت اللحم بعدك با لجهل

If you claim insistently that I show disrespect to you. I have indeed afterward, substituted endurance with ignorance.

(Imam Ash-Shawkāni 2010, Vol. 1 p. 59).

It is observed that the poem was composed to be patient and remain patient over the frivolity of an ignorant. In this regard, it is observed that the correctness of Shawkāni's use of Arabic poem in the interpretation of some Qur'anic words is evident and correspondent to the meaning of the Qur'anic verses concerned.

Similarly, it is observed that Shawkāni does not rely on the literal meaning of words in Arabic poems to interpret the Qur'ān. But he only uses Arabic poem to prove the correctness of interpretation of some Qur'anic words as upheld by some erudite exegetes.

Furthermore, application of the knowledge of Arabic poem or any other relevant discipline is not to be considered as unwarranted approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān. Adh-Dhahabi (2006) asserts that whoever refuses to consider literal meaning of Qur'anic words before inferring an injunction from the word of Allah is not consider as Qur'anic experts.

#### **Use of *Ahadiith* in *Fatuh 'l-Qadīr***

The author of *Fatuh 'l-Qadīr*, appears an excellent and meticulous in the use of *Hadith*, as the second primary source of Islam and Islamic legislations in his work, while shedding lights on a verse of the Glorious *Qur'ān*. This is not unconnected to his conviction that after the glorious book (*Qur'ān*), statements made by the prophet as the interpreter of *Al-Qur'ān* per-excellence while explaining the glorious *Qur'ān*, is superior to other sources or references.

The *Qur'ān* itself in several places affirms the unparalleled authority of the prophet in the interpretation and application of the divine laws. Allah says:



وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

We have sent down unto thee(also) the Message; that thou may explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought. (16:44)

The above verse and many more emphatically establishes the unique role of the Prophet as the manual of the glorious book he brought to the world. The Prophet played this role and was perfectly guarded by Allah Himself.

The companions on different occasions were faced with different challenges in their bid to properly digest and understand the intended message of the glorious Qur'an. This is because despite their Arab origin and the language with which the book is revealed, they still found it difficult to grasp some meanings and to understand some other messages, being the first of its kinds in their life experiences. (Tijani 2000).

In an occasion like this, resort was made to the Prophet to put them through and give them clear explanations and interpretations of the verses being confused without any hindrance. Examples of such instances are as follows:

....those whose (portion) is not wrath and who go not astray.  
(Q.1:7)

The Prophet interprets the *Al-Maghdūbi<sup>cin</sup> Alayhim* as Jews, while *Aḍ-Ḍāllīn* as Christians.

In another area, this is how the Prophet demonstrates his superiority in the interpretation of the glorious *Qur'an*. Allah says:

حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ

...until there comes to you the certainty (Q.15:99)

*Al-Yaqīn* is interpreted as Death by the Prophet. Undoubtedly, in understanding the meaning of the glorious *Qur'an* by the latter generations therefore, reference is made to the *Ahadith* of the Prophet to have an insight into how he interprets the relevant verses.

In his work, Ash-Shawkānī's reliance on the *Hadith* of the Prophet in vindicating a verse of



the glorious *Qur'ān* is unparalleled and beyond ordinary imagination. He demonstrates high sense of acquaintanceship with traditions of the Prophet and the sciences thereof. His searchlight for relevant *Hadith* to issues or verses under discourse captures various works and collections of *Hadith* and their sciences as compiled by different scholars of different ages.

Equally, Ash-Shawkānī paid a painstaking attention to the science of authentication and categorization of Hadith, giving premium to *Sahih* (sound) narrations over and above others of lesser status like *Hassan* (fair) and *Da'if* (weak). He indicates each at *Matn* (text) and *Sanad*(chain) levels. He goes further in some instances to demonstrate how some *Ahadith* were reported by different narrators or compiled by compilers and mentions the variations found therein.

Specifically, Ash-Shawkānī has a special feature on the Hadith of either *Da'if* (weak) or *Mawdu'* (unfounded) categories. He declines any indication to point out the difference between the two. In other words, the two are almost of the same category. He however uses some weak traditions in his *Tafsir*. This is substantiated in his work while explaining this verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ

O Messenger proclaim the (message) which hath  
been sent to thee from thy Lord.(Q.5:67)

Ash-Shawkānī cites a Shi'ite's Hadith which purported that the verse was revealed to prophet at the GhadirKhum in respect of <sup>c</sup>Ali, the fourth Khalifah of the Prophet. It (Hadith) proves that <sup>c</sup>Ali is the leader of the *Ummah* (Muslim Community). It reads:

إِن عَلِيًّا مَوْلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Indeed,<sup>c</sup>Ali is the leader of the faithful.

This Hadith had been declared as unfounded by scholars especially the Sunnis school where Ash-Shawkānī belongs but he did not indicate the status of the said Hadith.(Ash-Shawkani, 2010).

Furthermore, there may be other compelling reasons for his adoption of weak *Hadith* to





drive home his points. One of those reasons may be his preference to substantiate his point where there are no other Hadith of higher status available provided such a weak tradition does not contradict basic teachings of Islam or *Qur'ān*.

Imam Ash-Shawkāni, based on our observation makes use of available Prophetic traditions to substantiate his exegetical work. This undoubtedly adds value to the *Tafsīr* because it is a prominent feature in the traditional *Tafsīr (At-Tafsīr bil-Ma'thūr)*. The importation of the Qur'anic texts with the use of Ahādith has in fact exposed the chain of narrations and category of their authenticity whether Hasan (good) or *Sahih* tradition (sound).

In the same vein, it is explicit that in some occasions, Imam Ash-Shawkāni would make use of weak traditions. Though he uses such *hadith* on matter of exhortations and prohibitions, it could have been more appropriate that he avoids using such weak traditions. This is in the sense that the minds of his readers will be free from attaching much importance to such weak narrations since they are attributed to the Prophet of Islam.

### **The use of the Qur'ānto interpret the Qur'ān**

Among the styles or methods of Shawkāni in *Tafsīr* is using the Qur'ān to explain the meaning of the Qur'ān . It is unanimously agreed by exegetes that the first and the best commentary of the Qur'ān is the use of the Qur'ān itself.

Like orthodox exegetes who based their commentaries of the Qur'ān on *Tafsīr bil-mathur* (commentary based on traditions), Imam Ash-Shawkāni also uses some Quranic verses to clarify one another. Below are instances of his interpretation of Qur'anic statements with other Quranic statements.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتُرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي  
بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا تَتَكَلَّمُ لَهُمْ وَّهُمْ عَذَابُ أَلِيمٍ



Those who conceal Allah's revelations in the Book and purchase for them a miserable profit they swallow into themselves naught but fire; Allah will not address them on the Day of Resurrection nor purify them. Grievous will be their penalty. (Q2:175)

Imam Shawkāni interprets the statement, *ما يأكلون في بطونهم إلا النار* to imply:

Swallowing unlawful things in their stomach. He proves this meaning by using Qur'an 4:10 which says:

Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies: They will soon be enduring a blazing fire!

Thus, Shawkāni asserts that the word conceal Allah's message and that of those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans are the same. Imam Shawkāni's interpretations of *Amwal-Yatama* in this verse are corroborated with assertion of Ibn Jariy at-Tabari (1998) where he says that:

"المعنى ولا يكلمهم بما يحبونه ولا بما يكرهونه"

This means that Allah will not address them with what they love nor with what they hate. It should be observed that many contemporary writers of English translation of the Qur'an translate: to mean swallowing of fire at translated by Yusuf Ali (2000: *Suratul-Baqara*) whereas the word as contained in the verse may not mean "conceal Allah's message alone" but it has another meaning like eating unlawful food, unlawful drinks, unlawful adornments. etc.

Another Qur'anic statement interpreted by Imam Shawkāni through the use of another Quranic statement is the word "العالمين" Qatadah (died 117 A.H) Imam Shawkāni (2010 vol. p. 217) asserts that the word as contained in Qur'an chapter 1:1 connotes *كل موجود سوى الله* "All the existing things beside Allah" Ibn Abbas contends that *al-alamina* means Jinns and men. He proves this meaning with the use of Qur'an 25:1 which says:



...لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا

....that it may be an admonition

But Imam Shawkāni (2010) asserts that the first interpretation of ‘*al-<sup>c</sup>Alamin* as stated earlier which is that of at-Tabari is more correct. This is corroborated by Qur’ān 26:23 which read thus:

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (23) قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ

Pharaoh said: And who is the lord and cherisher of the  
Worlds. (Musa) said: The Lord and cherisher of the heavens  
and the earth, and all between

In this regard, to have the appropriate meaning of the word “*al-<sup>c</sup>Alamin* in the Qur’ān 26:23, the assertion of Shawkāni is to be upheld. Furthermore, while interpreting Qur’ān 1:6 says:

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

The Way of those on whom you have bestowed Your Grace,  
Ash-Shawkān upholds the assertion of majority of scholars who use Qur’ān 4:69 to interpret Qur’ān 1:6 which says:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ  
النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا

Thus, Shawkāni explains that those categories of righteous people that Qur’ān 1:6 talks about are contained in Qur’ān 4:69 (Imam Shawkāni, 2010 Vol. 1, p. 136).



### **Source of *Tafsīr Fathul-Qadir***

Imam Shawkāni as an erudite scholar, judge, exegete, and *Muhadith* applies in his work experiences and knowledge he acquired through his exposition to numerous works of other scholars. Thus, which serve as sources on his commentary of the Qur'ān. These include the followings:

- (i) *Tafsīr Jami' u-l-Ahkām al-Qur'ān* written by Muhammad al-Qurtubi (died 571AH/1273) this compendium work influenced Imam Ash-Sawkāni in making his own work to be *Tafsīr bil-Mathur*. Shaykh al-Qurtubi's was a great exegete, jurist and Imam. He was born in 1214 in Cordova in the present day Spain and died and buried in Egypt (Shawkāni 2010) and (Britannica Encyclopedia 2007).
- (ii) *Al-Jamicu-l-Bayan fit-Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* written by At-Tabari (died 923C.E /310 AH) This work influenced Imam Shawkāni in making his own work similar to *at-Tafsīr bil-Mathur*. At-Tabar's name is Abū-Ja'afar Muhammad Ibn Jarir. He was born, raised and died in *Baghdad* (Britannica Encyclopedia 2007).
- (iii) *Al-Hawi Fil-Fiqh* written by Al-Matruḍi (died 1058CE/450A.H). The author who is also known as Abu al-Hasan was born in Basrah. He was a Shafī'i Jurist (Britannica Encyclopedia 2007).
- (iv) *Irabul-Qur'ān and Ma'anil-Qur'ān* written by Abū al-Ja'afar Nuhās, (died 950C.E). This author was an Egyptian linguistic scholar. He taught many students in Cairo. He wrote his works on linguistic and Quranic syntax (Shawkāni 2010) and Britannica encyclopedia 2007).
- (v) *Al-Muharrir al-Wajiz Fit-Tafsīr* authored by Ibn Utiyyah (died 542 A.H). Imam Shawkāni was greatly influenced by the works of Ibn Utiyyah particularly in the area of *Tafsīr bi-Mathur*, Arabic grammar and Islamic law, Ibn Utiyyah is name is Abu Muhammad Abdul-Haq Ibn Utiyyah and was an erudite scholar. Utiyyah is the name of their great grandfather (Adh- Dhahabi 1996 Vol. 2).



(vi) *Ahkam al-Qur'ān li Ibn-l-Arabi* written by Al-QadiAbubakarIbnArabi (died 543A.H/1148C.E). The author was born in Servile in the year 468 A.H/1076 C.E. He acted as a Qadi (Judge) in sevile for certain period. That was why he was being referred to as al-QadiAbubakarIbn al-Arabi (Encyclopedia Britanica 2007). He was considered by many authors including as-Sayuti (d, 911 A.H) as an authority on *Nasikhwal-Mansukhin* the Qur'ān (Abrogation and Abrogated verse in the Qur'ān As-Sayuti 2005).

### **Conclusion**

This paper has discussed Imam Shawkāni's stylistic features and peculiar approach to exegetical analysis of the Glorious Qur'ān. It has been discovered that Imam's Shawkāni's approach to the exegesis of the Qur'ān was genuine from the perspective of the degree of authenticity, which he gave to legal matters.

Shawkāni brought out the authentic proofs among the various statement of the previous exegetes and jurists. He justifiably used the Qur'ān itself, Hadith, statement of *sahabah* and their followers, and their views of previous exegetes to interpret the Qur'anic verses. Moreso, he used Arabic poems and the knowledge of Arabic language judiciously to prove the correctness of the meaning of Quranic word interpreted in his *Fathul-Qadir*. This reiterated his application of meaning of the meaning of Arabic words as interpreted in Arabic poem to derive the meaning of Qur'anic words.. However, not all chapters of the Qur'ān consist of essential aspects of stylistic introduction in the *Tafsīr* Imam Shawkāni. This distinguished exegete used different styles to state his own view.

In addition, a few number of traditions of the Prophet used by Imam Shawkāni as his proofs were discovered to be weak by some scholars of Hadith. Such weak traditions were however not used by Imam Shawkāni in bringing out legal rulings; rather, they are used to prove the importance of certain exhortations and avoidance of certain prohibitions. It should be noted that Imam Shawkāni himself identified some weak traditions which he did not uphold or use in



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his Tafsīr. The style adopted in raising almost all issues to be elucidated in the Qur'ān is consistent. Besides, his commentary was not confined to only the jurisprudential issues contained in the Qur'ān, but, also on other verses very adequately. It cannot be disputed that this traditional work of *Tafsīr* would remain an invaluable authoritative source on Quranic interpretation. This makes this *Tafsīr* an indispensable tool to all jurists and those in legal dispensation.



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