

Research Paper

Comparing the Views of Allameh Tabataba'i and Fayz Kashani on Ta'wil of the Qur'an

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Ta'wil, a fundamental concept in Qur'anic sciences, has always occupied a central position in exegetical discussions. The significance of this issue is underscored by various narrations, particularly the concern of the Prophet Muhammad regarding "Ta'wil of the Quran over other Ta'wil", which highlights the crucial link between understanding the deeper semantic layers of the Qur'an and safeguarding the divine message. Among prominent Shi'a exegetes, Allameh Tabatabaei and Fayz Kashani stand as two pivotal figures, each

presenting a coherent intellectual framework concerning ta'wil. Although there appear to be superficial similarities in their general approaches, this resemblance has led to the hypothesis that Fayz may have influenced Allameh. The present study critically evaluates this hypothesis and addresses the following central question: What are the main points of convergence and divergence between the theoretical foundations and exegetical applications of Allameh Tabatabaei and Fayz Kashani regarding ta'wil, and does a comparative analysis of their interpretive practices substantiate the claim of influence? The novelty of this research lies in moving

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beyond theoretical definitions to analyze their actual exegetical performances, to uncover the underlying epistemological bases of each scholar.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical method combined with a comparative approach. Data was collected through library-based research, relying primarily on the two exegetical masterpieces: *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Allameh Tabatabaei and *Tafsīr al-Sāfi* by Fayz Kashani. In the first stage, the theoretical foundations of both exegetes were explored in relation to the essence of *ta'wil*, its relationship with the concepts of *tafsir*, *batn*, and *jary*, and their respective views on those qualified to possess knowledge of *ta'wil*. Subsequently, selected Qur'anic verses were analyzed comparatively to examine how each exegete applied his interpretive principles in practice. Through this analysis, points of convergence and divergence were identified, and finally, the hypothesis of intellectual influence was evaluated based on concrete exegetical evidence.

3. Findings

The comparative analysis reveals that, despite shared features—such as distinguishing between *tafsir* and *ta'wil* and acknowledging inner layers within the Qur'anic text—fundamental differences separate their approaches, challenging the assumption of direct influence.

Within Allameh Tabatabaei's intellectual system, *ta'wil* is understood as an objective, extra-linguistic reality from which the divine speech originates, transcending both wording and meaning. He defines *jary wa tatbīq* as a hermeneutical principle that allows the general meaning of a verse to apply to new or more complete instances. In this light, narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt that associate certain verses

with specific individuals or realities do not themselves constitute *ta'wil*, but rather represent *jary*—the application of a universal Qur'anic concept to its most perfect instance. For example, narrations interpreting “*al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*” (Al-Fātiḥa: 6) as referring to Amīr al-Mu'minīn are, according to Allameh, not indicative of the verse's *ta'wil* but of its highest manifestation in human form. This conceptual distinction marks the independence and originality of Allameh's hermeneutical school.

Conversely, Fayz Kashani equates *ta'wil* with the *batn* (inner meaning) of the Qur'an, viewing it as identical to the esoteric dimension of revelation. He maintains that the only legitimate means of accessing these hidden realities is through the narrations of the infallible Imams. For Fayz, such narrations are not mere illustrative applications but direct unveilings of the *ta'wil* itself. His exegetical practice in *Tafsīr al-Sāfi* clearly reflects this epistemological stance. For instance, in interpreting “*wa'taṣimū bi-ḥabl Allāh jamī'an*” (Āl 'Imrān: 103), he considers the narrations identifying *ḥabl Allāh* as *wilāyah* to represent the very *ta'wil* of the verse. Unlike Allameh, Fayz does not maintain a clear distinction between *jary* and *ta'wil*; rather, he grants revelatory narrations ultimate authority in unveiling the esoteric truth (*batn*) of the Qur'an.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study reject the hypothesis that Allamah Tabataba'i was influenced by Faiz Kashani, given the fundamental differences between them. Allamah, by presenting the theory of *objectivity of ta'wil* and considering the rule of *jary wa tatbīq*, explains the position of narrations as expressions of instances. In contrast, Faiz Kashani, with a narrative-

esoteric approach, considers *ta'wil* to be in line with the heart of the Quran and considers the narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) as the only way to reach these esoteric truths and revealer of *ta'wil* itself; therefore, the findings confirm the independence of Allamah's interpretive school on *ta'wil*, which distinguishes it from other common views.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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