

تفسير القرآن وهو آلهة العصر

فتح فيجهر الإمام محمد عبده

أ. د. حفنة الشرفاوي (*)

(ملخص)

تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تستكشف منهج الإمام محمد عبده في مواجهة العصر بدعوته إلى تجديد التفسير، وذلك في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر، حيث قام بتأكيد الاهتمام بمفهومين أساسيين نعرض لأحدهما في الجزء الأول من هذه الدراسة، وهو البحث عن معيار إسلامي يعين على هذه المواجهة، ونعرض للثاني في القسم الباقي من المقال في عدد تال، وموضوعه: البحث عن مركب ثقافي يعبر عن حقيقة الإسلام، كما جاء في نصوصه المقدسة، وكما عرفته القرون الأولى من هذه الحضارة، وهو مركب يضم الفاعلية الإسلامية في نشاطها الظاهري والباطني كليهما في وحدة جامعة، بعد أن هدتها عوامل الانقسام في العصر الحديث بين القديم المعبر عن الانتماء الروحي والهوية التاريخية، وبين الجديد المتصل بمؤثرات الاحتكاك الثقافي والنفوذ الأجنبي.

ذلك أن الحقائق السياسية والثقافية لعصر محمد عبده جعلت من المحتم أن يكون للغرب، ولتصوراته التمدينية صدى في كل محاولة لتجديد النظر في جوانب الإصلاح الاجتماعي والاقتصادي والسياسي، فالاستمداد الثقافي من الحضارة الغربية قائم في كل حال بصورة أو بأخرى حتى في أبعد ما يمكن تصوره من المجالات. ولقد كان في بعض مظاهر هذا الاستمداد ما يهدد وحدة المركب الإسلامي بأن يصبح المجتمع الإسلامي إسلامي الباطن غربي الظاهر، كما نرى تفصيل ذلك في العدد القادم إن شاء الله.

أما القسم الأول من هذه الدراسة الذي نعرض له هنا تمهيداً لمناقشة قضية المركب الثقافي التي أشرنا إليها، ففيه يتناول الباحث مفهوم الاجتهاد في تجديد التفسير. وقد عنى محمد عبده بالدعوة إليه باعتباره مبدأ الحركة في الاجتماع الإسلامي منذ نشأته الأولى. ذلك عنده هو المعيار الأهم الذي يمكن أن يهتدى به المسلمون حين يتهددهم الخطر. ذلك أن الإسلام يسمح باجتهاد مشروع في فهم نصوص الوحي، وتأويلها وفقاً لما يجد من ظروف العصر وضرورات المواجهة. وذلك كله مع الرعاية المقررة لأحكام الحقائق اللغوية ومناسبات النزول وروايات الصحابة،

(*) أستاذ الدراسات الإسلامية والثقافة العربية - كلية الآداب جامعة عين شمس.

وكل ذلك من شروط التفسير المقبول . وهذا يعنى أن الإسلام يوفق فى حقائق الوجود بين مراتب الدوام وضرورات التغيير. ولذلك يتفق زعماء التجديد الإصلاحى فى الإسلام على أن للأمة مبادئ أبدية تنظم حياتها الجماعية وتضبط أمورها ، لأن الأبدى الخالد هو الذى يثبت أقدامنا فى عالم التغيير المستمر وفقاً لتطور الحياة ، وهذا معنى صلاحية الإسلام لكل زمان ومكان ، ولكن هذه المبادئ الأبدية لا تستبعد كل إمكان للتغيير عندهم إذا دعت إلى ذلك ضرورة المواجهة لظروف جديدة تهدد هوية المجتمع الثقافى وثباته التاريخى.

غير أن هذا التجديد الذى يبشر به الإصلاحيون لا يتصل بالعتيدة أو الأخلاق ، بل يمكن أن يلجأ إليه الباحثون فيما يتعلق بالأسس الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والتشريعية والمعارف العلمية، فكل هذا عند زعماء الإصلاح مما يجوز الاجتهاد فى تأويله دون المساس بحقائق الإسلام الأبدية.

من أجل ذلك فإنه يمكن القول إن الدعوة إلى هذا الاجتهاد التى أتح عليها محمد عبده والمناريون من بعده فى تفسير القرآن الكريم إنما كانت استجابة لتحديات العصر، فتلك التحديات بأنواعها المختلفة هى التى أملت على محمد عبده ، كما أملت على غيره من زعماء الإصلاح فى بلاد إسلامية أخرى فى ذلك الوقت الدعوة إلى الاجتهاد ، رفضاً لحجية التقليد الذى تمسك به كثير من معاصريه ، وكان عبقرية الفكر الإسلامى وخصائصه الذاتية هى التى تدعو علماء كل عصر إلى مراجعة ذاتنا الثقافية واستلهاها أصول المواجهة لكل ثقافة دخيلة ، أو نحلة وافدة ، وهذا قريب مما توارد عليه العلماء فى مسألة حديث مجدد القرن الذى يبشر به ، الرسول الكريم (ﷺ) باستمرار الدعوة إلى الاجتهاد استمراراً بالرسالة إلى آخر الزمان.

وفى البحث بعد ذلك ما يدل على سبيل المقارنة على أن أكثر القرون التى شهدت الدعوة إلى الاجتهاد باعتباره معياراً إسلامياً أصيلاً فى مواجهة الخطر إنما كان القرنين الثالث عشر والتاسع عشر ، حيث تهددت القوة العسكرية والعدوان الحبرى المجتمع الإسلامى بالانهيار السياسى والسقوط الاجتماعى والفكرى فى كلا القرنين. ومن هنا كان وجه التشابه الإصلاحى بين محمد عبده وابن تيمية فى مواجهة العصر ، وذلك على بعد ما بينهما بسبب اختلاف ظروف العصر ، وآليات الدعوة إلى الاجتهاد ، ولكننا يمكن أن نقول فى إيجاز إن اجتهاد ابن تيمية كان اجتهاد تنقية بالرجوع إلى الأصول الأولى ، ولكن اجتهاد محمد عبده يضيف إلى ذلك اجتهاد التوفيق والسعى إلى الملائمة والدخول بالمصطلح الإسلامى فى رعاية سياق المدنية المعاصرة وهذا ما عرضه لألوان من النقد غير المنصف ، كما نرى فى هذه الدراسة.

مختار الفراسة لفخر الدين الرازي التلخيص والترجمة والتعليق للدكتور يوسف هراي

عرض، أ. د. عتيرة مجاهد (*)

ملخص

يتناول الدكتور مراد في كتابه موضوع الفراسة عند العرب: نشأته وتطوره. وهو علم تأثر بالتراث العربي والكتابات اليونانية، وقد تم نشر هذا الكتاب بالمكتبة الشرقية بباريس ١٩٣٩، ويبين المؤلف في مقدمة تحقيقه لكتاب فخر الدين الرازي أن كلمة «فراسة» دخلت في مصطلح الصوفية أو أن العرب كانوا يميزون بين الفراسة الفلسفية والفراسة المقصورة على القديسين والرسول. وقديماً كانت هذه القدرة الوسيلة المشروعة للمساعدة على اكتشاف المجرمين، كما أنها كانت تساعد على اكتشاف صفات العبيد عند شرائهم. والرازي في نظر علماء الفراسة العرب يعد من أهم مصادر هذا العلم، وهو فيلسوف عظيم في مجال التفكير الديني عند المسلمين، بالإضافة إلى أنه كان يتمتع بعلم واسع في مجال الطب. ويذكر الدكتور مراد في كتابه أنواع الفراسة كما تظهر في الكتابات العربية ويبين صلاتها بالعلوم الأخرى. ويتضح لنا أن هذه الكتابات تناولت موضوعات أكثر تنوعاً من الكتب اليونانية. وقد ازدهر عند العرب هذا الأدب الذي يعتمد على الفراسة في التنبؤ بصفات الشخصية وبمصير الإنسان حسب ملامح وجهه وشكل جسمه أو الحركات غير الإرادية التي يقوم بها الجسم.

إن الكتب العربية التي تناولت الفراسة لا تختلف كثيراً في مضمونها عن تلك التي تتحدث في مختلف العلوم؛ لأن الفلاسفة العرب كانوا يعدون الفراسة فرعاً من فروع علم الطبيعة مثله في ذلك مثل الطب. ويعترف الدكتور مراد بأن أساس هذا العلم هو نفس أساس علوم الطب والسحر اللذين عاشا جنباً إلى جنب في مصر والهند، فدراسة الأعراض لأي مرض، وربط اختلاف الطبع بشكل وتكوين الأعضاء ورد فعل المريض، قد أكد بما لا يدع مجالاً للشك أن هناك علاقة وثيقة بين شكل الأعضاء والصفات المادية والمعنوية لأي شخص، وقد أضاف د. مراد أن علم الفراسة كان فرعاً قديماً جداً من المعارف الإنسانية، وله علاقة بعلم التشريح والطب والفسولوجي.

(*) استاذ الأدب الفرنسي - كلية الآداب جامعة عين شمس.

ويدلل د. مراد على علم العرب بكتاب أرسطو الذى سار العرب على نهجه حيث قاموا بتصنيف العلوم إلى علوم نظرية وتطبيقية وشرعية، ويذكر، د. مراد أن أول محاولة لتصنيف العلوم قام بها الفارابى فى كتاب «إحصاء العلوم» الذى تأثر فيه بأرسطو. فكتاب الفارابى مقسم إلى خمسة أجزاء:

١ - العلوم الفلسفية.

٢ - المنطق.

٣ - العلوم الرياضية.

٤ - العلوم الطبيعية.

٥ - السياسة والعلوم الشرعية وعلم الكلام.

ويذكر د. مراد أن ابن سينا هو أول من ذكر علم الفراسة وعدّه أحد الروافد الفرعية لعلوم الطبيعة، وقد تبنى الغزالى تصنيف ابن سينا فى كتابه الشهير: «تهافت الفلاسفة». أما ابن رشد فقد فند فى كتابه «تهافت التهافت» اعتراضات الغزالى، وكشف عدم دقة ابن سينا فى تفسير مذهب أرسطو.

بعد هذا الجزء التمهيدى وقبل الشروع فى تحقيق نص الرازى يتطرق الجزء الثانى من كتاب د. مراد إلى كتاب الفراسة للرازى، وفى مقدمته يؤكد د. مراد صحة نسبة كتاب الرازى ويتحقق من أنه مؤلفه. ويذكر أن هناك ثلاثة مخطوطات لهذا الكتاب معروفة وموجودة فى كمبريدج ولندن واستنبول، ومخطوط كمبريدج هو الأهم على الرغم من أنه لا يحمل اسم المؤلف، ويقدر أنه يرجع للقرن الثانى عشر أو الثالث عشر الميلادى. ويميل د. مراد إلى الاعتقاد أنه يرجع إلى القرن الثالث عشر ولكنه لم يكتب فى حياة المؤلف بل جمعه أحد تلاميذه بعد وفاته.

ويستعرض د. مراد فصول الكتاب فيذكر أن الفصل الأول يقدم تعريفاً للفراسة، أما الفصل الثانى فيبين أنه يقوم على استنتاج طبع الإنسان طبقاً لمسقط رأسه، وفى الفصل الثالث يتناول الرازى بالدراسة أوجه الشبه بين الإنسان والحيوان، ويبين الفصل الرابع طريقة الحكم على الإنسان طبقاً لعواطفه، ويستعرض الفصل الخامس صفات الجنسيات المختلفة. وفى الفصل السادس يبين المؤلف أن ذكر الحيوان يكون دائماً أقوى من الأنثى. أما الفصل السابع فإنه يتناول فكرة أنه لا يجب الحكم على الإنسان وفقاً لصفة سائدة عنده، بل يجب أن يؤخذ فى الاعتبار علامات أخرى قد تقلل من دلالة هذه الصفة. وفى فصول الكتاب بعد ذلك ما يوضح أنه يمكن استنتاج طبيعة

الإنسان الداخلية من مزاجه وتكوين أعضائه، أما الفصل الأخير فيبين المعنى الفراسي لكل أجزاء الجسم.

والفراسة في رأى الرازي هي إحساس وحدس، وهي تعتمد في المقام الأول على حدة الملكة البصرية وقوة التخيل. وكل الوسائل الأخرى المستخدمة للوصول إلى معرفة شخصية الإنسان لا تتمتع بالقيمة نفسها، والرازي يعطى الأولوية للفحص الطبى: فحص سوائل الجسم، والمزاج والقدرات والأعمار، ويأتى بعد ذلك دراسة المناخ والأطعمة ثم دراسة الشبه بين الذكور والإناث فى الحيوان.

ويعلق د. مراد على كتاب الرازي الذى حققه بعناية كاملة، بعد الاطلاع على عدد من نسخه المخطوطة، بأنه يعد كتابا مهماً فى هذا المجال، ويضيف: «فى كلمة موجزة أن كتاب الرازي يعد مثلاً سارت على منواله كل الكتب التى تناولت الفراسة فى العلوم العربية بعد ذلك. والرازي يقرر أن قيمة هذا العلم تشهد بها نصوص القرآن الكريم والسنة». وفى النهاية يعلق د. مراد على كتابات العرب الأولى عن الفراسة بقوله: «قبل أن يعرف العرب ما كتبه أهل اليونان فى هذا الشأن كان لهم سبق فى معرفة الفراسة ولكنها كانت معرفة لم تحظ وقتئذ بقبول واسع ولم تكن مقنعة بعد». إن الفراسة العربية اشتملت على عشرات من العلوم الأخرى الثانوية وتتمثل العلاقة بينها فى هذا الحدس الذى يسمح بالحكم سريعاً على أى شخص.

Mourad ajoute à sa critique du texte arabe de Al-Razi le jugement suivant : 'En un mot, l'écrit de Razi peut être considéré comme le modèle des ouvrages sur la physiognomonie que la science arabe a produits.'

La dignité de cette science est attestée par le Koran, par la sunna et par la raison. Le Très-Haut dit : 'Il y a en cela des signes pour ceux qui cherchent à connaître à l'aide de certaines marques extérieures.'

Pour terminer, nous rapportons le jugement de Mourad relatif aux premiers écrits arabes sur la Firāsa : 'Avant que les écrits grecs vinsent à la connaissance des Arabes, ceux-ci possédaient déjà des connaissances physiognomoniques, mais elles n'étaient pas encore codifiées. La physiognomonie arabe engloba une dizaine d'autres sciences secondaires dont le lien était surtout cette sorte d'intuition qui permettait de juger rapidement d'une personne.'

à un examen médical : par l'examen des humeurs, des tempéraments, des facultés et des âges.

Vient ensuite l'inférence par l'examen du climat et des aliments, puis celle tirée de la ressemblance qui existe entre les mâles et les femelles.

Le deuxième Discours est divisé en quatre sections. La première section qui traite des signes des tempéraments est la plus étendue : elle comprend sept chapitres. Les sujets qui y sont traités sont d'ordre médical. La section II nous présente une analyse de la psychologie des quatre âges de l'homme.

La troisième section décrit d'une manière succincte le caractère des nobles et des riches.

Le troisième Discours, qui est la partie la moins originale, passe en revue la signification des membres un à un. Dans la majeure partie du troisième Discours, Al-Razi s'est inspiré de l'ouvrage d'Aristote.

En plus de cet ouvrage, les principales sources de l'écrit de Al-Razi sont l'ouvrage de Polémon, 'Sirr al-Asrâr', et le chapitre du 'Al-tibb-al-mansûri' de Abu Bakr Al-Razi.

La section I du deuxième Discours, contenant les données médicales sur les tempéraments, est inspirée d'Hippocrate et de Galien, soit directement, soit par l'intermédiaire des médecins arabes. Les chapitres VI et VII du premier Discours traitent des fondements de la physiognomonie et des conditions requises pour l'exercice de cet art.

Dans son ensemble, commente Mourad, l'ouvrage de Razi n'est pas une réplique des ouvrages qui l'ont précédé. Il est plutôt le modèle des ouvrages qui sont venus par la suite.

mort de l'auteur. Les manuscrits de Londres et d'Istanbul se ressemblent beaucoup et reproduisent les mêmes additions.

Il existe d'autres écrits de Al-Razi sur la physiognomonie, mais en persan, ils sont plus courts que le texte arabe.

Al-Razi définit dans le chapitre I la physiognomonie. Puis il montre dans le chapitre II que l'on peut déduire le caractère d'un homme d'après son pays natal. Dans le chapitre III, Al-Razi traite de l'analogie entre l'homme et l'animal. Le chapitre IV montre la manière de juger la nature d'un homme d'après ses émotions. Le chapitre V passe en revue le caractère des diverses nationalités. Dans le chapitre VI ; l'auteur démontre que, chez tous les animaux, le mâle est plus fort que la femelle. Le chapitre VII montre que l'homme ne doit pas être jugé selon une qualité prédominante mais il faut tenir compte d'autres signes qui pourraient atténuer la signification de cette qualité.

Les chapitres VIII et XI montrent que le caractère interne d'un homme peut être déduit d'après son tempérament et la complexion de ses membres.

Le dernier chapitre montre la signification physiognomonique de tous les membres du corps. Le premier Discours est divisé en sept chapitres. Après avoir souligné sa valeur, l'auteur distingue entre la Firāsa naturelle et la Firāsa des soufis qui est un don de Dieu. Puis il passe en revue les diverses sciences qui se rapprochent de la physiognomonie. Il s'agit de sciences plus ou moins occultes et seules les personnes douées d'un certain pouvoir d'intuition peuvent les exercer. La firāsa est une intuition puisque Al-Razi insiste en premier lieu sur l'acuité de la faculté visuelle et la puissance de l'imagination. Si l'art de la physiognomonie ne peut être enseigné, il est pourtant susceptible de perfectionnement.

Du fait du caractère conjectural de cette science, Al-Razi insiste sur la nécessité de recourir au plus grand nombre de signes possibles. Tous les moyens cités pour inférer le caractère d'un individu ne sont pas tous d'égale valeur. Al-Razi accorde la première place

2-La logique.

3-Les sciences mathématiques.

4-Les sciences physiques et la théologie.

5-La politique, la jurisprudence et la science du kalam.

Le premier auteur qui mentionne la physiognomonie est Ibn Sina qui compte cette science parmi les divisions secondaires de la physique. Elle vient au troisième rang après la médecine et l'astrologie.

Ibn Sina définit la physiognomonie comme la science qui a pour objet de juger du caractère d'après le physique. La classification d'Ibn Sina a été reprise par Al-Ghazāli dans son ouvrage célèbre 'Tahāfut-al-Falāsifa'.

Ibn Rushd réfuta dans son ouvrage 'Tahāfut-al-Tahāfut' les objections de Al-Ghazāli. Il relève les infidélités d'interprétation de la doctrine d'Aristote, commises par Ibn Sina. Pour Ibn Rushd, la physiognomonie est une science conjecturale et hasardeuse et ne fait pas partie de la physique mais plutôt des sciences divinatoires. Elle est donc la connaissance des faits cachés présents, non futurs. Car l'homme a toujours été avide de se renseigner sur sa santé, il a donc cherché par tous les moyens à connaître la destinée et à faire appel à des forces cachées pour servir ses ambitions. Au Moyen Age, le médecin tout comme le physiognomoniste et le magicien ont joué un grand rôle social. Considérée comme une science secondaire, la physiognomonie jouera un grand rôle dans divers domaines, d'ordre pratique : médical, social et juridique.

La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage de Mourad est consacrée à 'Kitab Al-Firasa' de Al-Razi. Dans l'introduction, l'auteur affirme que l'authenticité de l'écrit de Al-Razi sur la physiognomonie ne fait aucun doute. Trois manuscrits de cet écrit sont connus et se trouvent à Cambridge, à Londres et à Istanbul. Celui de Cambridge est le plus important, il est sans nom d'auteur et sans date, on estime qu'il doit dater du XII^e ou XIII^e siècle. Mourad estime que le manuscrit remonte au XIII^e siècle, mais il n'a certainement pas été écrit du vivant de l'auteur, ce sont des notes recueillies par un élève et publiées après la

Les écrits arabes sur la physiognomonie traitent une plus grande variété de sujets que les ouvrages grecs. Mourad fait une distinction fort importante entre la physiognomonie proprement dite et les méthodes de divination qui se réclament indûment d'elle. Une abondante littérature fleurit où il s'agissait surtout de prédire la destinée de l'homme d'après les traits de son visage et la forme générale du corps ou d'après les mouvements involontaires de certaines régions du corps.

Chez les Arabes, la plupart des ouvrages qui traitent de la physiognomonie ne diffèrent pas des autres ouvrages qui traitent des diverses sciences, du fait que les philosophes arabes la considéraient comme une des branches de la physique, tout comme la médecine. Or, Mourad reconnaît que l'origine de cette science se confond avec celle de la médecine et de la magie qui vécurent côte à côte en Egypte et aux Indes.

L'étude des symptômes des maladies et la considération des divers tempéraments et de leurs rapports avec la forme, la couleur et la consistance des membres et les réactions du malade ont confirmé l'existence d'un lien étroit entre la forme des membres et les qualités physiques et morales.

Mourad ajoute : la physiognomonie représentait une très ancienne branche des connaissances humaines ayant des rapports avec l'anatomie, la physiologie et la médecine ; elle a peu évolué depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à la fin du Moyen Age. La plupart des écrits grecs et arabes se ressemblent. Les Arabes ont connu l'ouvrage d'Aristote, celui de Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi est présenté comme un extrait de l'ouvrage d'Aristote.

Dans le chapitre II de son ouvrage, Mourad expose la classification des sciences, telle que les Arabes l'ont faite. Il mentionne le premier essai de classification fait par Al-Farābi, 'Jhsā al Ulūm' inspiré d'Aristote.

Aristote avait divisé les sciences en trois parties : théoriques, pratiques et poétiques. Cette division se retrouve chez les auteurs arabes. L'ouvrage de Al-Farābi est comme un inventaire des sciences et il est divisé en cinq parties :

1-Les sciences philologiques.

La physiognomonie arabe
et le
Kitab Al-Firasa
de
Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi
Achira Kamel*

Le mot firāsa exprime dans la langue littéraire arabe une intelligence qui conclut rapidement du connu à l'inconnu. D'autre part, ce mot fait partie du vocabulaire des soufis. Les arabes distinguaient entre la firāsa philosophique et la firāsa divine, cette dernière est exclusivement accordée aux saints.

Cette capacité intellectuelle d'inférence rapide, qu'est la firāsa, a été considérée par les juristes comme un procédé légitime pour la découverte de la culpabilité ; dans la vie quotidienne, cette capacité a d'autres domaines d'application : pour juger du caractère des esclaves et de ses attraits. Ainsi, le domaine de la firāsa est très vaste, selon l'auteur de cet ouvrage critique qui, au cours de ses voyages en Angleterre et en Allemagne, a découvert deux copies de l'ouvrage de Al-Razi. Ce dernier, considéré par les physiognomonistes arabes comme l'une des sources de leur science, est à la fois un théologien et un philosophe, il possède en outre de vastes connaissances médicales.

M. Mourad consacre la première partie de son travail à l'étude de la physiognomonie en soi, telle qu'elle se présente dans les écrits arabes, puis il montre ses aspects et ses rapports avec les autres sciences.

Le chapitre premier est consacré à l'étude de l'évolution de la physiognomonie, qui est une science que les Arabes recueillirent des grecs, bien que le vocable arabe ait une acception plus large.

* Professeur de langue et de littérature françaises université d'Ain Chams

This is what he intended to establish, but what the result was can be pursued in Horani's exposition of 'Abduh's thought and that of his disciples. He intended to create an Islamic criterion in the chaos of an increasing impact on Muslim society but this principle of *ijtihad* under these circumstances sometimes led him to read more than he should do into the Islamic doctrines. "*Maslaha* gradually turns into utility, *Shora* into parliamentary democracy, *Ijma'* into public opinion. Islam itself becomes identical with civilization and activity, the norms of nineteenth-century social thought, ... (Thus) 'Abduh without intending it was perhaps opening the door to the flooding of Islamic doctrine and law by all the innovations of the modern world ... he had intended to build a wall against secularism, he had in fact provided an easy bridge by which it could capture one position after another.²¹ It was under the general feeling of a wide flexible content of the real Islam that various innovations were adopted and justified by the principle of *ijtihad* after him. But a final judgment on 'Abduh and his school cannot be maintained without estimating the potential danger, which would have threatened Egypt, if he had not played the role he played. One of the two extreme trends, rigid conservatism or rational secular liberalism, was bound to control the situation. By 'Abduh's effort to Islamize the changes through his *Ijtihad*, he established the middle course, which kept Islamic doctrine in active position, at least theoretically, and at the same time allowed the process of change to continue. For this reason, 'Abduh is considered by many to be the founder of the Egyptian modernist school.

²¹ Horani, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

the medieval works.¹⁷ The same attitude was taken by ‘Abduh, except that he allowed himself a sort of eclecticism, which blended into a system of various elements taken from different schools.¹⁸ This eclecticism implied the principle of *ijtihad* in choosing (that is besides originating) the suitable solutions for the new conditions.

‘Abduh’s insistence on *ijtihad* was his answer to the need for an Islamic criterion, that can control the impact of contact with a “superior” civilization, before which Islamic society suffered a feeling of inferiority and was apt to rush into it, destroying its own characteristics. By providing this principle of movement, ‘Abduh, while thinking of the past, was looking to the future. By this principle, Muslims now can adjust themselves to the new circumstances without fear of losing their identity. The medieval conditions and solutions do not have the authority to determine our present or plan our future. “The fact of preceding us in point of time constitutes neither a proof of knowledge nor a superiority of mind and intellect, ... ancestors and descendants are equal in critical acumen and in natural abilities.”¹⁹ In his *tafsir* of the Qur’anic verse 103: 1 ‘Abduh referred to the same idea where the word *al’asr* (العصر) may mean time or afternoon, saying “but if it has the first sense, it contains a divine criticism of people who always complain of “the times” and credit all the good things to the past.”²⁰ Thus ‘Abduh was ready to favour an inner assimilation of western civilization without abandoning the fundamental Muslim ideas.

¹⁷ Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁸ Horani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* Oxford, 1962, p. 142.

¹⁹ Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

²⁰ Beljon, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

incapable of knowing what God's Book contains of beliefs and ordinances, advocates uncritical obedience, *taqlid*, because of despair of understanding and suspicion is Abu-Lahab-like, an enemy of the truth, crippling the religion and criminal against humanity."¹⁶

Secondly, there was not any essential antithesis between *ijtihad* and *ijma'* as Gibb tried to demonstrate. What modernists were striving for was to reach a new *ijma'*. This can be achieved only when the '*Ulama*' exert themselves to find new solutions for the new problems and stop maintaining the traditional way of thinking. Until this is achieved the modern '*Ulama*' have the right to practise *ijtihad* and to achieve a new *ijma'* among themselves. In other words, the traditional '*Ulama*' were to be deprived of their authority, till they respond seriously to the new circumstances. By this practical formation of the principle, *ijtihad* was valid and was practised by 'Abduh himself in numerous cases.

'Abduh's quest for a principle to move and orient the Muslims in their contact with Western civilization was his call to return to the Qur'an with a new approach, to understand it anew independently in the light of the new circumstances. But his call was not like that of the Wahhabis who favoured reform on conservative lines. The difference in time, the geographical situation, the degree of an external impact, and the discipleship to Al Afghani, a political rebel more than a traditional '*alim*, was sufficient to maintain a great difference between 'Abduh and 'Abd al- Wahhab. But in spite of that, the Wahhabi reformation gave a start to the rejection of the medieval and modern accretions and innovations and opened the door to the critical study of

¹⁶ Quoted by 'Abd al- 'Ati, *op. cit.* p. 57.

introspection from time to time, whenever an alien threat is felt, to purify the internal and to confront the external.

Concerning the validity of this principle, Professor Gibb noticed that *Ijtihad* implies in no way "Freedom of judgment" as some modernists would like us to believe.¹⁴ He derives his argument from the fact that the word literally means "exerting one's self," in the sense of striving to discover the true application of the teachings of the Qur'an and traditions to a particular situation, and it must not go against the plain sense of these teachings. On the other hand, in his opinion, *Ijtihad*, as propagated by modernists, is hardly valid, because it needs *ijma'*. Their interpretation remains individual, personal, and therefore negligible unless they secure the approval of *ijma'*, against which they raised their voices. Here lies the paradox of the situation as seen by Gibb.

Some remarks must be made here in answer to Gibb's note. First is the fact that *Ijtihad* involved freedom of judgment as far as I see. It is freedom in so far as it provides a new understanding of the original texts free from the medieval interpretation, and it is quite undisputable to be limited from going against the plain sense of these texts. It is also freedom as long as it rejects "the passive acceptance of dogmas from religious authorities without asking for proof and without thinking of the right of free examination and personal initiative."¹⁵ It is freedom because, as 'Abduh said, "whoever prevents the people from understanding the Book of God and thinking about its meanings, depreciates the ability of the human intellect by considering it

¹⁴ Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, 1950, p. 12.

¹⁵ Uthman Amin *op. cit.*

this great historic institution, even in decay still the legal centre of Islam and the token of its unity, was the end of an era in Islamic history.”¹¹ The feeling that something had gone wrong with Islamic history called for a re-examination of the internal values. Ibn Taymiya who was personally involved in that political struggle¹² felt the need for a re-interpretation of Islam, just as Al-Afghani did, and he could not provide Muslims with a better solution than the principle of *Ijtihad*.

In spite of the difference that might be in the details, we find that history repeated itself. In the 19th century, Western power represented a great threat to Muslim society. By the later decades of that century, demonstration of the new threat reached its apex. The unfriendly alien hands are now on the spot within the Muslim world “ready to fire, ready to call from across the sea, more guns, ships, might.”¹³ The plague is stronger this time, and stronger was the feeling that something has gone wrong with Islamic history, and again, the urgent need for re-examination of the internal values led to the propagation of the principle of *Ijtihad*. It is obvious that the difference in the historical conditions between the two centuries necessitated an essential difference between two conceptions, but in principle they are one, both in motive and spirit. In both cases the principle of *Ijtihad* was a spontaneous reaction to an external threat, as if Islamic faith, one can almost say, tends by its own nature to this kind of self –

¹¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, p. 153, New York, 1960.

¹² Ibn Taymiya's father took refuge at Damascus to flee from the exaction of the Mongols and he himself was appointed to preach the Holy war against the Mongols and for the purpose went to Cairo. Shorter E. I. art. Ibn Taymiya.

¹³ Smith, W. C., *Islam in modern history*, Monter ed., p. 101.

Muslim reformers may differ about the nature of this principle and its validity, but they usually agree in rejecting the authoritative validity of *taqlid*.

According to them, the temporary values of the medieval conditions have been given after that an absolute authority in spite of the complete difference of circumstances. The Muslim reformers in both Egypt and India, for example, felt an urgent need to advocate this principle of movement. This attitude implies that a similar impact, namely the Western influence, was felt in both countries. There is no historical evidence to prove that the principle of *ijtihad*, as advocated by 'Abduh, was essentially a response to Ibn Taymiya's influence. Ibn Taymiya lived in the 13th century and since he died the principle was not seriously raised till the 19th century. It is true that the problem was raised from time to time, but in most cases it was a response to external factors more than to inner direct influence.

It is perhaps significant to notice a similar reaction to a similar impact in both the 13th and the 19th centuries. One can almost say, it was the same situation which called for the same principle in both centuries. At no other time in Islamic history has Muslim society known such a bitter struggle with foreign military powers as happened in both centuries. In spite of the difference between the two cases from the cultural aspect, both were a great threat, from the military point of view, to Muslim society. In the 13th century Islamic world was faced with the possibility of total destruction in two war fronts. A dangerous threat to Islam was arising in the West by the Crusades and the East by the Mongols. "In 1258, Huleku captured Baghdad, killed the Caliph and abolished the Abbasid Caliphate. The destruction of

fetters that made it inactive or active but in the wrong direction. He tried to show Islam as compatible with the sound principles of modern civilization, and demonstrate his conviction that a freed Islam was the only solution for the modern problems in Muslim society. By *ijtihad* 'Abduh wanted to revive Islam and to provide it with a principle by which it can move, select, and adopt what it finds suitable for its benefit. The key of all his program was a re-interpretation of Islam⁹ and the key of his re-interpretation was the principle of *ijtihad*. It is by this principle that he puts on trial the ideas, the morals and the customs which he condemns and tries to establish new values, sometimes of Western background and enthusiastically claimed to be purely Islamic.

Ijtihad may appear at the first sight as an instrument emerging from an inner response to the inner desire for religious reform, but in fact it was more than that. It was a response to challenging circumstances imposed by a contact with alien civilization. In other words, it was something imposed by external conditions more than a normal continuous development of the Islamic doctrine. What has been claimed as influence ascribed to Ibn Taymiya and his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Juziyya is exaggerated.¹⁰ It is only in support of his view that 'Abduh quotes their arguments. But neither Ibn Taymiya nor his disciple was a direct influential factor in 'Abduh's call for *Ijtihad*. The principle of *ijtihad* in one way or another was propagated in more than one country by more than one reformer and it is improbable that all these calls were under the same influence of Ibn Taymiya. Modern

⁹ 'Abd al-'Ati, H. A., *The Concept of freedom in Muhammad 'Abduh*, unpublished thesis presented to McGill University, Montreal 1957, p. 137.

¹⁰ Goldziher, *op. cit.*, Arabic translation, p. 367; Shorter E. I, art. M. 'Abduh, by J. Schacht.

intelligentsia towards the whole process of change. The intelligentsia of the 'Abbaside period steeped itself in Hellenistic ways of thinking without any fear of political influence because "the traditions from which influence would emanate were either politically dead, like Hellenism, or subjugated, like Iran, or, like India, irrelevant for the destiny of the empire. The Muslims' sense of being masters in their own house was in no way weakened by the knowledge that they were taking over the best the other had to offer, on the contrary, it merely strengthened their belief in the potentialities of their aspirations."⁷ As we have said, the situation by the time of 'Abduh was totally different. A feeling of inferiority was dominating the whole process, and imposed on Muslims a general feeling of the difficulty of selection and adoption of alien elements without losing their own character.

In such a situation, a criterion was needed to control the process of change, and it ought to be an Islamic one. It is here that 'Abduh came forth to provide Muslims with a suitable solution. This was by advocating the notion of *ijtihad* as the Islamic principle of movement. 'Abduh fought against *taqlid* throughout his life condemning the passive acceptance of dogmas from earlier authorities without any investigation. "The gates of *ijtihad* says 'Abduh, far from being closed once and for all, as some wrongly pretend, are wide open to all the questions raised by the new conditions of life. The last word must no longer belong to the old letter, or to authorities long dead, but to the modernist spirit and to the consideration of the common good."⁸ 'Abduh tried, by the principle of *ijtihad* to free the faith from its

⁷ Grunebaum, *Modern Islam, The search for cultural identity*, New York, 1964, p. 32.

⁸ Uthman Amin, *Islam and West*, ed., Frye, p. 166.

spirit. Modern confrontation with Western civilization had placed Muslim society in a painful psychological position. The Islamic world was no longer the master of the situation as it had been at the time of Hellenism. It was no longer free to adopt the alien elements for its own objectives as it had then. Furthermore, no longer could the problems be settled by a few legal adjustments or some reconciliatory theories as Muslims could do before. The unfeasibility of Muslim society's medieval structure, contrasted to the active and dynamic way of life of the Westerners, became painfully evident.⁵ In other words the pressures to which the Islamic world yielded then were more imposed from outside than being germane to its development phase. As von Grunebaum has pointed out:

“It is the political involvement that directs the culture transfer in our time, which makes it psychologically and socially so difficult and so disruptive for the receiving groups. Selection and timing, constructive response, and hostile reaction, are no longer conditioned by the state of growth and the actual intellectual and emotional needs of the borrowing, but by extracultural aspirations - one could almost say - by a series of emergency situations over which the would be borrower has but limited control.”⁶ Thus while the fundamental structure of Islamic thinking had been left untouched by Hellenistic influence because of the existence of various factors, modern Muslim society did not have the same efficiency in its confrontation with Western impact. A great shift had occurred in the balance of power and manifested itself in the attitude of the modern Muslim

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Grunebaum, von G. E., *Islam, Essays in the nature and growth.....*, New York 1961, p. 241.

return to Egypt where he got involved with educational activities, trying to avoid the political issues. What I am suggesting here in answer to Baljon's remark is that 'Abduh, throughout his life, had been more concerned with the social aspect of Qur'anic interpretation than with traditional pure theological issues, in spite of the fact that his book on theology was earlier than his *tafsir*.³

'Abduh was aware of an urgent need for a new interpretation of the Qur'an to solve the modern problems. This was a typical response of Muslim thinkers to their contemporary problems because of an essential involvement of Islam in regulating the outward activities of Muslims as well as the inward. Such a need was even felt as early as the second Caliph of Islam who faced the new problems which arose after the Prophet. The quick expansion of Muslim dominion imposed on Muslims a close contact with foreign civilizations and this called for a new interpretation of the Qur'an, "especially as the resolution of the problems posed by the impact of Hellenism proved an arduous task, whose effects can be traced in commentaries of scholars like Fakhr al-Din al Razi."⁴

What Muslims need again in confrontation with an alien civilization, according to 'Abduh, is simply to re-understand their Qur'an as they successfully did before. But this was considered by some orientalists as an over-simplification of the situation. Compared with Hellenism, the case was at this time quite different in motive and

³ See the necessity of reinterpretation of the Qur'an and approaching it from the social aspect in Rida, *Tafsir* vol. I, p. 19 : the importance of the Qur'an in restoring Muslims glory, *Ibid* p. 31; see also the practical objective of teaching *tafsir* at al Azhar in "The report of the administrative Council of Al Azhar" Rida, *Tarikh al 'Ustadh al Imam*, vol. I, p. 465, Cairo, 1931

⁴ Baljon, *Modern*, p. 2

The Egyptian lived in religious circles where a thorough acquaintance with classic dogmatics was held a self-evident requirement for a man of knowledge. Ahmed Khan was a descendent of an aristocratic family closely connected with Mughal Court. There, Persian culture and refinement was sought after. Consequently, the Indian educationist did not dispose of the proper theological equipment when he was faced with the need of re-valuation of Islam's faith and institutions. In such a situation it is indeed easier to compose an exegetical work than a dogmatic disquisition. Conversely, an all-round theologian seeking to display familiarity with the doctrinal subtleties, more readily fancies the composition of a book on religious tenets.²

Two or three remarks must be made here. The first is that by a broad conception of *tafsir*, as mentioned, one can consider many of 'Abduh's early articles as *tafsir*. Here we find him quoting the Qur'anic verses either in the title or in the text to support his view. The second is that the political circumstances in which he wrote on theology - a field that would appear somewhat far from political controversies - must be taken into consideration. His theological treatise was originally delivered at Beirut, where he remained for three years teaching in a school newly established by a Muslim benevolent society.

One can notice even the relation between his pure theological activities at Beirut and the subsequent permission he was given to

² Baljon, J.M. *Modern Muslim Koran interpretation*, Leiden, 1961, p. 4.

phrase by phrase, but also the particular occasions in which the Qur'anic verse is explained or quoted in support of a certain view, we will find that *tafsir* seems to date from the beginning of Islam.

By this definition of *tafsir*, we allow ourselves to consider as *tafsir*, any cultural activity using the Qur'an in support of its stand, whether it takes the form of the traditional running commentary, or the form of an essay, dealing with a specific contemporary question. Thus we try to enlarge the concept of *tafsir* to include 'Abduh's early articles, especially those of "al-'Urwah al Wuthqa", inspired by Al Afghani. It is in these articles, particularly, that we find the Qur'anic verses enthusiastically connected with important political and social issues.

The fact that 'Abduh did not write his *tafsir*, till he was urged by his disciple Rashid Rida in a later time, does not mean, in any way, that 'Abduh had ever thought of a better means of reformation than the Qur'an itself. As a matter of fact, 'Abduh used the Qur'anic text, from the very beginning, in his efforts to criticize the ideas, the morals and the customs which he found an obstacle to reform. For him, all that Muslims needed was to have a full understanding of their Holy Book to comprehend the spirit of their religion and overcome their new difficulties. But in spite of that, 'Abduh did not start by writing a running *tafsir*, as did his Indian counterpart Sayyid Ahmed Khan, in his attempts to arrive at a new evolution of Islamic principles, but by a treatise on theology called *Risalat al Tawhid*. This difference between the two reformers appears significant for Baljon, who finds it betraying a different background:

**MODERN CIVILIZATION AND QUR'ANIC INTERPRETATION
IN MUHAMMED 'ABDUH'S THOUGHT
Effat AL SHARQAWI'**

1. THE QUEST FOR A CRITERION

This paper suggests approaching 'Abduh's interpretation of the Qur'an, in Muslims' confrontation with modern civilization, from two aspects. The first is his quest for a criterion and the second is his quest for a synthesis. The former is dealt with in the following paper while the latter will follow in the next issue.

As it is known, the Qur'an is the Divine Book, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, containing God's message of mercy, guidance and warning for mankind. For Muslims, the Qur'an represents unquestionably the very word of God. This is taken for granted by the traditional 'Ulama "علماء الدين" as well as by the most rational modernists, so much so that the disputing creeds might tend to find in it what they seek to find in support of their views¹. In a sense the entire body of Islamic religious writing might be considered as an extended commentary on the Qur'an.

In their confrontation with new situations Muslim reformers usually claim a Qur'anic basis for their attitude. If we allow ourselves to consider as interpretation, not only the traditional running commentaries in which the text of the Sacred Book is explained

¹ Professor of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, Cairo.

¹ For an a comprehensive exposition of this statement concerning the Qur'an see Goldziher. *Die Richtungen der islam-mischen Koranlegung*, Leiden, Brill, 1920 and the Arabic translation: *Madhahib al tafsir al-Islami*, A. al Noggar, Cairo, 1954.



**Egyptian National Library
and Archives
MS Editing Centre**

TURÁTHIYYÁT

A SEMI-ANNUAL PERIODICAL PUBLISHED BY THE MS. EDITING CENTRE

ENGLISH SECTION

**Modern Civilization and Qur'anic Interpretation
in Muhammed' Abduh's Thought**

Effat Al-Sharqawi

Tenth ISSUE

July 2007

National Library Press

Cairo

2008