

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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**A Comparative Study of Revelation from the Perspective of the Modern Mu'tazilites:  
Abduh, Fazl al-Rahman, Abu Zayd and Its Impact on Intellectual Developments in the  
Arab World**

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**Abstract**

The formation and growth of Mu'tazilite thought lasted for nearly a century and a half, from Napoleon's invasion of Egypt to the eve of World War II. The study of this movement and intellectual development begins with Napoleon's invasion because Egypt and its thinkers, more than other Arab lands, became connected to the West and became self-aware. This process began in 1517 AD with the fall of the Mamluk government and its replacement by the Ottomans. The present study, using a descriptive-analytical method, briefly examines, evaluates, and compares the thought of three modern Mu'tazilites on the concept of revelation and interpretation of the Quran, which had provided the basis for the political and religious movements of the Arab nations in the contemporary era. The results of these studies show that Muhammad Abduh, by emphasizing rationalism and breaking away from traditional frameworks, tried to adapt Islam to the needs of the modern era. Fazl al-Rahman, by emphasizing the historical nature of the Quran and its occurrence, reinterpreted Islamic rulings in light of social and cultural developments. Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd, with a literary and hermeneutic approach, considered religious texts as products of the culture and language of his time and presented a new interpretation of the Quran. These three thinkers, with different approaches, tried to adapt religious concepts to rationalism and the needs of the contemporary world. Although their views were opposed by traditionalists, they had a profound impact on contemporary intellectual movements in the Islamic world.

**Keywords:** Abduh, Fazl al-Rahman, Abu Zayd, Revelation and Revelation Interpretation, Relationship.

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## Introduction

Before Napoleon's invasion of the East, there had been efforts to promote cultural and social progress in the Levant. For example, in

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the 17th century, Emir Fakhreddin Benani traveled to Tuscany and, upon his return,

brought a group of Italian engineers to Lebanon. Also, the expansion of trade ties with Mediterranean countries and the arrival of the first printing press in Lebanon in 1610 represented small steps on the path of progress. In addition, the reformist aspirations of some Ottoman rulers, such as Sultan Selim III, and the policies of the "Regulations" in the 19th century, vaguely contributed to the spread of the idea of progress among the subordinate nations.

However, none of these efforts and movements were as effective as Napoleon's invasion of the East in awakening national pride and creating a desire for progress among the Arab-speaking people. This invasion not only paved the way for Egypt's separation from the Ottoman Empire, but also had a profound impact on the intellectual and cultural developments in the region. For this reason, this research seeks to examine one or two of the contexts for the formation of the new I'tezal thought and analyze the effects of these intellectual developments.

The present research pursues three main goals: First, to analyze one or two of the contexts for the formation of the new I'tezal thought within the scope of an article. Second, to introduce three new Mu'tazilites and examine their role in the formation of this intellectual movement. And third, to analyze how these new Mu'tazilites interpreted and viewed the issue of revelation and interpretation of revelation.

Finally, this study seeks to examine the connections and kinship between the interpretations of these three new Mu'tazilites on revelation and revelations. This study not only helps to better understand the intellectual developments in the Arab world, but also can shed light on some of the

intellectual and cultural trends that took shape in the region after Napoleon's invasion and have maintained their effects to this day. With the introductions mentioned, the main question of the present article is: What was the impact of Napoleon's invasion of the East on the awakening of national pride and the formation of the new renunciation thought among Arab-speaking people? And the subquestions are raised as follows: What were the main grounds for the formation of the new renunciation thought after Napoleon's invasion? What is the interpretation and attitude of the new Mu'tazilites towards the issue of revelation and interpretation of revelation? Is there a connection and kinship between the interpretations of these three new Mu'tazilites on revelation and revelations?

In order to answer the research questions, it was necessary to examine and analyze the opinions of these three intellectual movements. The main hypothesis of the research shows that Napoleon's attack on the East, as a foreign shock, had a profound impact on the awakening of national pride and the formation of the new renunciation thought among Arab speakers. This attack not only revealed the military and political weakness of the Ottoman Empire, but also caused Arab intellectuals and thinkers to seek solutions for progress and salvation from the current situation. This event, as a strong stimulus, provided the intellectual and cultural grounds for the emergence of new intellectual movements, including the new renunciation.

The sub-hypotheses of the following article indicate that the main grounds for the formation of the new renunciation thought included the awakening of national pride, familiarity with Western ideas, the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, and the need to redefine cultural and religious identity. These factors caused Arab intellectuals to turn to rereading

their intellectual heritage, including the ideas of the Mu'tazilites. The new Mu'tazilites, emphasizing rationalism, tried to interpret revelation and religious texts in a way that was compatible with the conditions of the time. They did not consider revelation as something completely beyond reason, but as something that could be understood and interpreted based on rational principles. This attitude led them to re-read religious texts with a critical and analytical approach, and there is also a connection and affinity between the interpretations of these three new Mu'tazilites on revelation and revelations. All three, emphasizing rationalism and re-reading religious texts, tried to create compatibility between tradition and modernity. They considered revelation as something that could be understood and interpreted based on rational principles, and this common attitude indicates the intellectual affinity between them.

These questions and answers help to better understand the objectives and content of the research and show how Napoleon's invasion of the East, as a pivotal event, had a profound impact on the intellectual and cultural developments of the region. Regarding the background of this research, it should be said: An article titled "The Nature of Revelation: Comparing the Opinions of Morteza Motahari and Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd" by Mohammad Sadeq Zahedi and his colleague (2014) compares the opinions of Morteza Motahari and Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd and concludes that according to Motahari, the words of the Quran have a divine origin, while Abu Zayd, on the other hand, considers

revelation to lack a linguistic nature. Abdullah Jabraili Jellodar (2019) in his article "Criticism and Study of the Ontological Foundations of the New Movement of Retirement in North Africa (with an Emphasis on Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd and Hassan Hanafi) compares the ontological foundations of the New Movement of Retirement with the Old Movement of Retirement. Also, the article "Comparative Prophetic Study of Understanding the Words of Quranic Revelation from Abu Zayd's Perspective and Its Analysis Based on the Principles of Allama Tabataba'i" by Hossein Alavi Mehr (2021) criticizes Abu Zayd's basis of revelation theory based on the principles of revelation theory of Allama Tabataba'i and it becomes clear that he considers numerous verses of the Quran to be divine. Despite the comparative study of Abu Zayd's revelation theory with other scholars, the interpretation of revelation by the three Mu'tazilite schools and its impact on the intellectual trends of the region have not been addressed. It is hoped that by understanding the quality of the Mu'tazilite intellectual trends, it will contribute significantly to the analysis of the role of these ideas in the intellectual awakening and political-religious developments of the Arab world.

### **1- Muhammad Abduh (1266-1323 AH)**

Perhaps the first person with whom this discussion can be started is "Muhammad Abduh". He was born in 1266 AH in one of the villages of Egypt called "Mahalla Nasr" in the city of "Shabirakhit" in the province of "Bahira". He was born to a Turkmen father and an Arab mother. His name was Muhammad and in accordance with his father's name, which was "Abduh", he was addressed and known as "Muhammad Abduh". At first, he made farming his profession, and after the age of 10, he began to learn the Quran and memorized it. At the age of 13, at the insistence

and coercion of his father, he went to the center of "Jami' Ahmadi" to learn Islamic teachings; but he did not like the difficulty of the information, the dryness and the rigidity of the teaching method there, so he left there and returned to his hometown and continued farming. But after a while, on the recommendation of his paternal uncle, Sheikh Darwish Khizr - who accepted his thoughts and beliefs - he returned to the "Jami' Ahmadi" once again, and after a while he went to "Al-Azhar".

In addition to being a student of Sheikh Darwish, he also benefited from the presence of "Sheikh Hassan Al-Tawil". Due to his opposition to the British ruler of Egypt, and his expulsion (exile) from Egypt by the ruler of Egypt, he spent some time in Europe. There he met the late "Sayyid Jamal Al-Din Asadabadi", and also benefited from his presence. On the advice of Sayyid Jamal, he studied the intellectual sciences, and chose a teaching career. During his teaching career, he trained many students; among his students are "Muhammad Darshid Reza", "Saad Zaghloul", "Taha Hussein", "Abdul Qadir Maghrib", "Mustafa Abdul Razzaq" and "Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout".

In addition to teaching, he also did political work, which is why he joined the Egyptian Patriotic Party. With the suggestion and appointment of "Riyad Pasha", the minister of Khedive Pasha, he became the editor of the newspaper "Wakayah Misriyyah". He also collaborated with the late Sayyid Jamal alDin Asadabadi in publishing the newspaper "Urwah al-Wathqi".

With the changes that occurred in the political and social field of Egypt, and with an appointed membership in the Shura Council - which was an advisory body - he spent his life in reforming religious thoughts, religious organizations and charitable activities. "At the end of his life, he reached the position of Mufti of Egypt and remained in this position until the end of his life. In the last months of his life, due to pain in his stomach and liver, lack of rest - despite the advice of doctors - and excessive activity, his illness worsened and he died on the evening of the eighth day of Jamadi Al-Thani, 1323 AH, at the age of fifty-six" (Amin, 1994: 294293).

## **2- The most important stages of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh's life**

In addition to his early education in the "Ahmadi Mosque" and "Al-Azhar", among the most important stages of Sheikh Muhammad Abduh's life, we can mention his acquaintance and discipleship with the late Sayyid Jamal Al-Din. This acquaintance and discipleship caused Abduh to be influenced by the thoughts of Sayyid Jamal, and it was under the thoughts of Sayyid that he developed a tendency towards the idea of renunciation. In some of his books, he explicitly or implicitly expresses his tendency towards the school of renunciation. Abduh used the teachings of the Mu'tazilites to defend Islam in order to prove that Islam is not deterministic and the enemy of science (Amin, 1994:295). He teaches a book entitled *Sharh Taftazani* – which is a philosophical book – in which the renunciation tendencies are particularly strong; because Taftazani was a Maturidi and the Maturidi tendency is close to the Mu'tazilites. Finally, he wrote a book called "*Risalah al-Tawhid*" in which he explicitly expresses his tendency towards the idea of renunciation. In that book, he writes: "Islam has given priority to the position of reason and has

invited the use of different experiences and opinions" (Abduh, 2005:20). Although Abduh shared some of his ideas with the Mu'tazilites, he avoided being accused of being a Mu'tazilite, fearing opposition from some fanatics due to his conservatism (Wailant, 2004). An example of Abduh's conservatism can be seen in his book "*Risalah at-Tawhid*." In this book, he, like the Mu'tazilites, proposes the theory of the creation of the Quran and ultimately accepts it (Abu Zayd, 1995: 202); however, in the second edition of the book, due to pressure from Egyptian society – due to the dominance of the Ash'ari school at that time and opposition to the Mu'tazilite doctrine – he was forced to delete this part of his book (Abduh, 2005: 53).

Among the topics that Abduh raised in his book and in his classes were the issue of free will, the origin of the Quran, and the issue of reason, which are in fact the established principles of the school of renunciation.

In Abduh's time, an argument was raised - mainly by Christians - that the Quran was unreliable. Their reason was that the stories of the Quran had no historical precedent. For example, in the story of Prophet Abraham safely escaping from the fire of the Nimrodites, they believed that in reality Prophet Abraham did not fall into the fire, but rather entered "Ur", and "Ur" has two meanings: one is fire and the other is a city; and that Prophet Abraham left "Ur", meaning he left the city safely.

Another example that they expressed was the denial of Prophet Abraham coming to Mecca, because in the life of the Prophet we do not

have at all or it has not been proven that he went to Mecca. On the first pages of some holy books, maps are drawn that show the path of the Prophet Moses and the Prophet Jesus, while nothing is narrated from the Prophet Abraham, and its mention by the Quran is merely a claim. And other examples were mentioned in this regard, in fact, in that era, science had replaced revelation. Abduh was also influenced by this trend. Like the Mu'tazilites, he did not accept narration that was against reason. In his opinion, narrations that deal with the meaning and interpretation of the Quran, but are not compatible with reason, are against the Quran (Wasfi, 2009: 17). Therefore, in his interpretation of the Quran, he believed that the historical stories of the Holy Quran are not accurate narrations of history. He says: Stories are narrated in two ways, sometimes they are accurate narrations of history that naturally take on the aspect of a story and have also happened abroad, and sometimes they are narrations of history but are somewhat contemporary in language rather than having historical reality. Although he believes that the stories of the Quran are true, it is not the case that everything that is stated necessarily happened.

It should be noted here that in the old I'tezil there were personalities who considered reason to have a place in the revelation and even higher than it; that is, they interpreted and interpreted what they could not understand with reason, and therefore it is known that the discussion of the permissible is one of the innovations of the Mu'tazilites. They said that things that they saw could not be reconciled with reason were permissible, and in a word, it can be said that this group founded and theorized the permissible in literature. A book called "The Question of the Imaginary among the Mu'tazilites" was written during this period.

Among other things that Abdu said was that in some places in the verses of the Quran where knowledge was expressed, he interpreted and interpreted it in a different way; for example, in the Quran, we have that God sent angels to help the Muslims, but the Muslims did not see them, or in other verses, there is talk of the evil eye or jinn and the like - of unseen matters. Abdu believed and said that these Quranic knowledges were revealed in the mental atmosphere of that era; that is, for example, in order for the Muslims to be encouraged and feel powerful, so God says that the angels came down from heaven to earth and engaged in battle, or people in that era believed that jinn existed, or a person whose mind did not work well was said to have gone mad or been possessed by a demon, and so on. In other words, God revealed the Quran through the mouth of the same people who addressed the verses; in other words, the Quran employed the same superstitions just to appeal to their hearts. These are examples of what Abdu said.

The question that arises here is whether Abduh was a Mu'tazilite? - Because, as stated, he was extremely conservative - hence some doubt his attribution to the new I'tezil, although some believe that in his book *Risala al-Tawhid* - which is 110 pages - there are materials that include the foundations and theories of I'tezil, such as the position of reason - which he raises in various places in his treatise - Abduh insists and emphasizes that we know God with reason and believe with reason, and in the discussion of divine names and attributes, he believes that divine



attributes such as power, life, will, etc. are rational. Therefore, these people believe that Abduh is the initiator and founder of the new I'tezil.

However, it can be said that in general, Abduh agrees with the Mu'tazilites in teachings such as human free will, good and bad are rational (Abduh, 2005: 58-47); However, he did not abandon the Ash'ari beliefs of his community in general, and he should be considered an Ash'ari in the principle of monotheism and a Mu'tazilite in the principle of justice.

### **3- The intellectual foundations of Muhammad Abduh**

As stated, Abduh believed that we know God with reason and that the attributes of the Almighty such as power, knowledge of life and will, etc. are rational. In explaining this, it should be said that the attributes he mentioned in the discussion of theology in the discussions of theology are compared with another group of attributes that have an auditory aspect, creating a comparison between these two groups.

Among the divine attributes is speech. As is well known, one of the distinguishing features of the old Mu'tazilites is the belief in the origin of the divine speech, unlike the Ash'aris, whose belief in the origin of the divine speech is considered one of their characteristics. Abduh, when he raises this argument in *Risala al-Tawhid*, clarifies that the divine speech is origin (Ibid, 53).

Another characteristic of the Mu'tazilites is the discussion of the inherent beauty and ugliness of things. In his treatise, Abduh states that the inherent beauty and ugliness of things are accessible to us.

One of the issues of disagreement between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites is the issue of

predestination and free will. The point of this issue is whether a person has free will in his thoughts and actions or is he forced? A person naturally finds that he is the agent of his own actions, and to the same extent he deals with others, and on the same occasion that human societies judge a person and encourage or punish individuals; at the same time, a person states that he has the all-encompassing and transcendent power over the entire universe in his hands, so the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites disagree on this issue. Some have taken the side of predestination, and some have chosen the side of free will by citing a series of narrational and rational reasons. Abduh accepts the principle of free will for humans.

The important thing in this issue is that each of these issues has a place in the eyes of the new Mu'tazilites, with the difference that these issues differ from the views of the old Mu'tazilites. For example, here they have raised the issue of the origin and predestination of the Quran. By stating its history, we will present the views of the new Mu'tazilites in order to clarify its difference from the views of the old Mu'tazilites.

#### **3-1- Origin and antiquity of the Quran**

One of the debates that was extremely common among Muslims in the second century AH and was an issue on the basis of which they made a kind of value judgment on individuals for more than 30-40 years was the debate on the origin and antiquity of the divine word. Theologians had divided into two groups, the Mu'tazilites believed in the

origin of the Quran and said that the Quran that was revealed to the Prophet over a period of 23 years could not be ancient. On the other hand, the Ash'aris believed in the antiquity of the Quran and said that the Quran is ancient in its essence, because the Quran is the divine word and the divine word is an attribute of the essence of God and is ancient. They said that the main source of the Quran that was revealed over a period of 23 years has its roots in the Tablet Preserved by God and that it is ancient in its essence and is not an origin.

The Mu'tazilites, who were proponents of rationalism, attacked their opponents in this debate, especially during the years 198 to 247 AH, which was the height of Mu'tazilite power. It was during these years that the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun decree occurred, which is known as the "Period of Tribulation" or the "Period of Examination of Beliefs" in Islamic history.

Another common debate at that time was whether it was possible to abrogate the Quran with the Sunnah of the Prophet? Those who believed in the precedence of the Quran to defend the inviolability of the Quran with the Sunnah, one of the theological arguments they put forward was that the Quran is the word of God, and since the word of God is ancient, it is at the forefront of the divine essence, that is, it has a transcendental level compared to the Sunnah, so the Sunnah cannot abrogate the Quran. On the other hand, some believed in the abrogation of the Quran with the hadith and said that the Quran, like the Sunnah of the Prophet, has a contingent aspect.

The proponents of the contingent aspect of the Quran in the present era - or the new Mu'tazilites - have put forward this debate in a different way. The title that this group has put forward is the historicity of the Quran, with the explanation that the historicity of the Quran

means that the teachings of the Quran belong to a specific historical period, that is, the rulings of the Quran do not have a transhistorical aspect; in other words, "It is not permissible for Muhammad to be lawful until the Day of Judgment" (Kulaini, 2009: 1/58). Three reasons and analyses are presented for this claim: sociological analysis, psychological analysis and theological analysis.

### **3-2- Sociological explanation and analysis**

In this analysis, supporters of the historicity of the Quran raise the role of the prophets. The supporters of this theory are Mu'tazilites, and this group gives a special place to reason, in a way that they take the side of reason in the conflict between reason and narration, and in understanding the Quran, wherever their reason fails, they interpret that verse. The sociological analysis of this group is that the role of the prophets is to govern society. On the other hand, society is constantly changing and evolving, so expecting the prophet to be a transhistorical legislator is a wrong expectation, because the prophets were not jurists, but their role in society was a guiding role, not a legislator. They came to invite people to monotheism, values, and human dignity. This group gives examples to prove this explanation and analysis and says that before Islam, 1/4 of the spoils and the like went to the chief of the tribe, after Islam, the Prophet changed 1/4 to 1/5 and called it khums. So before Islam, the Arabs had a custom and the Prophet continued the same custom, which we refer to as signature



rulings. This shows that the Prophet did not establish in many of his rulings in a single sense, but rather had signature rulings, and the fact that a ruling is a signature ruling, from the perspective of the new Mu'tazilah, indicates its historical nature, meaning that at one time, the Prophet as a social leader, when an issue arose, would say, "Don't do this," but after a while that ruling would change.

If we want to give an example of these movements, there is a person named "Shah Waliullah Dehlavi" who is the head of some religious movements in India. He has a two-volume book titled "Hujjud Allah Al-

Balagha". In the introduction to this book, he narrates the reason for its composition as a dream or revelation, and that is that I was in the Prophet's Mosque when Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein came to me and said,

"This is the pen of our grandfather, take it and write with it." This book was very effective in creating the idea of etiquette in India. In this book, Shah Waliullah Dehlavi explains the philosophy of jurisprudence and gives an argument for renewing the rulings, stating that since the conditions were changing until the time of the Prophet, who brought the complete Sharia, the rulings changed until they reached the peak of equilibrium. Although his argument is incorrect, he passed this method on to the later Mu'tazilites. They used this reason and said that the difference between our time and the time of the Holy Prophet is greater than the difference between the time of the Holy Prophet and the time of Jesus. Therefore, with this type of analysis, which is a type of sociological analysis, they conclude that the role of the prophets is not that of legislators and jurist, but rather divine leaders to protect and safeguard the society and guide the society towards monotheism; therefore, it has never been observed that the Holy Prophet opened a

problem for the people, or, for example, sat for a while in the mosque of Medina and explained the rules of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage; for this reason, detailed rules are not seen in the Quran. This group insists that these rules are historical and signed rules.

### **3-3- Explanation of psychological analysis**

In the statement of this analysis, it is said that sometimes it happens that a person has a creative idea in his mind, but at that time, he does not have the power to express and interpret it, but after a while he expresses that creativity in the form of sentences, theories and rules. This statement was used by Iqbal Lahori in his book "Revival of Religious Thought in Islam" (Iqbal Lahori, 2016). Citing this statement, the modern

Mu'tazilites say that the perception of divine revelation by the prophets in the face of the unseen world and God was not word for word, but general concepts were inspired to them, such as the inspiration that was given to him in the story of Newton after the apple fell from the tree. For example, the Holy Prophet perceived the Holy Quran as a simple existence, like the divine general knowledge that has a detailed revelation, then when faced with the daily problems of life, he would elaborate on this general knowledge. In other words, the interpretation used by this group is that the role of the prophets in receiving divine revelation is not like a recording. So, just as revelation is the word of God, so is the word of the prophets; and since the prophets are infallible, this process -

from the summary to the details - is an infallible process.

On the issue of the infallibility of the three prophets - that is, infallibility in receiving revelation, preserving revelation, and communicating revelation - they have an interpretation and say that it is a revelation experience, but in that experience there was no specific language involved, because experience is a type of present knowledge and does not have a language. In this experience, the prophets are infallible in receiving revelation, and then in communicating revelation, which requires a language form, it depends on the land of the prophet's mission, and that revelation experience takes the form of the language of those people and becomes a language, hence the language of Prophet Moses was Hebrew and the Quran was expressed in Arabic.

The result of this psychological analysis is that in fact, the Quran that we have in our hands is in accordance with the time of the Holy Prophet himself and not in accordance with our time. Also, some verses were abrogated due to the changing social conditions in the time of the Holy Prophet. Those who believe in this idea believe that if the Holy Prophet had lived another ten years, or if he had succeeded in conquering Iran, Egypt and Syria and the social conditions had changed, there was a possibility of the previous verses being abrogated. To support their claim, they cite examples such as the prohibition of wine, the obligation of prayer, the prohibition of usury and other matters, which were rulings that occurred gradually. **3-4- Theological Analysis**

This analysis depends on the origin and antiquity of the Holy Quran. They say that the Quran is an origin, the meaning of this statement is that its rulings are subject to change and the rulings of the Quran are not

transcendental, eternal and eternal, as a result of religious transformation is a principle, they say that the world has changed and its conditions have changed, so the rulings of this changing and variable world must be answered, such as genetic discussions, or the discussion of rent and other cases; therefore, the old rulings can no longer be answered in the completely new changed conditions.

In other words, in the face of modernity, that is, the new world that is formed and progresses based on human reason - selffounded reason or reason disconnected from revelation - especially the developments that have occurred in the world in this century, which is equivalent to two thousand years of humanity, such as discussions of nanotechnology, or simulation, etc., which have changed human life, several things can be done:

- 1) Close the doors and say that nothing has changed and that these things they say do not exist and live completely the way people lived ten centuries ago. For example, currently in America there is a Christian sect called the "Amish" who do not drive cars and do not use new technology.
- 2) There are changes, but religion is unable to respond to developments and changes. The old commandments belong to the same time, and these dimensions of social life are separate from the spiritual dimensions. This is a kind of separation of religion from the world or secularization.

3) For the new conditions in religion, he believed in creating a transformation from within the religion and renovated and modernized the traditional model of religion.

4) There is another method in this field that the new Mu'tazilites are committed to, which will be presented and discussed while introducing one of the figures of the new Mu'tazilites.

4- Summary of the intellectual foundations of Muhammad Abduh A. Abduh was a student of the school of Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, but his approach was not in harmony with Sayyid Jamal. After Sayyid Jamal was exiled, Abduh adopted a reformist approach in the newspaper "Wakayah Misriyyah" - due to his conservatism - and called for the observance of revolutionary tendencies in all aspects. Also, all of Abduh's efforts and efforts were focused on intellectual and educational reform and he was wary of political friction with the British government. B. Abduh avoided political struggles and paid more attention to the reform movement. C. Abduh considered educational and cultural reform to be the first priority. D. Abduh believed in cadre building and training forces in the form of struggle. E. Abduh's companions were mostly from the seminary and university classes. His class circle, even the audience for his lectures in mosques, was mostly made up of this class. And Abduh considered social reform in the light of individual reform, although he was not indifferent to social life and its rules (Hosseini Tabatabaei, 1983: 39).

### 5- Abduh's works

Tafsir al-Manar, Risala al-Tawhid, Sharh Nahjul-Balagha, Lessons from the Quran (Kalaam), Al-Wardat (Mysticism), Risala alRadd ali al-Dahreen, Fatawa fi al-Tajdid wa al-Islah al-Din, Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim - Juz Um.

### 6- Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988 AD)

Fazlur Rahman Malik was born in 1919 AD (1298 AH) in the city of Hazara, India - which is now in Pakistan. His father was a Sunni scholar. After completing his primary education in his hometown, he went to Oxford University. He is a professor and specialist in Persian language and the philosophy of Mulla Sadra and wrote a detailed book about Mulla Sadra. He is the first person to discuss the emergence of Mir Damad as a Dahir in detail. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the topic of "The Philosophy of Ibn Sina".

Fazlur Rahman has a distinct intellectual system among his contemporaries. He thought systematically, and the words he spoke tried to apply the social rules of Islam in a focused manner, because one problem that existed in the new Mu'tazilites was that in some cases, they violated the rules of worship, but Fazlur Rehman was very moderate and was not a fanatic or extremist.

After completing his doctorate in England, he taught there from 1950 to 1958. Then he went to a university in Canada and taught there until 1961. In 1960, when Pakistan was separated from India, the main issue in Pakistan was the establishment of an Islamic Republic, so the concern of the rulers of the country was to write a law based on the standards and laws of Islam. In a short time, several governments ruled this country. The main issue of the rulers was to maintain the satisfaction and coordinate and accompany the jurists and religious

scholars with them so that they could rule a country that had an Islamic character (The Islamic Republic of Pakistan). In the meantime, General Ayub Khan became the president of this country through a coup. To achieve his goals and the aforementioned goal, he established the Institute of Islamic Research and invited intellectuals outside Pakistan for intellectual and practical help. In the meantime, Fazlur Rehman was also invited to Pakistan. Upon his arrival in the country, he became the head of this institute between 1961 and 1968. During this time, he was involved and faced with practical problems and current issues of the government, the conflict between religion and the world, and the conflict between Islamic jurisprudence and law and the modern view. Fazlur Rehman, as the head of the Institute of Islamic Research of Pakistan, was strongly objected to by extremists and traditional Islamists for presenting certain opinions, so he was forced to leave the country. This time, he went to Chicago and taught at the university there. He remained there until his death in 1988.

While he was at the University of Chicago, a large number of Muslim students from different countries attended his classes. During this time, Fazlur Rahman trained a generation of Islamic scholars who had a rationalist and renunciative view of religion. When these people returned to their countries, they paved the way for the spread of renunciative thinking in their countries.

### **6-1- Fazlur Rahman's Thoughts**

Fazlur Rahman was one of the critics of Ash'arism. He criticized the principles of Ash'arism, such as accepting predestination or their opposition to reason, and especially denying rational goodness and ugliness. He states that this Ash'arist view that

human actions are figuratively attributed to him and that in reality humans are not responsible for their actions is a misinterpretation of the verses of the Holy Quran.

Another of Fazlur Rahman's views is the belief in the creation of the Holy Quran (Ma'raft, 2019: 1). Of course, there is a difference between creation and renunciative Mu'tazilites, and that is that for the old Mu'tazilites, the discussion of creation was a Quranic and theological discussion. But the new Mu'tazilites mean that the Quran was revealed in response to the conditions and questions that were raised at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, so the Quran does not have a transhistorical identity and an eternal identity. The meaning of the Quran's origin is that the Quran's rulings are historical, that is, the Quran's rulings have a specific time of use, in other words, they have an expiration date; for this reason, they presented the aforementioned three justifications – sociological justification, psychological justification, and theological justification.

Another long-term question that needs to be explored is how can we say that our rulings are Islamic? Martyr Motahhari (may Allah have mercy on him) quotes something from Iqbal somewhere in the book of Revelation and Prophecy and criticizes him for this, saying that this discussion you are making indicates the end of Islam. Fazlur Rahman, in response to this question, says that we should engage in dynamic ijtihad. They present a different understanding of

ijtihad. Ijtihad in the term refers to the Book, Sunnah, consensus, and reason (in Shia), and in other schools, refers to other sources to infer divine rulings. However, ijtihad from the perspective of the modern Mu'tazilites is an attempt to understand the meaning of a text or ruling in the past. They believe that one should understand its meaning in the past and change the verses that contain this law by expanding and expanding it, or limiting it with its contents, in other words, modifying it so that the ruling is included in the new conditions, with a new solution. They believe that one should expand your information so that you can answer your questions well. For example, if there is a problem in society in the present era, and we want to give a ruling about that problem, we cannot refer to the narrations to obtain the ruling on that problem, because with the passage of time, the components have changed, so the subject of the ruling also undergoes changes and changes. For example, in the early days of Islam and during the Battle of Khaybar, Muslims used to slaughter livestock to satisfy their hunger. The Prophet forbade them from eating livestock, because they needed those animals for war. For centuries, our jurists believed that eating these animals was forbidden, but today's scholars do not believe that it is forbidden (I.E., The rulings will change as circumstances change).

This group says that one should seek the general principles of religion and extract them. One of the most important of these principles is the principle of justice, and specifically social justice, meaning that laws should be enacted in society that establish social justice between individuals and the members of society; just as in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, laws such as khums and zakat and the

like were enacted on this basis, because the general spirit of Islam is equality, equity, and justice.

According to Fazlur Rahman, laws should also be applicable in the present era. For this purpose, extensive work should be done, and subject matter should also be studied so that we do not make mistakes; for example, social justice itself is a general discussion, and research and study should be conducted in this field so that we can determine which cases are examples of justice and which cases are not examples of justice. In other words, in Fazlur Rahman's thought, Islamic laws can be re-read in accordance with the conditions of the old time and place, and in accordance with the conditions of the new time and place, we can have a just, beneficial, and reasonable understanding of religion.

Another point that can be mentioned in the thought of Fazlur Rahman and his fellow thinkers from the New Mu'tazilites is that they believe that the rulings of the Sharia are all in the form of external propositions. - In logic, propositions are divided into batniyyah, kharqiyyah, nafiyyah and haqiqiyyah - Haqiqiyyah propositions are transhistorical, that is, they do not take time. The New Mu'tazilites believe that the rulings of the Sharia are part of the external propositions, except for what is proven by evidence, and all rulings are historical unless proven otherwise.

Fazlur Rahman believes and says that this matter - that is, the compatibility of Islamic rulings with the conditions of



time and place - causes the dynamics of *ijtihad*. He cites an example: During the time of the second caliph, when the Muslims conquered lands in war, the second caliph refused to divide them among the Muslims, despite the fact that such lands were divided among the Muslims during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, so the second caliph did not practically follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.

## **6-2- The Challenging Thought of Fazlur Rahman**

Among the challenging ideas of Fazlur Rehman that caused the extremists and traditional Islamists of Pakistan to take sides against him was the issue of Zakat. From Fazlur Rehman's point of view, Zakat is a type of tax and it is necessary to expand the examples and coefficients of Zakat and not create a conflict between Zakat and tax.

Another discussion of Fazlur Rehman is about Riba. He insists on proving that Riba existed during the time of the Prophet, although he considers it forbidden. He says that the interest that a bank takes from people is not Riba, because the bank is a new institution and if the bank is not strengthened, the result will be that people will give their money to usurers, which will lead to corruption in society.

Another example of Fazlur Rehman's challenging ideas and opinions was about inheritance. He said that if a father has a child and that child dies during the father's lifetime while the child himself has a child, after the death of the grandfather, the grandson does not inherit, and this was contrary to the opinion of the jurists of that era in Pakistan who did not consider the death of the father to be a hindrance.

And the last example of his opinion is about the hadd of theft. He says that the hadd of theft in the early Islamic era was because theft was not just

theft and the status, honor and reputation of individuals were questioned by theft, therefore the punishment and treatment of the law by the phenomenon of theft was severe and severe; but today, the hadd of theft has become a new issue because ownership is not tied to honor and reputation. The phenomenon of theft does not have the same subject matter as before and requires a new ruling and it is not necessary to implement the same ruling of cutting off the hand and... with severity. Even the way Islamic jurists deal with the issue of proving theft and limiting the method of proving theft and narrowing the scope of its implementation shows the injustice of cutting off a hand for theft in the modern era.

## **6-3- Works of Fazlur Rahman**

Important books of Fazlur Rahman include: *Islam, Islam and Modernity*, *Revelation in Islam*, *Philosophy and Tradition*, *Islamic Methodology in History and the Main Fields of the Quran*.

## **7- Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd**

Born on July 10, 1943, corresponding to 1362 AH, in a village near the city of Tanta in western Egypt. He began his education in the village school. At the age of eight, he memorized the Quran. At the age of 17, he obtained a diploma in electronics. At the age of twenty, he became the imam of the congregation in the village of Qahafeh, a part of the city of Tanta. At the age of 25, he entered Cairo University, and four years later he received a bachelor's degree in Arabic language and literature from the Faculty of Literature, Cairo University. He also

received his master's degree four years later from the same faculty. He received his doctorate in Arabic language and literature in 1981.

Nasr Hamed Abu Zaid had a modernist view of religious teachings and therefore faced strong opposition from official Islamic authorities. In 1992, several professors from Al-Azhar and the University of Egypt filed a petition with the Egyptian court, accusing him of apostasy and demanding his separation from his wife. With this atmosphere created, Abu Zayd was forced to leave Egypt and go to Leiden University in the Netherlands. Now, we must see what Abu Zayd's achievements were in the age of thought? Why is Abu Zayd a new

Mu'tazilite? And what was his method? As mentioned, the important characteristics of his retirement were rationalism and the belief in the origin of the Holy Quran and the primacy of reason over tradition. Abu Zayd was a supporter of the literary approach to interpreting the Quran. This method had begun with Muhammad Abduh. Abduh believed that some of the Quranic teachings, which were presented in the form of stories, did not have the precise aspect of historical writing, but rather the purpose of the Quran was to encourage and persuade, and these stories served that purpose; such as the story of the angels descending from heaven to earth in the Battle of Badr, which was only to encourage Muslims to fight. In fact, the Quran has used a series of cultural and belief features that did not exist outside of it to advance Muslims.

Among the personalities who had a literary approach in interpreting the Quran is Taha Hussein. Although he was blind, he was educated and reached high scientific levels. Regarding the story of Prophet Ismail, he says that these have no historical aspects and that the Holy Quran reduced

the tension between Jews and Islam by narrating this story, so that Jews feel that the religion of Islam is also rooted in divine teachings and revelation. Other personalities who are in this intellectual framework are Amin al-Khuli, a famous student of Muhammad Ahmad Khalafullah, and Abu Bakr Ayyash and his wife Bint al-Shati.

The reason that led such people to approach this thinking is an incident that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and those were the things that the orientalist had done in relation to Islam and the attacks they had made on Islam. This group saw that they could not give an answer that would at least satisfy themselves. Some of the teachings of the Holy Quran are about the resurrection and the torments of hell. Such teachings caused the orientalist to attack Islam and say that Islam is a religion of violence. This thinking, which began with Abduh, in defense of religion, said that these were stories.

Regarding the term rationalism, it should be said that the distance between the intellect of the new Aitzali and the old is very great. The intellect of the old Aitzali sought to achieve and discover reality, that is, the intellect was the agent and the means and means of achieving external truth, but the intellect of the new Mu'tazilites has become a conventional intellect and does not seek to discover external truth.

The summary of Abu Zayd's words can be summarized in 5 principles: First principle: Religious texts are linguistic texts. Second principle: Religious texts

are human because they are linguistic. Third principle: Religious texts are also products of human culture. Fourth principle: Religious texts are historical because they are products of human culture. Fifth principle: Religious texts are historical because they are historical, they should be investigated using methods of historical criticism.

### **7-1- Explanation and explanation of Abu Zayd's five principles**

In the first principle, Abu Zayd's view is that the texts of the Holy Quran were written based on the structures and common rules of Arabic grammar, and it was not as if they were revealed in a new language or a coded language that was unknown to mankind or the Arabs at the time of the revelation of the Quran. All the literary structures in the Quran were known to the Arabs either in brief or in detail, which is why they believed in the miracle of the Holy Quran.

In the second principle, what is meant by being human is that the Holy Quran was subject to the state of human thought of that era in expressing its contents and teachings. Sometimes language does not have the capacity to express meanings, and therefore the Holy Quran expressed those lofty meanings in sublime and empathetic forms so that it could be understood, meaning that human understanding and comprehension dominated it.

It is from the third principle that Abu Zayd's thought process gradually changes, in such a way that others condemn him as an atheist. The fact that the Quran is a linguistic product and uses the same conventional rules of language in expressing its contents has not been objected to so far. However, the claim and argument presented in this principle is that since religious texts are linguistic and a product of human culture, and language is a cultural product, meaning it reflects the culture of a people

and the people of an era, and the Arabs were superstitious, the Arabic language is also a product of the culture of the Arab era, so in order to understand the Quran correctly, one must know the culture of the Arabs. As a personal example, he came to Imam Sadiq and asked: O son of the Messenger of Allah, is the narration "The difference between my nation is mercy" true? While the difference causes separation and division, then why did the Imam say here that it is mercy? The Imam replied: Yes, the narration is true, and the meaning of the difference does not mean being against each other, but rather it is like the difference between night and day. Therefore, for a better understanding, we must go back to the original roots to see what the words meant in that space, and we cannot use our current interpretations of the words of the Holy Quran and say that this is what the verses of the Quran mean.

From Abu Zayd's perspective, historical texts must be interpreted in their own historical space because they are the product of the culture of that time. In other words, just as we must refer to the seventh century to understand the book *Bustan* and *Gulistan*, we must also return to our own time in the case of the Quran. The Quran is a historical product, meaning it has a specific time, which is contrary to the official beliefs of the Sunnis, because the Sunnis believe in the primacy of the Quran and its transcendence.

In fact, it can be said about Abu Zayd's third and fourth principles that if the Holy Quran reflects the culture of its time, it cannot have a transcendental role. The meaning of transcendentalism is that

the commands of the Holy Quran are binding for all times and all places and for all people in all circumstances. A prominent example is the issue of women's inheritance, which Abu Zayd raised and was attacked for a long time by critics who objected to him that he had violated and violated the Quranic ruling on inheritance. Abu Zayd says that the culture of Arab society at that time did not give women any role or value, and women were under the domination and power of men in every way, therefore they did not inherit, they did not have the right to testify, and after the death of the husband, if someone from her husband's relatives expressed their desire, the woman did not have the right to refuse. If the Holy Quran says about women's inheritance that women's inheritance is half of men's inheritance, this matter is actually dependent on the cultural atmosphere of that time, it cannot be said that it is an eternal and eternal ruling.

From here arises the fourth principle, according to this principle, since religious texts are the product of the culture of their time, therefore the teachings of religious texts are temporal and historical, and relate to the same era or eras after the revelation of the Quran, which had a cultural situation similar to the conditions of the beginning of Islam. This view targets the permissible of Muhammad, permissible until the Day of Judgment, and the forbidden of Muhammad, forbidden until the Day of Judgment, i.e. the permissible and forbidden are specific to that era. Abu Zayd does not say that he is not a Muslim, but rather what he is saying is that when someone wants to understand a book, he must understand it like a human text, so if a book that was written a thousand years ago in the religion of politics or in the religion of household management and the like, is now no longer useful to the present time due to the complexity and change of social

conditions, it only has historical value. In Abu Zayd's view, revealed texts also have a similar fate, they only have the value of a historical text, and he adds that religious texts such as the

Holy Quran lose their sacred and transcendental value. Such texts should be criticized and examined like other texts, and we should set aside the parts that reflect their time, we should extract them.

### **7-2- Summary of Abu Zayd's words about religious texts**

There are texts that have only one meaning and have not carried anything additional with them and have not brought them to our time, such as the evil eye and the jinn. Their semantic load has only a historical meaning in time and we cannot extend it to the present time.

Abu Zayd considers himself the successor of the method of interpretation called the method of literary interpretation in the Holy Quran. In this method of interpretation, many concepts were interpreted. Of course, Abu Zayd does not say that he is not a Muslim, but he turns religion into culture. Culture is a set of human customs and traditions that do not have a scientific aspect, it is a set of individual and social behaviors and those monotheisms that people have. Religion is faith in Allah and the Holy Prophet and, along with these two main pillars, it has presented us with a series of specific worldviews and specific religious principles that later became culture.

He says that religion has a core that if you take that core, you can take it to your

times, the essence of which is the religious customs of that time. Religion is all about justice, for example, the prohibition of alcohol was gradual. Regarding women's inheritance, the Holy Quran has done it up to a stage, and we understand the rest with our own reason. He says that the Quran declares the inheritance of a son twice that of a daughter, we must compare it with the historical atmosphere of that time. We must see if the historical and social conditions of the present time are the same? Or about the difference between blood money for women and men, at that time they said that the man is the breadwinner of the house and works, so if a man is killed, the economic damage that will befall that family is at most twice the damage if the woman of that family is killed; in the discussion of blood money, the issue of providing damages has been raised, and for this reason they have made a difference between men and women. But if someone harms a dead man, the damage caused is equal, because in the case of a dead man, there is no economic work involved, so they are equal. Abu Zayd says that every ruling that exists in Islam and existed before Islam, such as signed rulings, is historical. He considers the criterion for the historical nature of a ruling to be the fact that the ruling is signed.

## Conclusion

The Arab Awakening, which has manifested itself in its political form in the Arab unity movement over the past half century, was the result of the coming together of three political currents: a) adherence to Western civilization; b) religious modernism; c) patriotism. Of these three movements, the idea of following Western civilization emerged earlier than the other two, and it can perhaps be said that it was the originator of

the other two, for reasons that are clear. We will suffice by noting that the military defeats by the West shook the conscience of the Ottoman Turks and forced their leaders, who had been proud of the strength of their country and the correctness of their way of life for several centuries, to search for the roots of their weakness. Thus, it was obvious that the enthusiasm and determination of these leaders to compensate for their military failures was first used to reform their military force, which soon became clear that reforming the military force was not possible without reforming other aspects of social life, including the method of education and training, strengthening the economic foundation, and creating the underlying factors for social progress. And it was this type of thinking that gradually spread the wave of reformism to other areas of social life. The faith of the upper and middle classes in the old social institutions and traditions was shaken, and the way was paved for religious modernization. All this, in addition to the consequences of the Eastern Question, namely the tricks and plots of the Western government against the Ottomans, which intensified the insecurity of the Supreme Bab, brought the Ottoman subject nations out of political ignorance and demanded freedom.

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