

Engineered Spirituality in Bābīyah and Bahā'iyah: A Critical Study of Al-Dakhīl in Qur'anic Exegesis

Abdullah Qohi^{1*}, Nur Fatih Ahmad², & Ahmad Mansur³

¹Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya, Indonesia

²Qomaruddin University Gresik, Indonesia

³Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

Email: ¹natsushinji8@gmail.com, ²fatih@uqgresik.ac.id, ³amansur@uinsa.ac.id

Abstract

This study investigates the hermeneutical strategies of the Bābīyah and Bahā'iyah, focusing on their symbolic and esoteric reinterpretations of the Qur'ān in legitimizing new religious authority. Employing a qualitative library-based approach, the research examines primary texts alongside classical tafsīr traditions and modern hermeneutical theories. The analysis demonstrates that the Bābīyah and Bahā'iyah shifted from the linguistic-philological hermeneutics of classical mufasssīrūn such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Dhahabī toward charismatic-symbolic readings, where the authority of the interpreter overrides transmitted knowledge. Comparative engagement with contemporary hermeneutical models, including Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's cultural-linguistic paradigm, Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach, and Sahiron Syamsuddin's *ma'nā-cum-maghbzā* method, highlights both divergences and resonances. The study concludes that *al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr* should not merely be viewed as deviation, but as a distinct hermeneutical logic mobilized in constructing theological legitimacy and communal identity.

Penelitian ini mengkaji strategi hermeneutika Bābīyah dan Bahā'iyah dengan menyoroti penafsiran simbolik dan esoteris mereka terhadap al-Qur'an dalam rangka melegitimasi otoritas keagamaan baru. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis pustaka, penelitian ini menganalisis teks-teks primer di samping tradisi tafsir klasik dan teori hermeneutika modern. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Bābīyah dan Bahā'iyah bergerak dari hermeneutika linguistik-filologis para mufasir klasik seperti al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, dan al-Dhahabī menuju pembacaan karismatik-simbolik, di mana otoritas penafsir mengatasi otoritas transmisi. Keterlibatan komparatif dengan model hermeneutika kontemporer, seperti paradigma kultural-linguistik Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, pendekatan kontekstual Abdullah Saeed, serta metode ma'nā-cum-maghbzā Sahiron Syamsuddin, menyoroti baik perbedaan maupun titik pertautan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr tidak

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*Corresponding Author: Abdullah qohi



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semata-mata merupakan penyimpangan, melainkan logika hermeneutis yang khas untuk membangun legitimasi teologis dan klaim identitas.

Keywords: *al-Dakhil fi al-Tafsir; Babiyyah; Babā'iyah; Hermeneutic*

Introduction

The Qur'an, as the sacred scripture of Islam, occupies a central role in shaping religious worldviews, values, and practices. Since the time of the Prophet and his companions, interpretation (tafsīr) has developed into a diverse and evolving intellectual tradition that engages various methods, disciplines, and historical contexts. Yet, the interpretive process has never been entirely insulated from cultural, social, and ideological influences. Within tafsīr studies, this phenomenon is commonly described as *al-Dakhil fi al-Tafsīr*, namely the incorporation of external or non-textual elements into Qur'anic interpretation.

The notion of *al-Dakhil* is often juxtaposed with *al-Aṣīl*, which in classical tafsīr refers to interpretations grounded in the Qur'an, ḥadīth, consensus, and the principles of established hermeneutics. By contrast, *al-Dakhil* has traditionally been described as the incorporation of elements regarded as foreign to the Qur'an, whether in the form of weak reports, speculative reasoning, or symbolic readings detached from the linguistic and historical context of revelation. As Ulinnuha emphasizes, the preconceptions and intellectual background of a mufasssīr often shape interpretive outcomes, reflecting the dominance of ideology over hermeneutical discipline.¹ At the same time, recent scholarship emphasizes that such outcomes may also be categorized within the broader phenomenon of *al-Dakhil fi al-Tafsīr*.²

Modern scholarship on hermeneutics further underscores that all interpretation is inevitably mediated by historical and intellectual contexts, as argued by Fazlur Rahman, who emphasized that understanding the Qur'an requires a "double movement" between the historical situation of revelation and contemporary circumstances³. This perspective highlights that interpretation is never free from context. Building on this, Abdullah Saeed notes that the boundary between *al-Aṣīl* and *al-Dakhil* is less clear-cut than is often assumed, since interpretive practices are always shaped by evolving socio-

¹ Muhammad Ulinnuha, *Metode Kritik Ad-Dakhil Fi at-Tafsir: Cara Mendeteksi Adanya Infiltrasi Dan Kontaminasi Dalam Penafsiran al-Qur'an*, 1st ed. (Qaf Media Kreativa, 2019), 15.

² Eva Musyarrofah, *Al-Dakhil fi al-Tafsir: Refleksi Analitik terhadap Infiltrasi dalam Penafsiran Alquran*, 1st ed., ed. Muhammad Lutfi (Kencana (Prenadamedia Group), 2023), 9–10.

³ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 5–7.

cultural and intellectual horizons⁴. Consequently, the concept of *al-Dakhil* requires critical reassessment, not only as a methodological category but also as a reflection of the socio-political and theological circumstances in which tafsīr emerges.

Recent works further highlight this necessity, showing for instance how Ibn 'Arabī's hermeneutics, while symbolically rich, must remain methodologically disciplined to avoid excessive subjectivism.⁵ Similarly, Muhammad 'Abduh's rational hermeneutics underscores *'aql* and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as safeguards against ideological infiltration.⁶ Comparative studies between the *Living Qur'an* methodology and philosophical hermeneutics also reveal epistemological tensions that directly impact the legitimacy of interpretive outcomes.⁷

Among the religious movements frequently associated in scholarly debates with discussions of *al-Dakhil* are the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah, which emerged in nineteenth-century Persia amid profound social and political transformations. Both movements developed interpretive strategies characterized by symbolic and esoteric readings of the Qur'an, often reconfiguring verses to support claims of new religious authority and legitimacy. While such approaches diverged from the exegetical methodologies recognized within mainstream Islamic scholarship, they also reflected broader dynamics of crisis and renewal in Shi'ī society during the Qajar period.⁸

Their symbolic and esoteric readings further illustrate how Qur'anic verses were reconfigured to support new claims of authority and identity, highlighting interpretive innovation shaped by theological aspirations and ideological constructions.⁹ Rather than dismissing these interpretations solely as deviations,

⁴ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Routledge, 2005), 150.

⁵ Taufik Hidayatulloh et al., "Ibn Arabī's Hermeneutics as an Alternative Religious Exegesis for Contemporary Urban Muslim Communities," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 30, no. 1 (2025): 63–67, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v30i1.10082>.

⁶ Ahmad Nabil Amir and Tasnim Abdul Rahman, "Muhammad Abduh's Rational Hermeneutics and Its Implications for Islamic Legal Reform," *Al-Daulah: Jurnal Hukum Pidana Dan Ketatanegaraan* 14, no. 1 (2025): 31–36, <https://doi.org/10.24252/al-daulah.v14i1.56526>.

⁷ Ali Mahfuz Munawar et al., "Epistemological Distinctions between the Living Qur'an Methodology and Hermeneutics: A Theoretical Study in Contemporary Tafsir Studies," *Kalamizur: Jurnal Sains, Sosial, Dan Studi Agama* 7, no. 2 (2025): 472.

⁸ Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Cornell University Press, 1989), 33.

⁹ Denis MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz: Studies in Early and Middle Babism* (BRILL, 2008), 3:45. These two sects not only claimed affinity with Islamic teachings but also constructed new doctrines that stood in opposition to the fundamental principles of Islam. By employing symbols and terminology derived from Islamic texts, they sought to legitimize their teachings, even though their substance was laden with external elements that may be categorized as *al-*

situating their hermeneutics within such contexts illuminates the complex relationship between tafsīr, authority, and identity in modern Islamic history.

Previous studies on Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah have primarily emphasized their historical, political, and theological dimensions, often focusing on their origins and socio-religious impact. Far fewer works have investigated their Qur'anic hermeneutics systematically, particularly in relation to the concept of *al-Dakhīl*. This lacuna is striking given that their reinterpretations of central Qur'anic themes such as prophethood, inheritance, and ritual practices served as the foundation for new theological claims. While earlier scholarship has generally treated *al-Dakhīl* as a methodological deviation, it has not adequately situated such practices within the socio-political and theological dynamics of their time. A critical examination of their interpretive principles therefore provides not only insights into sectarian hermeneutics but also a valuable lens for understanding the broader dynamics of authority and innovation in Qur'anic interpretation.

Accordingly, this study analyzes the interpretive strategies employed by the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah movements and assesses them in light of the framework of *al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr*. Rather than treating their readings solely as erroneous or deviant, it explores how their symbolic exegesis functioned as a vehicle for constructing religious identity and legitimacy. The research therefore focuses on the ways in which the exegetical practices of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah exemplify the phenomenon of *al-Dakhīl* and considers their implications for contemporary discussions of Qur'anic hermeneutics and interpretive authority.

The article proceeds in three parts: first, outlining the conceptual framework of *al-Dakhīl* and its contrast with *al-Aṣīl*; second, providing a historical overview of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah movements within nineteenth-century Persia; and third, analyzing selected examples of their Qur'anic interpretations to evaluate how elements of *al-Dakhīl* were employed to legitimize new theological claims and reshape religious authority.

Method

This research adopts a qualitative design with a library-based approach, focusing on textual analysis and critical interpretation of relevant primary and secondary sources. The primary reference is Eva Musyarrofah's *Al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr* (2023), which provides a systematic review of the concept of *al-Dakhīl* in tafsīr studies. This work serves as the principal framework for identifying

Dakhīl. This infiltration was not merely theological in nature but also extended to aspects of exegesis and ideology.

interpretive tendencies that may reflect the incorporation of external or ideological elements into the reading of Qur'anic verses.

In addition, this study engages a range of supporting literature, including scholarly monographs, journal articles, and encyclopedias that address the history, doctrines, and interpretive strategies of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah movements. Classical works of tafsīr such as those of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī are also consulted for comparative purposes, particularly to contextualize mainstream exegetical methods against which the interpretive approaches of these movements are assessed.

The analysis employs three complementary approaches. First, a tafsīr-hermeneutic approach is used to examine the interpretive methods applied to Qur'anic verses and to evaluate how symbolic readings relate to established principles of tafsīr. Second, a historical approach traces the socio-political background and intellectual development of the two movements in nineteenth-century Persia as a context for their interpretive practices. Third, an ideological-critical approach identifies the ways in which interpretive strategies functioned to articulate new claims of authority, including prophethood, revelation, and religious syncretism. The study applies a descriptive-analytical method, aiming not only to map instances of *al-Dakhīl* within the interpretive corpus of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah but also to analyze the broader ideological structures that informed and sustained their hermeneutical innovations.

Result and Discussion

Conceptual Framework of *al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr*

The discourse on *al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr* the incorporation of extraneous elements into Qur'anic interpretation, has long occupied a central place in tafsīr studies. Classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) consistently distinguished between interpretations anchored in the Qur'an, Prophetic traditions, and established hermeneutical principles (*al-Aṣīl*) and those derived from weak reports, speculative reasoning, or ideological impositions (*al-Dakhīl*)¹⁰. In this sense, *al-Dakhīl* functioned as a methodological warning, intended to safeguard exegetical integrity against manipulation.

Modern scholars, however, have emphasized that the boundary between *al-Aṣīl* and *al-Dakhīl* is neither absolute nor easily discernible. Ulinuha stresses

¹⁰ Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Ay al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1995), Juz 1, 63-65. Show in Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Khuwārazmī al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshaf 'an Haqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ at-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh at-Ta'wīl*, 1st ed., ed. al-Shaykh 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad al-Shaykh 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2009), Juz 1, 5-7.

that a mufassir's intellectual background and preconceptions inevitably shape interpretive outcomes, often privileging ideology over textual discipline¹¹. Eva Musyarrofah similarly notes that *al-Dakhil* is not merely an external intrusion but can emerge from within interpretive practices themselves, reflecting the hermeneutical negotiations between text, context, and reader.¹²

From a hermeneutical perspective, Fazlur Rahman's "double movement" theory underscores that all interpretation is context-dependent, requiring a dialectical engagement between the historical setting of revelation and contemporary circumstances¹³. Abdullah Saeed advances this insight by proposing a spectrum of interpretive approaches in which contextualist readings remain legitimate even when they depart from traditionalist boundaries¹⁴. These perspectives suggest that the concept of *al-Dakhil* should be critically reexamined not only as a deviation but also as a reflection of interpretive plurality shaped by socio-historical contingencies.

Recent scholarship further illustrates this tension. Taufik Hidayatulloh and colleagues highlight how Ibn 'Arabi's symbolic hermeneutics, though often critiqued as speculative, served as an alternative spiritual exegesis responsive to modern urban contexts¹⁵. Ahmad Nabil Amir and Tasnim Abdul Rahman show how Muhammad Abduh's rational hermeneutics integrated reason and *maqāṣid al-shari'ah* to reformulate Islamic legal thought, demonstrating a constructive rather than deviant mode of engagement with the Qur'an¹⁶. Likewise, Muhammad Syaifuddin's epistemological analysis of the *Living Qur'an* methodology vis-à-vis hermeneutics reveals that interpretive frameworks carry distinct epistemic commitments, each shaping the boundaries of what may be considered *al-Aṣl* or *al-Dakhil*.¹⁷

Taken together, these perspectives underscore that the category of *al-Dakhil* is not static but historically and theologically contested. While classical scholars invoked it primarily as a safeguard against corruption of meaning, contemporary debates reveal its utility as an analytical tool for understanding

¹¹ Ulinnuha, *Metode Kritik Ad-Dakhil Fi at-Tafsir*, 15.

¹² Musyarrofah, *Al-Dakhil fi at-Tafsir*, 9–10.

¹³ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 5–7.

¹⁴ Abdullah Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach* (Taylor & Francis, 2006), 150, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203016770>.

¹⁵ Hidayatulloh et al., "Ibn Arabi's Hermeneutics as an Alternative Religious Exegesis for Contemporary Urban Muslim Communities," 67.

¹⁶ Amir and Abdul Rahman, "Muhammad Abduh's Rational Hermeneutics and Its Implications for Islamic Legal Reform," 35.

¹⁷ Munawar et al., "Epistemological Distinctions between the Living Qur'an and Hermeneutics," 472.

the dynamic interplay between text, interpreter, and context. In this framework, examining the Qur'anic hermeneutics of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah requires moving beyond simple judgments of deviance toward a contextual analysis of how their interpretive strategies exemplify the phenomenon of *al-Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr*.

Historical Background of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah

The Bābīyah movement first emerged in Qajar Persia during the mid-nineteenth century, a period marked by socio-political turbulence, colonial pressures, and crises of religious authority within Shī'ī Islam. Rooted in the *Ithnā 'Ashariyya* (Twelver) Shī'ī tradition, the movement arose from millenarian expectations concerning the advent of the Hidden Imam (*al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓar*) as a savior figure. In this milieu, Mīrzā 'Alī Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī (1819–1850), later known as *al-Bāb* ("the Gate"), proclaimed himself as the intermediary to the Mahdī and subsequently advanced claims of prophethood by introducing a new *sharī'a* through his text *al-Bayān*.¹⁸

While drawing on Shī'ī eschatology, the Bāb's teachings quickly diverged from Islamic orthodoxy by challenging the principle of *khatm al-nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood). His assertion of revelatory authority, abrogation of Islamic law, and restrictions on studying non-Bābī texts provoked strong opposition from the Shī'ī clerical establishment and Qajar authorities, culminating in his execution in Tabrīz in 1850.¹⁹

The suppression of the Bāb did not end the movement; instead, it marked the beginning of its transformation. Leadership disputes fractured the Bābī community, as different factions contested authority and succession²⁰. One of his prominent followers, Mīrzā Ḥusayn 'Alī Nūrī (1817–1892), later known as Bahā' Allāh, redefined Bābī teachings and established the Bahā'īyah. Bahā' Allāh advanced universalist principles, including the unity of religions, the oneness of humanity, and the vision of a supranational religious authority²¹. These teachings signaled a decisive shift from an intra-Islamic reformist sect

¹⁸ Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 33–40.

¹⁹ MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz*, 3:115.

²⁰ Siarhei A. Anoshka, "Transition, Emulation and Dispute over Authority in the Bábí/Bahá'í Faith," *Religions* 15, no. 5 (2024): 577, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15050577>.

²¹ Juan Ricardo Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*, [Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions v. 9] 9 (Columbia University Press, 1998), 45–50.

(Bābīyah) to an independent, transnational religion (Bahā'īyah) that systematically broke away from Islamic identity.²²

Scholars have observed that the Bābī–Bahā'ī transition reflected not only theological innovation but also socio-political negotiation. Early Bābī conflicts, including the confrontation at Shaykh Ṭabarsī (1848–49), demonstrated how millenarian theology could escalate into revolutionary resistance against the Qajar state²³. At the same time, Qurrat al' Ayn symbolized the sect's challenge to entrenched social and gender norms, linking the movement to broader currents of reform and proto-feminist thought in 19th century Iran.²⁴

Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah must be situated within the intellectual and spiritual ferment of nineteenth-century Persia, rather than reduced to narratives of heresy or foreign conspiracy. For example, recent studies on their exegesis of *kbatm al-nubumwa* (Q. 33:40) illustrate how these movements reinterpreted central Qur'anic concepts to legitimize new claims of authority²⁵. Others highlight the dynamics of leadership, emulation, and dispute within the early Bābī community as a lens to understand shifting notions of religious authority²⁶. Furthermore, analyses of the modern Bahā'ī community in Iran underscore its continuing contributions to social engagement and principled reform, demonstrating its evolution from a contested sectarian movement into a global religious tradition.²⁷

In this light, the rise of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah exemplifies how crises of authority, socio-political upheavals, and hermeneutical innovation converged in nineteenth-century Persia. Understanding this historical background provides essential context for assessing how their exegetical strategies can be situated within the broader phenomenon of *al-Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr*.

Hermeneutical Strategies of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah

The hermeneutical approaches of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah reflect distinctive strategies of reinterpreting the Qur'an to legitimize new claims of

²² Moojan Momen, "Persecution and Resilience: A History of the Baha'i Religion in Qajar Isfahan," *Journal of Religious History* 36, no. 4 (2012): 63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9809.2012.01225.x>.

²³ Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam, "The Babi-State Conflict at Shaykh Tabarsi," *Taylor & Francis (Routledge)* 35, nos. 1–3 (2002): 87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210860208701941>.

²⁴ Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse University Press, 1992), 18–21.

²⁵ Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, "Last Prophet and Last Day: Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Exegesis of the 'Seal of the Prophets' (Q. 33:40)," *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 341, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030341>.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 343

²⁷ Iqan Shahidi, "Principled Engagement: The Bahā'ī Community of Iran's Approach to Social Change," *Religions* 16, no. 9 (2025): 1149, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16091149>.

authority and identity.²⁸ Central to the Bāb's exegesis was a symbolic and esoteric reading of Qur'anic verses, often framed in millenarian terms. For instance, in his commentary on the Sūrat Yūsuf (*Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf*), the Bāb interpreted Joseph's story as an allegory for his own mission, portraying himself as the divinely chosen figure whose suffering and eventual vindication paralleled the hidden Imam's eschatological role.²⁹ Such hermeneutical maneuvers exemplify what classical scholars would categorize as *al-Dakḥīl*, since they rely on allegory divorced from the linguistic and historical context of revelation.

The Bahā'īyah further expanded these symbolic strategies. Bahā' Allāh's writings reconfigured core Qur'anic doctrines particularly the finality of prophethood (*khatm al-nubuwwa*) and the unity of the religious message. In Bahā'ī exegesis, the Qur'anic affirmation that Muhammad is the "Seal of the Prophets" (Q. 33:40) was reinterpreted not as the chronological end of prophethood, but as a metaphor for spiritual consummation, allowing for new "Manifestations of God" to appear across history.³⁰ This hermeneutical reframing legitimized Bahā' Allāh's own claim as a new divine manifestation and situated the Bahā'īyah as a universal religion transcending Islamic identity.

From a methodological perspective, these interpretive strategies illustrate a shift from textual-linguistic hermeneutics, characteristic of classical tafsīr, toward charismatic-symbolic exegesis, where the authority of the interpreter superseded traditional disciplines.³¹ In the Bābīyah, the authority of the Bāb was established through esoteric allegory and apocalyptic expectation, while in the Bahā'īyah, Bahā' Allāh's authority was consolidated by universalist reinterpretations that integrated elements from other religious and philosophical traditions.

Contemporary scholarship underscores that such hermeneutical innovations cannot be understood solely as doctrinal deviations. Rather, they represent responses to the socio-political crises of nineteenth-century Persia, where traditional Shī'ī exegetical frameworks appeared insufficient to address millenarian aspirations and demands for renewal. Recent studies have shown that these sectarian hermeneutics exemplify the broader phenomenon of *al-*

²⁸ MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz*, 3:44–45. "Pseudo-tafsīr" means **pseudo-exegesis** or **spurious interpretation**. It refers to an interpretation of Qur'anic verses that is not based on sound methodologies of *tafsīr*, but is instead intended to support a specific ideology or personal claims, as in the case of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah movements.

²⁹ Ibid., 210

³⁰ Buck and Ioannesyan, "Last Prophet and Last Day," 341.

³¹ Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 80.

Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr, in which external ideologies, charismatic claims, and socio-political contexts penetrate Qur’anic interpretation.³²

By contrast, classical exegetes such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī emphasized methodological rigor in works like *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*. He outlined standards including reliance on *riwāyah* (transmitted reports), *tafsīr bi’l-ma’tbūr* (interpretation based on hadith and reports of Companions and Successors), and strict attention to Arabic grammar, rhetoric, and *qirā’āt* tools designed to safeguard exegesis from arbitrary symbolic reinterpretation.³³

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), for instance, in *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān* grounded his exegesis in *riwāyāt* traced to the Prophet, Companions, and early authorities, while giving careful attention to Arabic philology and variant *qirā’āt*.³⁴ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), building on this tradition, emphasized hadith authentication, the interpretive significance of *ashab al-nuṣūl*, and juristic implications, reflecting an exegetical model rooted in transmitted knowledge and communal consensus.³⁵

Modern Muslim thinkers such as Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, however, offer a different hermeneutical paradigm. Abū Zayd emphasized that the Qur’ān must be studied as both a cultural product (*muntaj thaqāfi*) and a producer of culture (*muntaj thaqāfi*), situating it within its historical and socio-cultural contexts.³⁶ His literary-critical approach frames the Qur’ān as a discourse that unfolds meaning through interaction with readers across time. Rather than treating interpretive plurality as corruption, Abū Zayd regarded it as the inevitable outcome of the text’s engagement with diverse historical and social horizons.³⁷

This divergence highlights the epistemological tension between traditionalists, who prioritize textual stability and theological orthodoxy, and reformists, who emphasize contextual dynamism and the agency of the reader. While classical methodology serves as a safeguard against infiltration (*al-Dakhīl*),

³² Musyarrafah, *Al-Dakhīl fī al-Tafsīr*, 21–24.

³³ Muḥammad Ḥusain- al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn* (Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2001), 18–21.

³⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vols. 22, 12–15.

³⁵ Emi Suhemi, “Semiotics in Qur’anic Interpretation: The Application of Semiotic Theory in the Tafsīr of Jalalain, Ibn Kathīr, and Al-Tabarī on QS. An-Nur Verse 35,” *El-Sunan: Journal of Hadith and Religious Studies* 2, no. 1 (2024): 88–90, <https://doi.org/10.22373/el-sunan.v2i1.5695>.

³⁶ Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *Maḥbūm Al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsah Fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, Dirāsāt Adabiyah (al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1990), 15–23.

³⁷ Ahmad Sulaiman, “From Textuality To Discursivity: The Hermeneutics of Quran Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd,” *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam Dan Tafsīr* 5, no. 2 (2023): 327, <https://doi.org/10.20414/sophist.v5i2.96>.

modern hermeneutics views such “infiltrations” as part of the natural life of a living text.

Indonesian scholarship also contributes to this discourse. Contemporary Muslim scholars such as Sahiron Syamsuddin and M. Amin Abdullah advocate integrative hermeneutical approaches that combine classical tools with modern contextualism.³⁸ Their work emphasizes the necessity of *maqāṣid al-shari‘ah*, sociological realities, and interdisciplinary engagement in order to bridge the gap between traditional authority and modern demands.³⁹ In this sense, the interpretive strategies of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah though often dismissed as deviant—can be analyzed alongside these broader trends of hermeneutical experimentation.

In this regard, the assessments of Muslim scholars such as ‘Āmir—who categorized these movements as part of *al-niḥal al-waḍ‘iyyah* (fabricated sects) provide insight into how they were perceived within Islamic scholarship.⁴⁰ Likewise, works such as Hatcher and Martin’s *The Bahá’i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* offer perspectives from within the Bahā'ī community itself, highlighting how its adherents construct a global and universal religious identity.⁴¹ Indonesian scholarship, such as that of Al Adawiyah and Al Kamil, has also engaged critically with the hermeneutics of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah, underscoring the persistence of *al-Dakhīl* in symbolic and ideological exegesis.⁴²

By integrating both classical Muslim critiques and modern insider and outsider perspectives, the study of Bābī and Bahā'ī hermeneutics demonstrates that their symbolic and esoteric exegesis not only served to legitimize new theological claims but also to construct alternative forms of religious authority and communal identity, thereby illuminating the dynamic interplay between text, context, and power in modern Qur’anic interpretation.

³⁸ Muhamad Ridwan Syafi’i, “Corak Pemikiran Hermeneutika Al-Qur’an Prof. Sahiron Syamsuddin,” *Jurnal Budi Pekerti Agama Islam* 2, no. 5 (2024): 54, <https://doi.org/10.61132/jbpai.v2i5.509>.

³⁹ Ilyas Supena, “Epistemology of Tafsīr, Ta’wīl, and Hermeneutics: Towards an Integrative Approach,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 1 (2024): 122, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.141.08>.

⁴⁰ Amir and Abdul Rahman, “Muhammad Abduh’s Rational Hermeneutics and Its Implications for Islamic Legal Reform,” 35–36.

⁴¹ William S. Hatcher and Douglas Martin, *The Bahá’i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*, Bahá’i Publishing, (1985), 27–31

⁴² Abidah Al Adawiyah and Safinatul Ilmi Al Kamil, “Ad-Dakhīl Fī at-Tafsīr: Analisis Ad-Dakhīl Dalam Penafsiran Sekte al-Bābiyyah Dan al-Bahā’iyyah,” *Hamalatul Qur’an: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur’an* 6, no. 1 (2025): 135–36.

Textual Analysis of Example Qur'anic Verses

A crucial dimension of assessing *al-Dakhil fi al-Tafsir* in the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah movements lies in the analysis of their primary texts. Both the Bāb and Bahā' Allāh produced extensive writings "*al-Bayān* and the *Kitāb-i-Aqdas*" that explicitly engaged Qur'anic verses in ways that reconfigured their meaning to support claims of new revelation.

a. *Khatm al-Nubuwwa* (Q. 33:40)

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Classical exegetes consistently interpreted this verse as an affirmation of the closure of prophethood. Ibn 'Abbās explained that *khātam al-nabiyyīn* means Muhammad is the last of all prophets, with no prophet to come after him.⁴³ Al-Ṭabarī reinforced this reading by compiling multiple narrations and stressing the *ijmā'* (consensus) of the scholarly community that prophethood ended with Muhammad.⁴⁴ Al-Zamakhsharī, drawing on the tools of *balāghah*, interpreted *khātam* as signifying both "completion" and "conclusion," thus emphasizing Muhammad's unique role as the final prophet.⁴⁵ Al-Bayḍāwī synthesized philological and theological approaches to underscore the closure of revelation with Muhammad.⁴⁶

By contrast, in *al-Bayān* the Bāb proposed that *khatm* should be understood not as chronological closure but as "the pinnacle of perfection," thereby leaving room for further divine manifestations.⁴⁷ Bahā' Allāh in the *Kitāb-i-Aqdas* developed this further, interpreting *khatm* as spiritual consummation and a metaphor for completeness, which justified the continuity of revelation through new "Manifestations of God" after Muhammad.⁴⁸ This hermeneutical departure illustrates *al-Dakhil*, where theological aspirations infiltrated Qur'anic interpretation at the expense of philological rigor and consensus.

b. *Tafsir Sūrat Yūsuf* (Q. 12:4)

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ

⁴³ Ibn 'Abbās, *Al-Tamwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* (Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), 485.

⁴⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 271.

⁴⁵ al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshaf 'an Haqā'iq Ghawāmiḍ at-Tanzīl*, 521.

⁴⁶ Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār Al-Tanzīl Wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* (n.d.), 33.

⁴⁷ Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bāb, "Bayān al-'Arabī," Ms. no. 2004, Teheran, Iran, n.d., 112–113.

⁴⁸ Bahā' Allāh, *Kitāb-i-Aqdas* (Bahā'ī World Centre, 1992), 81–82.

In the classical tafsīr tradition, Joseph's dream was understood as divine foreshadowing of his eventual elevation in Egypt. Al-Ṭabarī, citing Ibn 'Abbās, explained that the eleven stars symbolized Joseph's brothers, the sun his father, and the moon his mother, all of whom would eventually bow to him in recognition.⁴⁹ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī interpreted the vision through a rational-theological lens, highlighting lessons about divine decree, patience, and providence.⁵⁰ Al-Sa'wī, while introducing mystical reflections, nevertheless preserved the historical and moral integrity of the story.⁵¹

The Bāb, however, in his *Tafsīr Sūrat Yūsuf* allegorized the narrative by identifying himself as Joseph, while the celestial bodies were recast as symbols of humanity's recognition of his divine mission.⁵² This allegorical hermeneutic shifted the text from a historical-moral account to a typological prophecy validating the Bāb's charismatic role. Methodologically, this represents *al-Dakḥīl*: the imposition of self-referential ideology upon a text whose classical exegesis was anchored in historical and theological realism.

c. *Wilāya* (Q. 5:55)

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

This verse has been pivotal in Shī'ī exegesis, often linked to the authority of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ibn 'Abbās reported that it was revealed when 'Alī gave his ring in charity while bowing in prayer.⁵³ Al-Ṭūsī in *al-Tibyān* and al-Ṭabarsī in *Majma' al-Bayān* elaborated on this report, embedding it within the Imāmī doctrine of wilāya and succession.⁵⁴ Al-Bayḍāwī, by contrast, offered a more general interpretation, explaining *walī* as “protector” or “patron” of the believers without limiting the verse to a particular individual.⁵⁵

The Bāb re-appropriated this verse to claim that the locus of wilāya had shifted to himself, positioning his own authority as the legitimate continuation of 'Alī's role.⁵⁶ In this way, the verse was transformed from a statement of spiritual guardianship into a legitimating tool for charismatic leadership. This

⁴⁹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 13–14.

⁵⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb / Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Dār al-Fīkr, 1981), 131.

⁵¹ Shāhab al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Al-Sa'wī, *Ḥaṣḥiya 'alā Al-Jalālayn*, DKI (Dar al-Kitab al-'Ilmī, 2021), 56.

⁵² MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz*, 3:216.

⁵³ 'Abbās, *Al-Tamwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*, 112.

⁵⁴ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Tibyān Fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Maktabat al-Amīn, 1957), 558–561.

⁵⁵ al-Bayḍāwī, *Amwār Al-Tanzīl Wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, 181.

⁵⁶ Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal*, 112–115.

interpretive move constitutes a classic instance of *al-Dakhil*, as external ideological claims were inscribed into Qur'anic hermeneutics.

The analysis of these verses demonstrates the methodological divergence between classical and sectarian hermeneutics. Classical exegetes—such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, al-Rāzī, and al-Bayḍāwī—anchored their interpretations in *riwāyah*, philology, and theological consensus. By contrast, the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah employed allegorical and esoteric strategies that subordinated textual meaning to theological innovation and charismatic claims. These cases illustrate *al-Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr* not merely as deviation, but as a hermeneutical phenomenon that emerges when socio-political aspirations, eschatological expectations, and ideological constructions reshape Qur'anic interpretation.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the phenomenon of *al-Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr* is not merely a matter of exegetical error, but rather a complex hermeneutical process in which theological aspirations, ideological constructions, and socio-political pressures directly shape Qur'anic interpretation.

Methodologically, this analysis underscores the importance of engaging primary sectarian texts alongside classical *tafsīr* in order to discern both the innovations and the departures that define sectarian hermeneutics. It also illustrates how the framework of *al-Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr* can serve as a critical lens for evaluating the intersection of scripture, authority, and identity in modern Islamic history. In this way, the study contributes not only to *tafsīr* studies, but also to broader discussions on the politics of interpretation and the contested boundaries of religious orthodoxy.

Beyond the specific cases of the Bābīyah and Bahā'īyah, this study contributes to broader debates in Qur'anic hermeneutics by demonstrating that the framework of *al-Dakhil fī al-Tafsīr* can function as an analytical tool rather than merely a confessional category of deviation. By situating symbolic and esoteric exegesis within their socio-political and theological contexts, the study highlights how interpretive practices reflect negotiations of religious authority, identity, and legitimacy. This perspective offers a critical lens for examining other modern interpretive innovations, encouraging scholars to reassess the boundaries of “orthodoxy” and to engage with the dynamic interplay between text, context, and power in Qur'anic interpretation today.

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