



Universidad Nacional de Catamarca - Facultad de Humanidades
Instituto de Investigación en Teorías del Arte y Estética
Revista Rigel – ISSN 2525-1945.

Epistemological Integration in the Thought of Imam ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘ālibī in Light of His Tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*

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Soumission : 18/01/2026

Acceptation 27/06/2026

Publication : 22/09/2026

Abstract

This study examines the epistemological integration in the thought of Imam ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Makhlūf al-Tha‘ālibī through his Qur’anic exegesis *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*. It seeks to identify the manifestations of his encyclopedic scholarship and its impact on the formation of his exegetical approach. The study adopts the inductive method to examine relevant passages in the tafsīr and the descriptive method to present and analyze them in accordance with the objectives of the study. The study first introduces Imam al-Tha‘ālibī and his tafsīr, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, and then highlights his attention to the Qur’anic sciences, the science and methodology of ḥadīth, theological and jurisprudential issues, and linguistic discussions. These dimensions reveal the diversity of his knowledge and its integration within the exegetical process. The study also seeks to demonstrate how he employed these disciplines in interpreting the Qur’anic text and to highlight the impact of his epistemological integration on addressing various exegetical issues. The study concludes that *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* represents a clear manifestation of the encyclopedic thought of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī, as it brings together Qur’anic sciences, ḥadīth, theology, jurisprudence, and linguistics. He employed his diverse body of knowledge in the service of Qur’anic exegesis and the elucidation of the meanings of the Noble Qur’an, thereby underscoring the importance of studying epistemological integration in identifying the distinctive features of his exegetical methodology and his scholarly standing.

Keywords: Epistemological Integration, al-Tha‘ālibī, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, Qur’anic Exegesis, Encyclopedic Thought.

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon the trustworthy Prophet, our master Muhammad, and upon his family and all his Companions. To proceed:

Allah has bestowed upon our homeland a distinguished group of scholars who devoted themselves to the study of various disciplines of Islamic law and religious sciences, including Qur’anic exegesis, theology, jurisprudence, ḥadīth, and linguistics. Among the most prominent scholars of our homeland throughout the various historical periods was the eminent Algerian scholar Imam ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Makhlūf al-Tha‘ālibī, who was distinguished by his encyclopedic scholarship and his profound engagement with various Islamic sciences. This is clearly demonstrated by the diversity of his scholarly works, which numbered nearly ninety.

He authored works in Qur'anic exegesis, most notably his renowned *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*; in Qur'anic readings, *al-Mukhtār min al-Jawāmi' fī Muḥādhāt al-Durar al-Lawāmi' fī Aṣl Maqra' al-Imām Nāfi'*; in ḥadīth, *al-Arba'ūn Ḥadīthan Mukhtārah*; in linguistics, *al-Dhahab al-Ibrīz fī Tafsīr wa-l'rāb Ba'd Āy al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*; in Prophetic biography, *al-Anwār fī Āyāt wa-Mu'jizāt al-Nabī al-Mukhtār*; and in Sufism, *Quṭb al-'Ārifīn wa-Maqāmāt al-Abrār wa-al-Aṣfiyā' wa-al-Ṣiddīqīn*, in addition to numerous other works recorded in biographical and bibliographical sources.

This vast corpus of writings across diverse fields demonstrates the eminent scholarly standing attained by Imam al-Tha'ālibī. It also confirms that the author of *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* possessed an encyclopedic intellectual outlook that enabled him to delve deeply into the intricacies of various Islamic sciences.

In light of the foregoing, this research paper seeks to address the following central research question:

What are the most prominent features of epistemological integration in the thought of Imam al-Tha'ālibī as reflected in his tafsīr, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this topic can be highlighted as follows:

- It sheds light on the eminent scholarly standing attained by Imam al-Tha'ālibī.
- It highlights the encyclopedic thought of Imam al-Tha'ālibī.
- It demonstrates the extent to which Imam al-Tha'ālibī's epistemological integration influenced his Qur'anic exegesis.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

- Introduce Imam al-Tha'ālibī and his tafsīr, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*.
- Demonstrate that Imam al-Tha'ālibī's encyclopedic thought is clearly manifested in his tafsīr, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*.
- Highlight the extent of Imam al-Tha'ālibī's attention to the Qur'anic sciences in his tafsīr.
- Examine the ḥadīth scholarship and methodology employed in *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*.
- Demonstrate the breadth of Imam al-Tha'ālibī's treatment of theological and doctrinal issues.
- Explain Imam al-Tha'ālibī's methodology in examining and clarifying scholarly disagreement concerning jurisprudential issues.
- Examine Imam al-Tha'ālibī's attention to linguistic discussions in his tafsīr.
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Previous Studies

To the best of my knowledge, I have not found any study that has specifically addressed epistemological integration in the thought of Imam al-Tha'ālibī through his tafsīr, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*.

Research Methodology

In studying this topic, I adopted two main methodological approaches:

1. Inductive Method:

This method was employed to examine *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* inductively and identify the relevant passages constituting the subject of the present study.

2. Descriptive Method:

This method was adopted to describe and analyze these passages in a manner that serves the objectives of the study.

Research Structure

In order to address the research problem presented above, I followed the following structure in studying this topic:

The paper begins with an introduction that provides a preliminary framework for the topic and presents its central research problem. It then discusses the significance of the study and its intended objectives, followed by a statement concerning the absence of previous studies that have addressed

this particular topic. The methodology adopted in conducting the research is then identified, followed by a brief presentation of the structure adopted by the researcher in examining the subject.

The paper is organized into **six sections**. The first section introduces Imam al-Tha‘ālibī and his tafsīr, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. The second section highlights the extent of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s attention to the Qur’anic sciences in his tafsīr. The third section examines the ḥadīth scholarship and methodology employed in *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. The fourth section investigates Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s approach to clarifying and resolving scholarly disagreement concerning jurisprudential issues. The final section addresses Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s attention to linguistic discussions in his tafsīr.

First Section: Introducing Imam al-Tha‘ālibī and His Tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*

Subsection One: Introducing Imam al-Tha‘ālibī

He is Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Makhlūf al-Tha‘ālibī al-Jazā’irī. His lineage traces back to our master ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him). He was known as al-Tha‘ālibī in reference to the Arab tribe of al-Tha‘ālibah. He followed the Mālikī school of jurisprudence and adhered to Ash‘arī theology. He was a Qur’anic exegete, jurist, ḥadīth scholar, Sufi, and theologian, and was regarded as one of the foremost scholars of Algeria throughout its various historical periods. He was born in 785 AH, although some sources state that he was born in 786 AH, and he grew up in the town of Khmīs Yusr, located in the province of Boumerdès, east of Algiers.¹

Imam al-Tha‘ālibī embarked on his scholarly journey at an early age. From his childhood, he was keen to pursue knowledge under the guidance of the scholars of his hometown, Wādī Yusr. He subsequently traveled to Béjaïa in 805 AH, where he studied under some of its most prominent scholars. His principal teacher in Qur’anic recitation there was the eminent scholar ‘Alī ibn ‘Uthmān al-Manjalātī. However, his thirst for knowledge remained unsatisfied, prompting him to leave Algeria and travel to Tunis in 809 AH, where he studied under a distinguished group of its scholars, including ‘Isā al-Ghubrīnī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Khalaf, known as al-Ubbī al-Wushtātī, and Muḥammad al-Balawī al-Qayrawānī, known as al-Barzālī, among others. He then traveled to the Turkish city of Bursa and subsequently to Egypt, where he met Shaykh Walī al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī and studied under him extensively, particularly in the sciences of ḥadīth. Al-‘Irāqī granted him an ijāzah (scholarly authorization) for everything he had studied with him, as al-Tha‘ālibī himself stated in his autobiographical account. He subsequently returned to Tunis in 819 AH.²

This extensive travel over a relatively short period demonstrates Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s eagerness to associate with the scholars of his time from different parts of the Islamic world and to broaden his knowledge through their expertise in various Islamic disciplines. This intellectual journey ultimately contributed to the formation of an encyclopedic scholar with extensive knowledge and proficiency across the diverse fields of the Islamic sciences. His works number more than ninety titles covering various Islamic disciplines, including *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn wa-Tuḥfat al-Muttaqīn*, *al-Durr al-Fā’iq al-Mushtamil ‘alā Anwā’ al-Khayrāt fī al-Adhkār wa-al-Da’awāt*, *al-Irshād limā Fthi min Maṣāliḥ al-‘Ibād*, *Haqā’iq al-Tawḥīd*, *Rawḍat al-Anwār wa-Nuzhat al-Akhyār*, and *Jāmi‘ al-Himam fī Akhbār al-Umam*, among numerous other works.³

Imam al-Tha‘ālibī did not confine himself to scholarly authorship; rather, he left his scholarly legacy to a group of students who remained close to him and benefited from his knowledge in various disciplines. Among the most prominent of them were Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Jazā’irī, Muḥammad

¹ See: Muḥammad ibn Maymūn al-Jazā’irī, *al-Tuḥfat al-Marḍiyyah fī al-Dawlah al-Bakdashīyyah fī Bilād al-Jazā’ir al-Maḥmiyyah*, p. 334; Muḥammad ibn Qāsim Makhlūf, *Shajarat al-Nūr al-Zakiyyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Mālikiyyah*, vol. 1, p. 382; and ‘Ādil Nuwayhid, *Mu’jam A’lām al-Jazā’ir*, p. 90.

² See: *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, ed. ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and Muḥammad ‘Alī Mu’awwad, vol. 5, p. 171

³ See: al-Tha‘ālibī, *Ghanīmat al-Wāfīd wa-Bughyat al-Ṭālib al-Mājid*, pp. 26–29

ibn Marzūq al-Kaḥfī, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Tālūtī, and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Maghīlī, among others¹.

Imam al-Tha‘ālibī received recognition from the scholars of his time, who praised him, highlighted his eminent scholarly standing, and attested to his knowledge and piety. Imam al-Sakhāwī praised him, stating: “He was an eminent imam and scholar, a prolific author who abridged Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah’s exegesis into two volumes, abridged Ibn al-Ḥājj’s *al-Far‘ī* into two volumes, and authored works on preaching, spiritual exhortation, and other subjects.”² Imam al-Tinbuktī also described him as follows: “The eminent imam, the authoritative scholar, the practicing scholar, the ascetic, the devout, the saint of Allah, the sincere adviser, the righteous and God-knowing Abū Zayd, known as al-Tha‘ālibī, the author of beneficial works. He was among the saints of Allah who turned away from the worldly life and its people, and among the finest of Allah’s righteous servants.”³

In 876 AH, after spending years pursuing knowledge, writing, and teaching, the eminent scholar and imam of Algeria, Sīdī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘ālibī, passed away and was buried in “Jabbānat al-Ṭalabah” (the Students’ Cemetery), leaving behind a great scholarly legacy that was embraced by successive generations. May Allah have mercy upon Sīdī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘ālibī and reward him abundantly for his contributions.⁴

Subsection Two: Introducing His Tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*

It is entitled *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*. Its author explicitly stated its title in the introduction to his tafsīr. Imam al-Tha‘ālibī abridged it from the tafsīr of Imam Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, and drew upon the abridged tafsīr of al-Ṭabarī, the abridged tafsīr of Ibn Ḥayyān, al-Qurṭubī’s *al-Tadhkirah*, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī’s *al-‘Aqibah*, and other scholarly sources.

A reader of *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* will notice specific symbols used by its author to indicate the source to which he referred when establishing or presenting a particular passage. He used the letter ‘ayn to indicate the words of Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, and the letter ṣād to refer to al-Ṣafāqūsī’s abridgement of Abū Ḥayyān’s tafsīr. He also used the letter tā’ and, at times, the expression *qultu* (“I said”) to distinguish his own words from those of other scholars.⁵

It should be noted that Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s explicit identification of the sources from which he drew in composing his tafsīr is an indication of his scholarly integrity. Otherwise, most exegetes relied in their tafsīrs on works dealing with various Islamic disciplines. After collecting and examining Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s preferred positions and conclusions in his tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, it became evident, beyond any doubt, that his profound scholarship and encyclopedic intellectual outlook are manifested throughout *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. Hardly any passage that requires examination, investigation, and critical clarification can be found without Imam al-Tha‘ālibī expressing his own well-founded and firmly grounded scholarly position, which confirms his eminent scholarly standing.

Given the exceptional value and considerable scholarly significance of this work, it has been published in several editions, the most notable of which are:

1. An edition edited by Muḥammad ibn Muṣṭafā ibn al-Khūjah al-Jazā’irī, published in Algeria in 1905.
2. An edition published by the National Book Foundation in Algeria, edited by ‘Ammār Ṭālibī.
3. An edition published by al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣriyyah in Beirut in 1417 AH, edited by Muḥammad al-Fāḍilī.
4. An edition published by Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī in Beirut in 1418 AH, edited by Muḥammad ‘Alī Mu‘awwad and ‘Adil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd.

¹ *al-Tuḥfah al-Mardīyyah*, Muḥammad ibn Maymūn al-Jazā’irī, p. 340

² *al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’*, vol. 4, p. 152

³ *Nayl al-Ibtihāj bi-Ṭaṭrīz al-Dībāj*, pp. 257–258

⁴ See: Aḥmad ibn Yahyā al-Wansharīsī, *Wafayāt al-Wansharīsī*, pp. 105–106; and Muḥammad ibn Maymūn al-Jazā’irī, *al-Tuḥfah al-Mardīyyah*, p. 337

⁵ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, pp. 118–120

The Second Section: Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s Attention to the Qur’anic Sciences in His Tafsīr

One of the manifestations of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s encyclopedic scholarship and attainment of epistemological integration is his attention to the Qur’anic sciences in his tafsīr, his detailed discussion of some of them, and his preference for particular positions where scholarly disagreement arose. He was knowledgeable in Qur’anic readings to such an extent that he devoted a separate work to them. He also addressed areas of disagreement among exegetes concerning issues related to abrogating and abrogated verses, the rare and difficult vocabulary of the Qur’an, occasions of revelation, the various categories of the Qur’an, the clear and ambiguous verses, and other issues related to the Qur’anic sciences, expressing his considered preference regarding the correct position. Since the present context calls for brevity, I will present a few concise examples of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s preferred positions in this field:

— **In the science of Qur’anic readings**, concerning the permissibility of reading *wa-al-arḥāmi* in the genitive case in Allah’s saying in verse 1 of Sūrat al-Nisā’, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* states: “Ḥamzah read *wa-al-arḥāmi* in the genitive case, coordinating it with the pronoun, as in their saying: ‘I ask you by Allah and by the ties of kinship.’ This was stated by Mujāhid and others.¹ He [Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, indicated by the letter ‘ayn] said:² ‘According to the grammarians of Basra, this reading is not permissible, because in their view an overt noun may not be coordinated with a genitive pronoun except in poetic necessity.’”³ Imam al-Tha‘ālibī then commented on Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah’s statement by citing al-Ṣafāqūṣī, preferring the position he expressed: “The correct view is that coordination with a genitive pronoun is permissible without repeating the preposition, as maintained by the Kufan grammarians; moreover, a mutawātir reading cannot be rejected on the basis of a position such as that of the Basran grammarians.”⁴

Imam al-Tha‘ālibī, in his preference for this position, establishes an important principle in this regard, namely: “Once a Qur’anic reading has been authentically established, it is not permissible to reject it or its meaning; rather, it is equivalent to an independent verse.”⁵

— With regard to his knowledge of abrogating and abrogated verses, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* states, in his interpretation of verse 61 of Sūrat al-Nūr:)There is no blame upon you whether you eat together or separately(: “Some scholars said: This verse was abrogated by his saying, peace and blessings be upon him: ‘Indeed, your blood and your property are sacred to one another...’—the ḥadīth,⁶ and by His saying in verse 27 of Sūrat al-Nūr:)Do not enter houses other than your own until you seek permission(, and by his saying, peace and blessings be upon him, in the ḥadīth of Ibn ‘Umar: ‘None of you should milk another person’s livestock without his permission...’—the ḥadīth.”⁷ Al-Tha‘ālibī then commented on this view, preferring the position that there is no abrogation in the verse, stating: “The truth is that there is no abrogation in any of what has been mentioned.”⁸ As can be observed in this example, Imam al-Tha‘ālibī presented the evidence of those who held that the verse had been abrogated and then responded to them, preferring the view that there was no abrogation in it. Had Imam al-Tha‘ālibī not possessed knowledge of this discipline, he would not have ventured to oppose those who maintained the occurrence of abrogation and to weaken their evidence.

— Imam al-Tha‘ālibī also demonstrated considerable attention in his tafsīr to the occasions of revelation. Whenever he found an authentic report concerning the occasion of revelation of a sūrah

¹ See: ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī, *Tafsīr ‘Abd al-Razzāq*, vol. 1, p. 432; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, vol. 7, p. 519; and al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 2, p. 424

² See: *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, vol. 2, p. 4

³ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 2, p. 160

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 160–161

⁵ *Qawā‘id al-Tarjīḥ ‘Inda al-Mufasssīrīn*, Ḥusayn al-Ḥarbī, p. 89

⁶ *al-Jāmi‘ al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Bukhārī, Book of Military Expeditions, Chapter: The Farewell Pilgrimage, vol. 5, p. 177, ḥadīth no. 4406

⁷ *Ibid.*, Book of Lost Property, Chapter: None Should Milk Another Person’s Livestock Except with His Permission, vol. 3, p. 126, ḥadīth no. 2435

⁸ *Al-Tha‘ālibī*, vol. 4, pp. 198–199

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 199

or Qur'anic verse, he included it in his tafsīr. An example of this is his statement concerning the occasion of revelation of Sūrat al-Najm: "The reason for its revelation was that the polytheists said: 'Muḥammad fabricates the Qur'an and invents its statements,' so the sūrah was revealed concerning this matter."¹

Since the present context calls for brevity, I will suffice with these examples. Otherwise, the Qur'anic sciences are numerous, and Imam al-Tha'ālibī's comprehensive knowledge of them and mastery of their various branches are clearly evident to the reader of his tafsīr. He devoted separate works to some of these disciplines, further confirming the breadth of his learning and the richness of his scholarly resources across the various fields of the Qur'anic sciences.

The Second Section: Ḥadīth Scholarship and Methodology in *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*

Imam al-Tha'ālibī demonstrated remarkable in acquiring knowledge of ḥadīth. He studied the science of ḥadīth under a number of scholars of his time, as evidenced by his statement: "I then travelled to the East, where I met in Egypt Shaykh Walī al-Dīn al-'Irāqī. I studied numerous disciplines under him, most of which concerned the science of ḥadīth. Allah granted me great insight and advancement in this field, and he wrote for me and granted me an ijāzah."² Imam al-Tha'ālibī devoted considerable attention in his tafsīr to ḥadīth scholarship and methodology, as is clearly demonstrated in the following:

1. His insistence on relying on authentic reports and disregarding weak and fabricated ones:

In numerous passages, Imam al-Tha'ālibī repeatedly emphasizes that reliance must be placed on authentic reports. Whenever scholars differed concerning the interpretation of a verse, Imam al-Tha'ālibī preferred the view whose proponents based their position on an authentic ḥadīth and rejected what was based on anything else. This is evident in numerous passages throughout his tafsīr, including the following:

- He stated, commenting on some reports indicating that created beings will be transformed into dust on the Day of Resurrection: "Know, may Allah have mercy upon you, that I have not come across any authentic ḥadīth concerning their returning to dust ... What must be relied upon in this matter is transmitted evidence; if anything authentic concerning it is established from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, then it must be believed and accepted; otherwise, reason has no place here."³
- In explaining the meaning of the letter "Nūn" (ن) at the beginning of Sūrat al-Qalam, Imam al-Tha'ālibī presented several views and then commented on one of them, saying: "... This ḥadīth is the one upon which reliance should be placed in interpreting the verse, because it is authentic. And Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, knows best."⁴
- Elsewhere, he weakened one of the views and affirmed another, stating: "... This interpretation is not correct, while the first is the correct one—Allah willing—on the basis of the authentic ḥadīth."⁵
- He also stated in another passage: "... The correct interpretation of the verse is that it is an instruction addressed to the messengers, as is explicitly stated in the authentic ḥadīth; therefore, there is no reason for hesitation concerning this."⁶

He also clarified the scholarly disagreement concerning the distinction between the *faqīr* (poor person) and the *miskīn* (needy person), stating: "People have extensively discussed the distinction between the *faqīr* and the *miskīn*, and the most appropriate basis for reliance is what has been

¹ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 321

² Ibid., vol. 5, p. 171.

³ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 5, p. 546

⁴ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 464

⁵ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 121

⁶ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 152

authentically established from the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.”¹ He then followed this conclusion by citing the relevant ḥadīth.

- He stated in one passage, further emphasizing this methodological approach: “The truth, about which there is no doubt, is that it is obligatory to believe in what the Almighty has mentioned. There is no way to determine its precise meaning unless an authentic ḥadīth is established concerning it; if such a ḥadīth is established, it must be accepted.”²

These examples, along with others, demonstrate Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s caution and pious restraint in speaking about the Word of Allah without clear evidence or authentic proof.

2. His avoidance of extensive citation of Isrā’īlyyāt reports and his cautionary remarks concerning those he mentioned:

Although Imam al-Tha‘ālibī stated that he had abridged his tafsīr from that of Imam Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah, he refrained from transmitting the Isrā’īlyyāt reports found therein. Whenever he did cite such reports, he drew attention to the falsity and invalidity of what they contained. This was also confirmed by Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī in his book *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufasssīrūn*, where he commented on Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s approach to dealing with Isrā’īlyyāt reports, stating: “I found al-Tha‘ālibī mentioning some Isrā’īlyyāt reports, but he follows what he mentions with remarks indicating that they are not authentic, or at least that their authenticity cannot be established with certainty.”³

An example of this is found in his interpretation of verse 190 of Sūrat al-A‘rāf, where *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* states: “It is reported in accounts concerning this matter that Satan suggested to Ḥawwā’ [Eve] that she name this child ‘‘Abd al-Ḥārith,’ which was the name of Iblīs. He said to her: ‘If you do not do so, I will kill him.’ They claimed that the two of them obeyed him out of concern for the child’s life, and that this was the association of partners with Allah that they committed, but only in the matter of naming.”⁴ Imam al-Tha‘ālibī then commented on this report, stating: “Adam and Ḥawwā’ must be declared innocent of obeying Iblīs, and I have not yet found evidence establishing the authenticity of what has been narrated in these accounts. Even if it were authentic, it would have to be interpreted figuratively.”⁵

3. His avoidance of mentioning weak reports cited by some exegetes concerning the virtues of the sūrahs:

Upon reading *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, I noticed that al-Tha‘ālibī refrained from mentioning the reports concerning the virtues of the sūrahs that abound in books of tafsīr. Imam al-Tha‘ālibī did not rely upon these reports, which specialists in ḥadīth had identified as weak and invalid, noting that most of them were fabricated.

4. His commentary on transmitted ḥadīth reports, examination of their chains of transmission, and analysis of their texts, together with identifying their degrees of authenticity and weakness, relying for this purpose on the principal authoritative ḥadīth collections.

If this indicates anything, it indicates that Imam al-Tha‘ālibī was not merely a compiler who indiscriminately transmitted whatever he came across, whether sound or unsound; rather, he possessed expertise in ḥadīth scholarship and a thorough knowledge of its various disciplines. This further confirms the breadth of his encyclopedic scholarship and the integration of the Islamic sciences in his intellectual formation—may Allah, Exalted be He, have mercy upon him.

The Third Section: Clarifying Scholarly Disagreement in Jurisprudential Issues

¹ Ibid., vol. 3, p. 189

² Ibid., vol. 1, p. 487

³ *al-Tafsīr wa-al-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 1, p. 179

⁴ Al-Tha‘ālibī, vol. 3, p. 102

⁵ Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 102–103

One of the manifestations of epistemological integration in the thought of Imam al-Tha'ālibī is his attention to jurisprudential issues and his careful clarification of the scholarly disagreement surrounding them. This can only be achieved by a scholar well versed in jurisprudence, knowledgeable of its foundations, and familiar with its most subtle details. Imam al-Tha'ālibī's knowledge of jurisprudence is particularly evident in matters of scholarly disagreement, as he carefully examined the differences of opinion concerning numerous jurisprudential issues and expressed his preference for the position he considered to be stronger. Examples include the following:

- Concerning what is meant by "blood" in Allah's saying in verse 173 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, Imam al-Tha'ālibī transmitted¹ Ibn 'Aṭīyah's statement: "By 'blood' what is intended is flowing blood, because whatever remains mixed with the flesh is not prohibited by consensus."² Imam al-Tha'ālibī then commented on Ibn 'Aṭīyah's statement, qualifying it and rejecting the claim that consensus had been established on the matter, stating: "Rather, there is an anomalous disagreement concerning this, mentioned by Ibn al-Ḥājj and others. The well-known position is more evident, based on the statement of 'Ā'ishah—may Allah be pleased with her: 'Had anything other than flowing blood been prohibited, people would have had to search for what was in the veins. Yet we used to cook meat while the cooking pot would be covered with a yellowish hue.'"³ ⁴ As is evident from this issue, Imam al-Tha'ālibī possessed extensive knowledge of the various positions of the jurists, including both the well-known and the anomalous views.
- Regarding the ruling on *mut'ah* for divorced women and which of them are entitled to it, al-Tha'ālibī presented several views on the issue and then commented on them, preferring the position supported by the apparent meaning of the Qur'an: "The apparent meaning of the verse indicates that this ruling applies generally to all divorced women, as maintained by al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad, and the proponents of the opinion-based school; and the apparent meaning is that *mut'ah* should be understood as obligatory."⁵

It is also worth noting in this regard that Imam al-Tha'ālibī, in his tafsīr, devoted particular attention to the Mālikī school and followed a specific methodology in transmitting the views of Imam Mālik. In many passages of his tafsīr, he confined himself to transmitting the views of Imam Mālik without referring to the positions of other representatives of the various jurisprudential schools. When the scholars of the different schools agreed upon a single position, Imam al-Tha'ālibī would introduce the view by mentioning Imam Mālik. He would also explicitly name Imam Mālik while referring to others without mentioning their names, relying on several formulations, most notably: "a group of scholars," "a group together with him," "a group of scholars," "the majority of scholars," and "others have said." This approach can be observed in numerous passages of *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. It is also noteworthy that Imam al-Tha'ālibī did not limit his transmission from Imam Mālik to his jurisprudential opinions, but extended it to his exegetical views as well. This highlights the extent of Imam al-Tha'ālibī's ties to the Mālikī school, given its close connection to the history of our homeland, and further underscores the importance of preserving the unity of the religious reference framework of our country in both its theological and jurisprudential dimensions.⁶ This was also the subject of a study I conducted entitled: "Imam al-Tha'ālibī's Methodology in Transmitting the Views of Imam Mālik through His Tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*."

¹ See: *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 1, p. 358

² *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, vol. 1, p. 240

³ See: al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 12, p. 194; Abū Bakr al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Ghaylāniyyāt*, vol. 2, p. 761, report no. 1044

⁴ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 1, pp. 358–359.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 475

⁶ See: Khalīl al-Zāwī, "Imam al-Tha'ālibī's Methodology in Transmitting the Views of Imam Mālik through His Tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*," Conference: *The Scholars of Algeria and Their Epistemological Contributions in Africa*, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, University of Algiers 1, 2022.

The Fourth Section: His Extensive Treatment of Theological Issues

In his tafsīr, al-Thaʿālibī attached considerable importance to theological discussions, as he extensively addressed most issues pertaining to Islamic creed. Among the theological topics to which he devoted extensive attention in his tafsīr are: the Oneness of Lordship (*Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah*), the Oneness of Divinity (*Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*), the Oneness of the Divine Names and Attributes (*Tawḥīd al-Asmāʾ wa-al-Ṣifāt*), belief in the angels, belief in the revealed Books, belief in the messengers, the degrees of divine decree (*al-Qadar*), guidance and misguidance, wisdom and causation in the acts of Allah, theological notions of good and evil (*al-Taḥsīn wa-al-Taḍbīḥ*), the issue of imposing what is beyond human capacity, the fate of the children of polytheists, the punishment and bliss of the grave, the signs of the Hour, the Resurrection, the Trumpet, the Ṣirāt, the Scale, intercession, the good deeds and reward of unbelievers, Paradise and Hell and their everlasting nature, and other theological discussions.¹ Among the examples of al-Thaʿālibī's presentation and discussion of matters of Islamic creed is the following:

- In his examination of the issue of the eventual extinction of Hell, in his interpretation of Allah's saying in verse 107 of Sūrat Hūd, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* states: "It has been narrated that Hell will be destroyed, its inhabitants will cease to exist, and its gates will fall silent. According to this view, they will remain there forever until their fate ultimately reaches this state. He [Ibn ʿAṭīyah, indicated by the letter ʿayn]² said: This is a possible view, while what has been narrated and transmitted from Ibn Masʿūd³ ..." And others held that what will be removed from Hell is only the highest level of Hell, which is reserved for sinful believers."⁴ Imam al-Thaʿālibī then commented on Ibn ʿAṭīyah's statement, saying: "This is the correct view—in shāʾ Allāh—and it is the interpretation adopted by the author of *al-ʿĀqibah*,⁵ namely, that what will be destroyed is that which pertains to sinful believers. A discussion of the parallel meaning of this verse has already been presented in verse 128 of Sūrat al-Anʿām."⁶ The position preferred by Imam al-Thaʿālibī in this matter is the view of the majority of scholars.
- He stated concerning the infallibility of the angels, after discussing the issue and presenting the various opinions: "The creed is that the angels are infallible, and therefore nothing occurs from them that would diminish their rank or their noble status—may Allah's prayers and peace be upon them all."⁷
- *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* states concerning the infallibility of the prophets: "The community has unanimously agreed that the prophets are infallible with regard to conveying the message, from major sins, and from minor sins that involve moral blemish. They differed concerning other minor sins, but my view is that they are protected from all of them."⁸

The Fifth Section: Imam al-Thaʿālibī's Attention to Linguistic Discussions in His Tafsīr

A reader examining the list of Imam al-Thaʿālibī's works will notice his considerable interest in the sciences of the Arabic language. This interest was reflected in and had a clear impact on his tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. Hardly any issue requiring linguistic examination can be found without Imam al-Thaʿālibī discussing it in detail, addressing the reasons for disagreement among exegetes concerning linguistic issues and the effect of such disagreement on the meanings of the verses. He also frequently supplemented or corrected Ibn ʿAṭīyah's views and expressed a preference contrary to his position

¹ *The Theological Views of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Thaʿālibī through His Tafsīr al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, ʿAlī ibn Yahyā Kaʿbī

² See: *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, vol. 3, p. 208

³ See: *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, Ibn ʿAṭīyah, vol. 3, p. 208; and *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Abū Ḥayyān, vol. 6, p. 213

⁴ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 3, p. 303

⁵ See: ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī, *al-ʿĀqibah fī Dhikr al-Mawt*, p. 339

⁶ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 3, p. 103

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 206

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 317

on many issues. Among the examples of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s attention to linguistic discussions in his tafsīr are the following:

- In explaining the meanings of particles and, in his interpretation of Allah’s saying in verse 143 of Sūrat al-A‘rāf, Imam al-Tha‘ālibī transmitted Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah’s statement: “Had we remained with this negation in its absolute form, we would have concluded that he [Moses] would never see Him, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter.”¹ Imam al-Tha‘ālibī then qualified Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah’s statement, saying: “This is a weaker opinion, which he, may Allah have mercy upon him, did not perceive. The indisputable truth is that *lan* does not necessarily indicate perpetual negation.”²
- In the discussion of generality and specificity, and in his interpretation of Allah’s saying in verse 93 of Sūrat Yūnus, Imam al-Tha‘ālibī transmitted Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah’s statement: “Thus, they did not differ—that is, concerning the prophethood of our Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him. This specification is the interpretation adopted in the works of all those who engaged in interpretive exegesis, but such an interpretation requires supporting evidence. The second interpretation suggested by the wording is that the Children of Israel did not differ with Moses at the beginning of his mission. However, when knowledge and commandments came to them and Pharaoh was drowned, they differed.”³ Imam al-Tha‘ālibī then commented, supplementing Ibn ‘Aṭīyyah’s view: “He, may Allah have mercy upon him, sought to avoid specifying the meaning, yet fell into specification. Had he generalized their disagreement to include their prophets, Moses and others, as well as our Prophet, it would have been better. Nevertheless, the interpretation adopted by those who engaged in interpretive exegesis—that of specification—is preferable, in view of the indication contained in Allah’s saying in verse 94 of Sūrat Yūnus. The connection between the two verses is clear, and Allah knows best.”⁴
- In the discussion of literal and figurative meaning, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, in its interpretation of Allah’s saying in verse 282 of Sūrat al-Baqarah, states: “Qatādah and others said: The meaning of the verse is: when they are called upon to give testimony. Al-Ḥasan ibn Abī al-Ḥasan said: The verse encompasses two matters: do not refuse when you are called upon to obtain testimony, nor when you are called upon to give it. Ibn ‘Abbās held the same view. Mujāhid said: The meaning of the verse is: do not refuse when you are called upon to give testimony that has already been entrusted to you.”⁵ Al-Tha‘ālibī then commented on Mujāhid’s statement, expressing his preference for it: “This is the literal meaning of the verse. As for naming something according to what it ultimately leads to, that is figurative usage, whereas a witness, in the literal sense, is one to whom testimony has been entrusted.”⁶

He states elsewhere, concerning the issue of the glorification of Allah by animals and inanimate objects: “The correct view is that it is literal. Were it not for the concern of prolonging the discussion, we would have presented evidence concerning this that would bring reassurance to the heart.”⁷ In his preference concerning the antecedent of the pronoun in Allah’s saying in verse 22 of Sūrat al-Raḥmān, *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* states: “A majority of the interpreters held that this [i.e., pearls and coral] emerges from the ‘briny’ waters in the places where rivers and fresh waters flow; therefore, He said: ‘from both of them.’”⁸ Al-Tha‘ālibī then commented on this view, stating: “This is based on the assumption that the pronoun in ‘from both of them’ refers to the fresh and the salty waters. As for the

¹ *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, vol. 2, p. 450.

² *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 3, p. 75

³ *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, vol. 3, p. 142

⁴ *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, vol. 3, p. 265

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 548–549

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 549

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 477

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 350

view that the two seas are the Persian and Roman seas—or the Red Sea and the Levantine Sea—there is no difficulty, since all of them are salty. Al-Akhfash transmitted from some scholars that pearls and coral emerge from both salty and fresh waters. Those who rejected this view have no conclusive proof, and whoever affirms it has a stronger position than one who denies it.”¹

Conclusion

In this research paper, I have presented the most prominent features of epistemological integration in the thought of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī through his tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. The most significant findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

- It is well established among researchers that tafsīr works vary in their approaches. There are jurisprudential tafsīrs, linguistic tafsīrs, theological tafsīrs, exhortative tafsīrs, and others. Their authors tend to focus extensively on one particular discipline while giving less attention to others. *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*, however, is a comprehensive and inclusive tafsīr that encompasses the various Islamic sciences without excessive elaboration that may become tedious or undue brevity that may compromise the intended meaning.
- The encyclopedic scholarship of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī is clearly manifested in his tafsīr. He was knowledgeable in both rational and transmitted sciences and well versed in the various Islamic disciplines. He possessed the capacity for independent scholarly reasoning and was well aware of areas of consensus and the causes of disagreement among exegetes, weighing differing views and clarifying what he considered correct.
- The reader of *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān* cannot fail to recognize the breadth of Imam al-Tha‘ālibī’s knowledge and his mastery of the various branches of the Qur’anic sciences, as well as the detailed treatment he devoted to them.
- In his tafsīr, Imam al-Tha‘ālibī was keen to support interpretations with authentic reports and to refrain from relying upon weak or fabricated ones. He also demonstrated precise knowledge of the various disciplines of ḥadīth, both in terms of transmission (*riwāyah*) and critical understanding (*dirāyah*).
- Imam al-Tha‘ālibī was a jurist who was well acquainted with the various positions of the jurisprudential schools, including both their well-known and anomalous views, and who carefully examined the areas of disagreement among them. It should also be noted that his adherence to the Mālikī school did not prevent him from departing from the position of Imam Mālik and preferring another view whenever he possessed evidence supporting it. This was the established practice of jurists engaged in independent scholarly reasoning in every era.
- Imam al-Tha‘ālibī extensively addressed numerous theological issues and drew attention to various weak reports that undermine the doctrine of the infallibility of the prophets and angels. In the various theological issues he examined in his tafsīr, he generally concurred with the majority of the scholars of the Muslim community.
- Imam al-Tha‘ālibī possessed profound knowledge of the sciences of the Arabic language, to the extent that he authored separate works on some of them. This linguistic expertise is clearly reflected in his tafsīr *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥisān*. He was knowledgeable of the grammatical principles established by the various schools of Arabic grammar, carefully addressing points of disagreement and preferring the interpretation supported by the wording of the Qur’an and the context of its verses, without distorting the meanings of the divine Qur’anic texts merely to make them conform to human and essentially interpretive grammatical rules.

In conclusion, this is what I was able to collect and examine in the present study. All praise is due to Allah, first and last.

¹ Ibid., vol. 5, p. 350

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