

CHAPTER IV
THE USE OF HERMENEUTIC IN UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY
QUR'ĀN AND ITS INTERPRETATION

A. Hermeneutic and Tafṣīr

On one statement, Vincent Crapanzano had said that Hermes had promised not to lie to Zeus, but Hermes promise not to say the whole. Therefore, this chapter will explain whether hermeneutic same as *tafsīr* or not.

As has been widely explained in the previous chapter that hermeneutic In Greek mythology, the term is synonymous with the image of the god Hermes in order to connect the message from the Gods to human. However, the message must be interpreted first by the messenger before his submission to the human. Starting from this mythology, implicitly contained an important elements about interpreter's behavior, that to explain and to translate.

Basically the word hermeneutic means understanding that is how we understand something particularly and understanding of a particular text. Derived from the Greek language hermeneutikos Greek philosopher Aristotle first wrote an editorial that *Peri Hermeneias* which is then translated into Latin as *De Interpretatione* then translated in English as *On the Interpretation*. However, long before the translation of the Latin language, al-Farabi (d. 339/950), prominent Muslim philosopher, has

translated the works of Aristotle and comment on it firstly into Arabic under the title *fī al-'Ibārah*.

hermeneutic is developed into a specific methodology to interpret the bible (the holy book of Christians). Firstly because it's in the history of the bible they got problems with bible texts itself, why not, because they know that the bible was not written by the Prophet 'Isa nor written by the Jesus disciples, but written by people who never met Jesus, so if we look at the Bible new testament, there is Bible of John, the Gospel of Mark, Gospel of Matthew, Luke and so on, these are the people who never met Jesus, but writing about the bible and tells the life history of Jesus.

The second is: that the Prophet Jesus spoke in Aramaic while the bible was written in the Greek-language manuscripts, whereas the Prophet Isa didn't speak the Greek language, then growing Bibles today is not longer use the Greek language, english , German, French, the Indonesian edision which is taken from the English language, and they say: those are Bible.

In the 19th century, hermeneutic is considered as the basic principle of interpretation of all forms of text as a particular method in the humanities. Then a new philosophical framework since Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Hans-Georg Gadamer (d. 1900) Germany's leading philosopher. The passage of time makes sense behind the term "hermeneutic" continues to metamorphose with the advancement of science .

Because Christians facing issues like this, they assume there is gap, or the distance between the Bible and the Prophet Jesus who received the revelation, therefore, to suspect or believe that the bible does not currently represent a revelation received by Prophet Jesus then they built a methodology called hermeneutics, the goal is to bridge the revelation received by the Prophet Jesus with these four-John, Luke, Mark and Matthew - because there was a long distance even a hundred years, so they want to find an approach that when they read the bible they can have a revelation received by the Prophet Isa, so the authors had considered giving distance between the Prophet Isa and readers today, then hermeneutics methodology used to bridge and make them closer to the revelation.

In the *tafsīr* methodology nobody ever questioned the text, because the Prophet himself who interpret the Qur'ān, and the path is very clear, the *huffadz* (people who memorized Al- Qur'ān) as well as Qurro' (Expert in reading Al-Qur'ān) also always keep the Qur'ān in their hearts. There are no civilization in the world that has the books and scriptures as great as The Qur'ān which is being memorized in the chests of millions of its believers.

In interpreting the Qur'ān, an interpreter is required to master several disciplines according to the rules agreed by the interpretations of Islamic scholars. A person does not have the authority to interpret the holy Qur'ān if he does not have enough capacity to become an interpreter.

Interpretation methodology used must be appropriate with Prophet's guidance, the Companions, Successor, and the qualified scholars. In other words, they are our main reference.

The first science which born among Muslims is the Science of Interpretation (*Ulūm al-Tafsīr*). It became possible and became a reality because of the scientific nature of the Arabic structure. Tafsīr is not really synonymous with Greek hermeneutics, or Christian hermeneutics, and also not the same as scientific interpretation of the scriptures of other religions and cultures¹. The science of interpretation of the Qur'ān is important because it is really a scientific principle on which is built the entire structure, purpose, understanding the views and culture of Islam. That is why al-Tabari (d. 923 CE) regard it as the most important compared with all the knowledge and science². It is the science that explores the happenings of the holy book the Qur'ān in terms of history, its *sanad*, *adab* (manner) / how to read, words, meanings, related laws and wisdom lesson³

Qur'ānic interpretation (*tafsīr*) is not the same as the hermeneutics of the Qur'ān. Or in other words the history of Qur'ānic interpretation development is different from the historical development of hermeneutic.

1 Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam : A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education. An Address to the Second World Conference on Muslim Education*, Islamabad, Pakistan, 1980. Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), 1980; second edition by International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1991, quoted from Prof.Dr. Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Tafsīr dan ta'wīl Sebagai Metode Ilmiah* (Jurnal ISLAMIA, Tahun I No.1/Muharram 1425 H),54.

2 Abu Ja'far Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan fi ta'wīl al-qur'ān*, translated by J.Cooper (Oxford : OUP, 1987), 1- 8,

3 Al-Imam As-Suyuthi, *Ilmu Tafsīr* (translation edition) (Surabaya : Bina Ilmu, 1982), 11.

Qur'ānic text, since its first time revealed to the Prophet Muhammad until now no meet the problem, that remains in Arabic. Unlike Bible with its Hebrew (or other material that make up the Old Testament), according to their scholars, it was not built entirely on the basis of historical science that shows its authenticity, but it is based on faith alone, and if there are errors and mistakes like that it can be corrected only by speculative correction (the danger). The New Testament also has the same problem with the Hebrew Bible. These books, especially gospel, written after the time of Jesus in Greek (not Aramaic language, which is the native language of the historical Jesus). Moreover, it is recognized by the authorities and well-known in the Christian gospel writers goal is not to write an objective history but for the purposes of evangelism which resulted to some allegorical interpretations excessive. Recognized also that the copies of Bible literature subsequently undergo regular editorial-editing to fit the needs and changing of the times.

However, explicitly the equation of contained between the hermeneutic and tafsīr. According to Dilthey, hermeneutics is “the technique to understand the expression of a life that consists in writing”⁴. and commentaries that explain the verses of the Qur'ān in terms of its words by words, its grammatical, composition, literary and scientific cues.⁵

4 Mudjia Rahardjo, *Hermeneutika Gadamerian: Kuasa Bahasa dalam Wacana Politik Gus Dur* (Malang: UIN Maliki Press, 2010), 97.

5 Abd Kholid, *Kuliah Sejarah Perkembangan Kitab Tafsīr* (IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya), 2.

No	Tafsīr	Hermeneutic
1	Prophet Muhammad had not authorized to change any treatise that will be delivered only to the extent convey what it is and if there is a message just to clarify vague or unclear.	Hermes authorized to interpret and retell the treatise to be delivered
2	Always under the control of God, so that Muhammad should not do as he pleases himself.	No control of the Gods of the treatise delivered whether in accordance with prevailing norms or not / have not. ⁶
3	Having a clear concept, and deeply rooted in Islam	Built on relativism
4	The leading interpreters of all time still has agreements.	Leads to the idea that any interpretation of the Qur'ān is relative
5	Referring to the sciences which that will give the understanding of Scripture revealed to the Messenger of Allah, an explanation of the meanings of the Book of Allah and the withdrawal of the laws and their lesson note.	Associated to Hermes, the messenger of Gods in Greek mythology who served convey and interpret messages Gods which were still vague to be understood in the language of human
6	Epistemologi source is the revelation of the Qur'ān.	Its sources of epistemological sense merely containing allegations, doubt, and assumption.
7	<i>Tafsīr</i> history that has been so well established in Islam	It comes in the context of Western civilization, dominated by the concept of skeptic science or reasonable speculation.
8	Supporting sciences in interpreting the Koran existing and well-established	There is no supporting sciences toward hermeneutics.

6 Nashruddin Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsīr*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), 77.

B. Hermeneutic in Understanding The Holy Qur'ān and Its Interpretation

Hermeneutic has now become a common methodology, hermeneutic when it entered into the field of philosophy that is where there is a clash with the minds of the Muslims, is it possible this hermeneutic applied to the Qur'ān, because they said "Al- Qur'ān is a book, Al- Qur'ān is a text, the Qur'ān also are ancient books or classics, so there is a distance between us by the Prophet" about whether the texts of the Qur'ān is authentic or not even they begin to question, they spend narrations, then arose a study of the deconstruction of the Qur'ān, they want to make re-construction of Al- Qur'ān, they want to edit the holy Qur'ān, to the extent that they want to issue a critical edition of the Qur'ān, they mean they want to change back Qira'ah of Qur'ān itself. And those are because of hermeneutic role.

If hermeneutic applied to the study of the Qur'ān, then it will bring a new paradigm to the Qur'ānic interpretation and also to the status of the Qur'ān itself. Schleiermacher's opinion stating that all of the text does not have the uniqueness method it would be contrary to the beliefs of Muslims who have long believed the Qur'ān as revelation of were revealed to Muhammad and as authentic and final.

Schleiermacher's thought very clearly have an impact on thoughts of Arkoun and Nashr Hamīd which they equating the Qur'ān like any other book. This is a new lawsuit against the status of the Qur'ān as

revelation. Nashr Hamīd clearly said that the Qur'ān is a human language. And according to him a divine text changes into human text since the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. The Text of Al- Qur'ān formed in the reality and culture for over 20 years. That is why the Qur'ān is a cultural product (*muntaj Thaqaḥī*) who also became a cultural producer (*muntij li al-Thaqāḥah*) as a text and a reference to various other texts.⁷ Because the Qur'ān together with other texts, Nashr Hamīd said: "I study the Qur'ān as a text in Arabic in order to be reviewed by the Muslims, Christians and Atheists"

According to Schleiermacher hermeneutical thought, scriptural truth should not affect the procedures that will be revealed expression in each texts⁸ and scriptures does not require special methods.⁹ While the study of the Qur'ān people can not simply interpret the Qur'ān, and must follow the interpretation procedures that have long agreed by clerics/muslims scholars continued to Prophet Muhammad.

Schleiermacher made hermeneutic as a general matter, but for Paul Ricoeur hermeneutics born with Bible interpretation and the effort to raise the level of scientific philology¹⁰ (*Kunstlehre*) is not limited to a particular method.

7 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Naqd al-Khitab al-Dini* (Kairo: Sina li al-Nashr, first edition, 1992), 93.

8 Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth dan Method* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 142-143

9 Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, "*General Hermeneutics*" translated by J. Duke and J. Forstman in the *The Hermeneutic Reader: Teks of the German Tradition from The Enlightenment to the Present*, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1992), 80.

10 Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutic and the Human Sciences: Essay On Language, Action and Interpretation*.

The understanding of Arkoun and Nasr Hamīd equating the Qur'ān with other texts is very contrary to the Qur'ān. Since the Qur'ān is the word of God which is the show for mankind.

In addition to the relativity of interpretations (tafsīr), according to Adian Husaini, the application of hermeneutics also reflect badly on the “reliability” of the building concept of Islam during this time. The hermeneut suspect did not hesitate to insult the Islamic scholars. and even to the crashing “areas” off limits as the deconstruction of the concept of revelation of the Qur'ān.¹¹

Because Muslims have a different tradition of scientific civilization with Jews and Christians. Prophet, the Companions and later scholars of the Qur'ān have been keeping a strict vigil over the continued sanad continued from generation to generation.

Perhaps hermeneutic only suitable for use as a tool to read the book of commentary (in contrast to the Al-Qur'ān and tafsīr), due perhaps Muslims should have the ability to read and Understand the Qur'ān better than the interpreter read it and because of the age difference/context surrounding the former with the current interpreter. So it is not impossible if the readers who live in contemporary times will gain a new understanding / new interpretation of a particular verse, but does not deviate from the basis of existing scientific tradition since the time of Prophet Muhammad.

11 Adian Husaini, *Hermeneutika dan Tafsīr Al- qur'ān*, (Bandung: Gema Insani, 2007), 28.

One of Biblical hermeneutic purpose is that we can read the text as well as or better than the author, for of course it's fine for Bible, because the purpose of a Christian to read the bible hermeneutics methodology is that they are able to read the Bible as Johannes, Luke, Mark and Matthew, or even to be better than them because there was a distance, it is only natural that such methodology applied in the study of the Bible. But when it is applied to the Qur'ān then what occurred in the minds of Muslims that we will read the Qur'ān as well as or better than God, it is not possible right? Impossible it happens, it is not thought at all by Muslims, because of what? because when reading the Qur'ān that we were behind the Qur'ān, we can not mess with the Qur'ān and its part of *Ibādah* (worshiping Allah The Almighty).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica said clearly that the main purpose of hermeneutics is to find out the the “the Value of Bible's Truth”.

For both Jews and Christians throughout their histories, the primary purpose of hermeneutic, and of the exegetical methods employed in interpretation, has been to discover the truths and values of the Bible.

Why with the hermeneutics the theologians aim to seek Bible truth value? The answer is because they have a number of problems with the texts of their scriptures. They questioned whether the Bible was literally can be Word of God or the word of man. The current who believes that Bible can be considered as God's Word harsh criticism and was considered extreme in understanding the Bible.

Literal interpretation asserts that a biblical text is to be interpreted according to the “plain meaning” conveyed by its grammatical construction and historical context. The literal meaning is held to correspond to the intention of the authors. This type of hermeneutics is often, but not necessarily, associated with belief in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, according to which the individual words of the divine message were divinely chosen. Extreme forms of this view are criticized on the ground that they do not account adequately for the evident individuality of style and vocabulary found in the various biblical authors.

Note the last phrase which reads “individuality of style and vocabulary found in the various biblical authors”. The big difference that causes the Bible authors could not say Word of God (the Word of God) literally. Therefore Christian theologians need hermeneutics to understand the actual Word of God. They were almost unanimous that the Bible is not the literal Word of God. Therefore, they feel the need to read the Bible “between the line” in order to understand the true word of God. This is where the role of hermeneutics in helping to understand the Bible for Christian theologians

The situation is different with the Muslims, who can understand the Word of God from the Holy Qur’ān both “on the line” or “between the lines” Muslims agree that the Qur’ān is the Word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Muslims also agree that the Qur’ān is literally from God. Also, Muslims agree, reading the Qur’ān is literally as

worship and be rewarded; rejected a literal reading of the fault; reads literally in prayer is a requirement, and understand the Qur'ān literally also justified, while the literal translation and not said to be al- Qur'ān. Ibn Abbas has stated that such an understanding between the Qur'ān is the kind of commentary that everyone can understand (*la ya'dziru fī fahmihi ahad*). Understanding this kind of course referring to the literal understanding of word or *lafadz*. Therefore the Muslims, unlike Jews and Christians, never felt troubled by Qur'ānic words literally.

The next difference is that the Bible is now written and read is no longer with its original language. Bible native language is Hebrew for the Old Testament, Greek for the New Testament, and Jesus himself spoke the language of Aramaic. Is then translated the whole Bible into Latin, then into the European languages such as German, English, French and others, including Indonesian language which that taken from the English Bible version. Hebrew Bible texts also have a problem with the issue of originality, as expressed by a student of Bible history:

The Hebrew text now in our possession has one special peculiarity: not with standing its considerable age, it comes to us in relatively late manuscripts which are therefore far removed in time from the originals (sometimes by more than a thousand years). None of these manuscripts is earlier than the ninth century C.E.

So now if anyone want to apply it to the Qur'ān, he has to make the assumption that the first time we have a problem is the texts of the

holy Qur'ān, such persons would say that this Qur'ānic text is problematic, because if someone uses hermeneutics means he considers the Qur'ān, there are writing or making it up, because according to him, in every book, both ancient books and new books there exist three elements: the first is the text, the book consists of letters, words, sentences, paragraphs and so on, then the second one: every book was the author or writer, of course, a book may not be granted, there must exist an author, then the three existing readers now for all three Bible. This is so fit, or complete, the Bible itself is no text, no writer and no readers, ever since the Bible does not represent the whole of God's revelation received by the Prophet Isa the reader is not able to absorb the entire revelation was, he built a methodology hermeneutics, so one of the Biblical hermeneutics goals is that we can read the text as well as or better than the author, to the Bible it is of course right, because the goal of Christians is to read the Bible by using the methodology of hermeneutics is that they are able to read the Bible as Johannes, Lukas, Mark and Matthew, or even to be better than them because there was a distance, it is only natural that such methodology applied in the study of the Bible. But when it is applied to the Quran then what occurred in the minds of Muslims that we will read the Qur'ān as well as or better than God, it is not possible right? Impossible it happens, not even been thought at all by Muslims. Further is, that the Bible is now written and read is no longer the language of origin. Bible native language is Hebrew for the Old Testament, Greek for

the New Testament, and Jesus himself spoke the language of Aramaic. It then translated the whole Bible into Latin, then into the European languages such as German, English, French and others, Indonesian language much to the English Bible. Hebrew Bible texts also have a problem with the issue of originality.

One characteristic of this hermeneutical method, they said that if we use the method of hermeneutics when we read the text, the reader must participate in making their own interpretation, if we read the term reproductive usual reading, re-reading what has been written by the author, so we were behind the author, we follow the plot the author, but the methods of hermeneutics we no longer reproduce but we produce a new meaning of the text itself, so it is called a productive reading or reading productively, so the author is dead, and we can read and can understand it as best and as we like the new meaning that our own production, what to do with just text it is up to the reader, would mean anything free, the reader is in a position that is very free to interpret and understand the text, it is called with a productive reading in Arabic called *qira'ah muntijah*. This certainly does not apply to the holy Qur'an especially about what is already *qoth'ī* or definite.

Here are the brief difference between Bible and The Qur'ān:

Bible	Al- Qur'ān
Written by people who never met Jesus	Memorized, and written since the Prophet was alive then followed by the companions with the strict provisions of <i>sanad</i>
Written not with the native language of Jesus' "Aramaic" but the language of Hebrew and Greek	Written and recited in Arabic, the original language of the Prophet Muhammad who was also with it the Qur'ān was revealed
Bible was written even composed only by their faith without any empirical evidence	The Qur'ān is not human works (Prophet Muhammad PBUH
Christians do not read the bible with the original language (Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament)	Muslims read the Qur'ān with the original

C. Some Reactions toward Hermeneutic in Islamic Studies

The use of the term hermeneutic in the study of the interpretation of the Islamic world is something new.¹² Since Hasan Hanafi introduced hermeneutics to the world of Islamic thought in his book entitled: "*Les Methodes d'Exeges, Essai sur La Science des Fordements de la Comprehesion, Ilm Usul al-Fiqh*" in 1965. And in another book titled:

¹²Farid Esach in his book "*Qur'ān: Pluralism and Liberalism*", said: the term hermeneutic is still new in Islamic thought, then it meets some various reactions among muslims. That actually it has been practiced so long, especially in the concept of interpretation. Quoted from Muzairi, *Hermeneutika dalam Pemikiran Islam*, a paper on the magazine of "*Hermeneutika Al-qur'ān Mazhab Yogya*". Islamika, 2003, 61.

“Islam in the Modern World, Religion, Ideology, and Development”, vol: I, particularly in the section entitled: *“Method of the mystic Interpretation”*, and the vol II in Section: *“hermeneutics Libration and Revolution”*.¹³ Thus among the scholars of Islam are divided into two groups: a group that received hermeneutics of Islamic thought and the anti-hermeneutics.

The reasons of those who accept hermeneutics in Islamic thought are:

1. The Qur’ān is a human texts (the result of the culture) and therefore need to be in the presence interpretation to understand it.
2. Al-Quran is now the time to be re-interpreted, because interpretation of the Qur’ān which is exist today only interpreted textually, it is necessary to comply with the present conditions (contextually).
3. The Qur’ānic interpretation which is exist today is still relatively. So that still allows interpretations are more free than that.
4. Constituents a key pillar of Hermeneutics: text, author, and the audience, are not different with the concept of Qur’ānic exegesis. namely: 1) who is saying, 2) to whom was revealed, and 3) to whom addressed.¹⁴
5. The practice of hermeneutics have been made in the interpretation of the Islamic world for a long time, even since the beginning of the study interpretation, especially when faced with the Qur’ān. Evidence of this

13 Muzairi, *Hermeneutika dalam Pemikiran Islam*, sebuah makalah dalam buku *“Hermeneutika Al- qur’ān Mazhab Yogya”*. Islamika, 2003, hlm: 60.

14 *Ibid*, hlm: 62.

is: 1) studies on *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *Nāsikh-mansūkh*, 2) the use of a variety of theories and methods in the process of interpretation, and 3) the interpretation of traditional categorization, such as Shiite interpretation, your interpretation *Mu'tazilah*, interpretations of law, philosophy, and other commentary. It shows an awareness of the group, ideology, period, or particular social horizon.¹⁵

6. The term hermeneutics in its meaning is almost equal to the *tafsīr* or *ta'wīl*. which means to explain or reveal (*al-Kashf wa al-bayān*), whereas hermeneutics has a sense interpretation.
7. There is a parallel between the spirit of the Protestant Reformation and Salafiya Movement in Islam. In Salafiya movement, developed a tradition of interpretation of the *Qur'ān* which more or less independent of the school tradition. This explains why in decisions of Muhammadiyah Majlis Legal Affairs Committee, for example, references to the Yellow Book (*turāth*) that includes traditional circles currents altogether less, or even none at all.

While the anti-hermeneutics in the study of Islam, has the following reasons:

1. Hermeneutics is based on the guidelines that any interpretation of the *Qur'ān* is relative. Yet, the fact remains that the interpreter of all time still has the basic guidelines in interpreting the *Qur'ān*.

¹⁵ Fahrudin Faiz. *Hermeneutika Al- qur'ān: Tema-Tema Kontroversial* (Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2005), 13.

2. The hermeneut found that the interpreter can understand better than author, impossible can happen in al-Quran. There never was an Qua'anic exegete claiming that he was more understand than the creator or author of al-Quran, Allah SWT.
3. The concept of hermeneutics guided by the interpretation of the text by reading a dogmatic doctrine and should be abandoned and removed (deabsolution) is also not in accordance with Islamic teachings. As Muslims, we must believe that the Quran is a miracle and a different plain texts. The doctrine of the truth of the Qur'ān are all sourced in God and a requirement of faith of Muslims.
4. Hermeneut say that the author does not have authority over the meaning of the text, but history is also not possible to determine its meaning applied to the al-Qur'ān. All Muslims agree that the authority of the truth of the Qur'ān Allah retained by the creator. Reality also shows that Allah through the Qur'ān actually change history, not influenced or determined by history. Among the influence of al-Qur'ān is the fact that the Qur'ān has given rise to a new civilization called “text civilization” (*hadārah al-nash*).
5. The tradition of hermeneutics in the Bible is indeed possible. There are a variety of Bible and Bible has some authors. And the author Qur'ān is just God. Hence hermeneutical method was applied to the Bible can not be used in the Qur'ān.

6. Bible filled with a series of misleading myths and dogma. It triggers the use of the Bible hermeneutics. While al-Qur'ān was definitely absolute and well-kept its authenticity. Similarly, the history and tradition of tafsīr al-Qur'ān. Because the Qur'ān was created by the One who is most perfect and interpreted by creature with their full of limitations, then there will never be a perfect word of interpretation.
7. People who want to interpret the Qur'ān should be some provision such: mastering as-Sunnah, which in this case is to understand fully nash (text) as-Sunnah, knowing and understanding the historical narratives in the Qur'ān or news about the race humans in ancient times were sourced from the Prophet. Mastering the science of Tawhīd, Fiqh science, science I'rāb (grammar), balāghah science, history and etcetera.