CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

7.1. SUMMARY

In the end, it is necessary to summarize the major points of the research and put them in a general framework so that we can come up with a clear overview of the research. This would help to open wider horizons for more research.

1. The issue discussed in this research is the timing of the call to come up with a modernist understanding of the Qurʾān by putting aside the current Islamic methodologies and principles and replacing them with new ones originated from the West and developed there. This has raised questions about its credibility and its identity. This call cannot be called Islamic unless its internal elements are coherent and its outcomes are correspondent with the basic Islamic principles or (al-Maʿlūm min al-Dīn bi al-Ḍarūrah) what is known in Islam as necessity. The answer to this question has required the following five chapters, which uncovered the following results:

1. The second chapter of this research has scrutinized the historical circumstances that have led to the emergence of modernism at this particular period. It was made clear in this research that the major factors behind the emergence of this phenomenon are the failure of the modernists to achieve their promises to free the Arab world and achieve progress and development. Their failure culminated in their defeat in the 1967 war, which was under their leadership. This defeat has led to the weakening of the project of modernism and the strengthening of the Islamic movement. This forced them to reconsider their
view of Islam and to see how they could use it as a tool in the struggle. As (al-Qimnî) has put it "an intellectual weapon in the current intellectual battle"\(^1\).

Therefore, the necessities of the reality facing them and the strategy of the battle are what led them to attempt to come up with a new explanation of the Qur’ān that could serve their modernist project. 'Amīrah al-Durrah as an example states that "as long as we do not find a modern explanation of religion and neutralize religion in the making of the Arab man, we will never be successful in changing the social structures..."\(^2\). This new explanation of religion requires "new legislative thinking"\(^3\) that serves the modernist project.

The contribution of this research is to come up with a general framework for this phenomenon to show its epistemological context and the factors behind its emergence in addition to its historical features. This has enabled the researcher and could enable other researchers in related topics to deal with the phenomenon methodologically and realistically. This could help in predicting the general direction this phenomenon could take, its future and its solutions.

2. After this chapter, the researcher has found it methodologically necessary to answer the question that arises itself: how could the modernists transcend Islamic methods and expose their weaknesses and their unsuitability for our era? The third chapter answers this question. We discussed the view of the modernists in

---


335
terms of four basic tools of Islamic interpretation (Tafsîr). These tools are the concept of Qurʾān, the Sunnah, the language and then the abolition.

a. The concept of the Qurʾān: it was made clear by this research that the modernists have been aware that it is impossible to ignore the Islamic understanding of the Qurʾān if they want to achieve their project. The Islamic understanding of the Qurʾān contradicts the materialistic and historical theory of the modernists. For them, all the texts are a social product that could be criticized, added to, and even deleted from.

However, the Islamic understanding of the Qurʾān states that the Qurʾān is the word of Allâh, which contains God’s commands that Muslims must follow. The job of the Qurʾānic scholar from the Islamic point of view is to understand the Qurʾān and explain it in order to behave in line with its guidance. We cannot add to it, delete some part of it, or criticize it.

Because of this, some modernist thinkers, like Muhammad ’Arkûn, have tried to raise suspicions about the accuracy of the Qurʾān. They claim that the Qurʾān is a historical product influenced by the historian’s aims and his specific objectives. He denies that the Qurʾān is the word of Allah or even the existence of Allah. Other writers like Naṣr Ḥâmid ’Abû Zayd have tried not to directly raise doubt about the Qurʾān. They try to assert the concept that

5 In his last book: al-Fikr al-’Islâmi wa ’Istihâla al-Ṭa’âlî. Arkoun states: “all these factors have collectively contributed to the nullification of the historicity of the Qurʾanic discourse. As such, they (Moslems) present al-Qurʾān for recitation, reading and living as though it were the eternal sayings revealed from an Almighty Lord...” Arkûn, Muhammad (1999), al-Fikr al-’Islami wa ’Istihâlat al-Ṭa’âlî. Hâshim Sulîh (trans), 1st ed. Beirut & London: Dâr al-Sîqi, p.146.
the Qurʾān is a historical accumulation of the years of suffering of Arabic society. It appeared at the right moment expressed by Muḥammad - peace on him - in the form of a literary text. He says: "The nature and the essence of the text is a cultural product and an axiom that does not require any confirmation". The result then is the fact that the Qurʾān is a human product that is influenced by factors like any other text. The writer of this research was able to show the weaknesses of these unscientific claims.

b. The concept of the Sunnah: The methods used by the modernists in dealing with the Sunnah are various. However, they all coincide in the fact that they aim to abolish the role of the Sunnah in explaining the Qurʾān and belittle its value. Though the modernists do their best to hide their real intention so that they may find easy access to the conscience of the average Muslim, it is clear for any reader of their literature that they believe in the unsuitability of the Sunnah for our era. It is but an accumulation of the Prophets dealings with the social reality in his time and his place. According to them, it is a big mistake, which can cause us to run a great risk. For them, those who follow the guidance of the Sunnah, as it is known by the Muslim scholars both in the past and the present, is against the principle of development and history. It fails to see the time and place factors. The writer has shown the weaknesses of these claims by uncovering their contradictions.

---

c. It has been used widely by the modernists so that they support their opinions. Some have claimed that *Naskh* proves that the old methods that deal with the *Qur'ān* are not capable of explaining it and that the *Qur'ān* is part of history. Naṣr Ḥāmid 'Abū Zayd, for example, says in this context:

The phenomenon of the (*Naskh*) which the (‘*Ulamā*’) have admitted that exists, is the biggest evidence that (shows) the dialectic relationship between the revelation and the reality and, based on this understanding, the old (‘*Ulamā*’) are wrong in the sense that they insist on not taking a critical position regarding the narrations of the science of the (Nāsīkh) and the (Mansūkh). They resorted to only narrating the old (‘*Ulamā*’) views and compromising between the (different) narrations and the (different) opinions.  

Other modernists have proven the existence of the *Naskh* so that they can prove the *Qur'ān* contains the dialectic theory, as is the case of Shuhrūr who considers the *Naskh* as an explanation of the way al-’*Ijtihād* could be conducted. He says: Allah has used the Nāsīkh and the Mansūkh so that He educates us on how we can develop our legislation within its limitations which means according to the ḥanīfīyyah and righteousness. Others have denied its existence so that they can prove the existence of the structuralist theory, as is in the case of 'Abū al-Qāsim Ḥāj Ḥamad. Both the dialectic theory and structuralist theory have led the modernists to fall into contradictions. Those who believed in the dialectic theory have ended up denying the existence of *Naskh* that they used to prove their dialectic, while

---

10Ibid., p.125.  
11Shuhrūr, Muḥammad (1990), op. cit., p.476.  
12Ibid., pp.447-452.  
the other ones have ended up accepting the *Naskh* and the rejection of the *Qur’ān* and its source claiming that - according to their methodology- the acceptance of the *Naskh* is an admission of the fact that there is a "contradiction in the structure of the *Qur’ān* and its content...(and) a rejection of the truth that came with it"\(^{14}\).

d. The language: The modernists in general have taken up a negative position on the Arabic language and consider that the language that has reached us through the dictionaries is primitive, infertile, inactive, and unable to carry new meanings\(^{15}\). This is because, according to (al-Jābirī), it is a language that appeared in a dry environment and an inconsistent climate, which created in the Arabian's subconscious the principle of "separateness" and "possibility". It is a language that lacks causality and logical connections\(^{16}\). It is clear that the negative position taken by the modernists towards the Islamic heritage and its methods is due to their fanaticism for modernism and political ideologies in addition to their ignorance of the Islamic heritage and its methods.

3. After we have critically analyzed their views about the Islamic methods, we explain the most important modernist methodologies claimed to provide a better explanation of the *Qur’ān*. This analysis has required the whole of the fourth chapter in which we have explained two principles on which modernism stands: objectivity and entirety. In addition to the principles we

---


have explained three methodologies used by the modernists, which are: modern linguists, historical materialism, and mythological methodology.

a. Objectivity; the modernists have defended the separation between the subject and the phenomenon under study and advocating leaving aside any emotions and any prejudice, which could lead to illusion and disagreeing with the facts. To reach objectivity, three conditions should be met:

- To know the nature of the phenomenon under study
- To decide on the kind of methodology that should be used.

This methodology requires the following three major steps: Firstly, the study of structuralism, which ignores all the previously adopted concepts about the heritage text, and to study its words through the internal structural relationships. Secondly, historical analysis, which means understanding the text in its cultural, social and political context and thirdly, the uncovering of the first ideological function of the text17.

However, this claim has been proven to lack the factual and theoretical basis. It was shown practically that modernists do not have any respect for objectivity. Their main aim is to defeat their adversary and defend modernism. On the theoretical side, it was shown that their concept of objectivity is based on wrong assumptions as it opposes the following: First, rationality is influenced by the cultural values, that is, the historical and the cultural criteria. Second, the influence of the facts by the values because the language used to describe them is influenced by the cultural and historical values. Third, the

influence of the facts on the values, that is, the values are related to the mind and reality and accept analysis, understanding and sharing.18

b. Comprehensiveness; the modernists believe that the scientific study is the one that keeps the balance between the specific and the general. It does not ignore the specific cases and at the same time it does not limit its analysis to specific cases only. It tends to generalize. It studies the subject in its entirety and uses various tools and methods19. This is, for them, a necessary requirement that will help in opening the door of al-'Ijtihād as seen by the modernists and thus enabling them to criticize Islam. Islam for them is a phenomenon that should be evaluated in the light of modern intellectual views of religion, society and history20. However, what they did is that they studied Islam piecemeal instead of in its entirety. They came up with an ambiguous generalization that fails to see the nature of things instead of knowing the thing in details21. At the expense of Islamic thought, they purposely resort to modifying the narrations as a result of their fanaticism and preconceived intellectual thought22. In brief, the modernist used the principle of disunity. They set apart one part from another so that one part seems to be as if it is against the other in their struggle against the Islamists23.

d. Modern linguistics refers to all that is related to linguistic studies from a modern point of view. Our focus was on the issue of the synonym. We have shown that some of the modernists, due to their being influenced by the positivist school in its first stages, believe that there is no synonym. Thus, in the Qurʾān, every word had an unchangeable and unique meaning. The meaning of the word does not change according to the context.

It is like the terms of Maths and Physics. They believe that for every concept there must be its concrete manifestation. They argued that resorting to synonyms is a manifestation of the formalities (Shakhāniyyah) and a result of dictatorship. However, besides contradicting themselves theoretically and practically, we find that they are not fully aware of the methodologies they claim to use. We find them believing in theories that their representatives have forsaken. For example, Wittgenstein- the leader of the positivist school- who was famous for his opinions that there is no synonym during his first writings, changed his mind in his late writings and advocated, therefore, the fact that language contains synonyms and that the context defines the meaning of the words.
e. Historical materialism; the modernists believe in historical materialism. They believe that it is the theory that could explain the Islamic heritage within its movement and development. This theory could grasp its relative values and define the objective relationship between us and the elements of democracy and progressivism that it contains\(^\text{30}\). Some of them have even claimed that there is no other theory that could explain perfectly our status more than the materialistic theory\(^\text{31}\). Some of them, following the example of Lenin\(^\text{32}\), have claimed that it agrees with the Qur'ān\(^\text{33}\) and that it is based on Islamic principles. We have shown the weakness of these claims and their contradictions. We have also shown that these claims cannot provide a good explanation of the Qur'ān. In addition to this, we have explained that historical materialism is but a system of beliefs based on hypothetical assumptions that contradict the Islamic principles and that doing without one of them will lead to the destruction of the whole theory.

f. The mythological methodology: the modernists believe that this methodology assumes that myths are only imaginative stories. They should be studied and understood as they are so that they could uncover how the religious intellect related to their works. This will help in criticizing its justifying ideological claims that stand between it and science and historical

---


\(^\text{33}\) Shuhrūr, Muḥammad (1990), op. cit., pp.230-234.
criticism. According to them, the Qur'ān has a mythological structure that mixes partial historical events and the popular Arabic stories and the old myths in addition to some influence exercised by stories from the Bible and the Torah. In this context, 'Arkūn says: "The myths of Ghalghāmish, Alexander the Great and the seven who slept in the cave are well echoed in the Qur'ān. In addition to this, as a matter of course, come the influence of the Torah and the Bible, the Sābi 'In and the old Arabic stories. According to them, these Qur'ānic conceptualizations, which cannot be grasped by this modern intellect, constitute a universal imagination for the prophets and their followers who are still abundant until now. These followers are unable to distinguish between the myth and history, and between the idealistic conceptual factors and the concrete realistic ones. We have shown how their analyses are but a repetition of the claims of Western anthropology that stand on the basis that all religions are but the product of people and a result of the progress of illusions and wrong conceptualizations. For this, the function of the anthropologists focuses on the social function of religions. We have also shown their failure in using the right methodology to analyze the Islamic heritage as they started from presumed beliefs and assumptions. Thus they have not fulfilled their promise to be objective. In addition, they have

36'Arkūn, Muḥammad (1996), al-Fikr al-ʾIslāmī, op. cit., p.99. Also the comment of Šāliḥ Hāshim in the footnote on the same page.
38See section on objectivity in the 4th chapter.
deviated from the principle of entirety and have instead focused on topics that they do not have suitable and sufficient tools to deal with.\(^{39}\)

4. After exposing their methodology we have analyzed the applied issues in two chapters: the first one was concerned with faith issues and the other one was concerned with juridical issues. On the level of faith, we have seen that their confusion in dealing with it has led them to denying the unseen and attempting to analyze all that is mentioned in the Qur'ān from a materialistic and experimental perspective. This resulted in their claim that the Qur'ān is unrealistic and contains contradictions exemplified by Şādiq Jalāl al-‘Azm and Sayyid Muḥammad al-Qimnī. Others have attempted to explain the Qur'ānic verses by using the philosophy of materialism to deviate from the right meanings of the verses. They reached such conclusions by claiming that there are no synonyms in the Qur'ān. For example, Ḥāj Ḥamad misinterpreted the Qur'ānic verses and criticized the status of prophethood so that he could be in agreement with his theory of historical development. He even accused some of the prophets of simple-mindedness and animism.

Other writers, to support the concept of the (struggle of contradictory elements), have made the Qur'ān a dictionary of Marxist philosophy, as is the case of Muḥammad Shuḥrūr. On the level of judicial matters, we have seen that the aim that the modernists wish to fulfill is to raise suspicion on the accuracy of the Qur'ān, as is the case of ‘Arkūn or to claim that the legislative texts are historical and that they are meant to be changed like al-Jābirī. Others like Şādiq Bil'īd and Ḥusayn 'Aḥmad 'Amīn have claimed that the legislative texts are unsuitable for

the current era and they even claimed that there are no legislative texts. While others - like Muḥammad Shuḥrūr, call for permissiveness and disengagement from the bounds of Islam. This is the summary of this thesis.

7.1.2. The results:

The results that should be stressed are the following:

1. The danger that modernist ideology represents can be seen in their either deliberate or undeliberate misrepresentation of Islam. Their views are meant to fight against Islamic awareness and to limit its progress while spreading secularism. In brief, the modernists' interest in Islam was the result of circumstances of a certain reality and intellectual and political struggles against the progress of religious awareness.

2. The underestimation of Islamic methodologies by the modernists: However, this underestimation is not because of some scientific reasons but because of fanaticism for certain ideological convictions in addition to their great ignorance of Islam and its methodologies.

3. The methodological contradictions and ambiguity that the modernists suffer from: They do not present any methods that could be used for analysis. On the contrary, they have imported ideological concepts and incoherent and outdated knowledge. In addition, their knowledge opposes the basics of Islam and cannot be taken in any case as an alternative methodology in understanding the Qur'ān.

4. The explanation that the modernists present, whether related to the field of faith issues or judicial and legislative issues, deviate from the right path and are far from the spirit of Islam and its principles. It shows the intellectual and moral crisis that the nation is suffering. It shows also the tragedy of the nation; as it is
very sad when some of its intellectuals work very hard to change its identity by legalizing intellectual, moral and legislative corruption in the name of religion. They are voluntary servants of failed ideologies. They destroy when they think they are doing the right thing.

5. Taking into consideration the international as well as the regional cultural, economic and political context of today's world, the most dangerous thing that this trend represents is the possibility of its being used by the dominant forces and being imposed by force on the Muslim population. These forces can spread these ideas so that the Muslim follows them.

There are, in fact, some indications that support this possibility, for example, the story of 'Alā Ḥamid, who works in the tax service in Egypt, who won an American prize because he wrote his book Masāfah ǧī 'Aqli Rajul in which he attacked Allah and the Qur'ān in addition to making fun of the prophets and similar intellectual rubbish⁴⁰.

7.2. THE HORIZONS OF THE RESEARCH

7.2.1. Recommendations:

For the above mentioned reasons the researcher recommends the following things:

1. To continue to scrutinize this phenomenon and deepen the research about it. This undoubtedly requires collective and guided efforts in addition to being armed with the intellectual, spiritual, and materialistic weapons. A sufficient knowledge

of Islamic thought as well as Western philosophies and cultural, moral, historical
and civilizational awareness are also recommended.

2. To observe the influence of this phenomenon on the Islamic thought in
general and on the field of interpretation specifically that emerged after this
period. The modernists' writings after this period focus on the issues of taking
interest, women and Shūrah. It is improbable that this phenomenon with all its
authority and ideological power that lasted for three decades will not have an
influence on Arabic and Islamic thought. This is in order to clean the Islamic
intellectual thought and make it immune to such poisons and diseases.

3. To organize conferences and conduct research concerned with the study of
this phenomenon so that a greater understanding and deeper knowledge could
emerge about it. Research centers are needed to observe this phenomenon, assess
its direct and indirect influence and control it before things get out of hand
especially in these tough circumstances surrounding our nation, that is, the
cloudiness that covers it which nearly blinds the eyes.

7.2.2. A Suggested Framework for the Renewal of Qur'ānic Studies:

The renewal of the Qur'ānic studies, deepening and raising it to the level where it
could meet the needs of the current era: The renewal is needed more than in any other
era in which the Muslims have lived before. Mohamed Hussein says:

"The job of the Qur'ānic explanation in the modern era from the
modern perspective of the concept and values is manifested in the
need to show how the Qur'ān and life go hand in hand. It (the
mission of the Qur'ānic explanation) is clarified by integrating the
social aims and the Qur'ānic aims. This important role is magnified
by giving suitable human solutions to the problems of the current generation in life.\textsuperscript{41}

However, this renewal has conditions that should be respected:

1. The respect of the fundamentals: Since the renewal is necessary, each era can renew according to its tools and the newly faced circumstances. It is essential for the one who wants to renew to be knowledgeable of the basic branches of religion, its essentials and things that can be changed so that he would not be confused and start to destroy when he believes he is doing the right thing. If someone claims that the Islamic legislation can be changed and that the Sunnah is a historical experience, he is, in fact, claiming things, which have dangerous effects. It will destroy our religion and will allow damaging ideologies to influence the 'Ummah and put an end to the remaining good things in our nation.

Therefore, those who strive for renewal and aim at constructing methods should know that the fundamentals are what preserve the nation. Any attempts at destroying the pillars on which the nation stands will lead to more danger and waste. As Sayyid Qutub has mentioned:

"every star and every planet has its tropic and its orbit, and also an axis around which it moves. This is the case of human life, it requires a stable axis or else the end will be destruction and chaos. It is like when the star missed its orbit (madār) or started to change its axis without organization or regulations.\textsuperscript{42}

For the scholars concerned with renewal, he has to be aware of such loopholes.

After, the operation of renewal will be necessary as a result of the nature of the

Qur'ān so as to get along with the current era. This could be achieved if we observe the other following conditions:

2. Knowledge of the heritage: so that the process of renewal is right and with civilizational roots, it is important to fully understand the Islamic heritage so as to spot the strong elements and the weak ones. The strong elements need to be taken while the weak elements need to be avoided. This does not mean that we have to be familiar with every detail of Islamic heritage as this is almost impossible but what is required is a complete knowledge of the fundamentals that have produced this great Islamic heritage.

Among these fundamentals is the knowledge of the Arabic language and its grammar.

An underestimation of Arabic and its grammar under the pretext that modern linguistics can replace them is against the principles of science and its methods and casts suspicion upon the things that have already been proved. The great linguist Muḥammad al-Ḥannāsh says:

"Every student of modern linguistics, in any place in the Arab world, if he wants to serve this language, he has first to become a friend of the old grammarians and the old linguists by reading their published books and their manuscripts.... Therefore this issue need not be discussed as it is considered one of the known assumptions"\(^4\).

Therefore, the mastery of Arabic helps us to have advanced knowledge. Many schools have gone long journeys but in the end they reached or nearly reached the

same findings that our early scholars have reached during the peak of Arabic language studies. Muḥammad Bannūr from the Tunisian University affirms that:

"Modern (Arabic) linguistics and Arabic rhetoric refers to close meanings to such an extent that if we name one, we mean the other. This interference is clear in the concept (that) denies the independence of the structure or the signification (based) on contextual considerations"\(^{44}\).

3. The knowledge of modern methods: Among the things that could serve the process of renewal and explanation in particular is to know the findings of the modern schools. Knowledge of the modern methods and sciences help to understand the Qurʾān better and in accordance with the era of the scholar as our scholars have said in the past said, "rules are to be modified according to the change of time". This could not be achieved only if we up grade the tools of understanding. This goes hand in hand with the objectives of the Qurʾān. Ibn ʿĀshūr - in his answer to al-Shāṭibī, who objected the use of natural sciences by some scholars to understand the Qurʾān, says:

"The objectives of the Qurʾān are related to the totality of the Daʿwah (mission) and it (the Qurʾān) is a lasting miracle. Therefore, it has to contain what is suitable for the understanding of different people in the eras that witness the spread of sciences in the nation"\(^{45}\).

The most important fields of science that the scholars have to look into are the techniques of the Arabic language and modern rhetoric which have been concerned with the study of the word (morphology). It developed an advanced understanding of how to use the word and to communicate it. It can help him to

---

\(^{44}\)Bannūr, Muḥammad (n.d.), *Rhetorique des attitudes propositionnelles de la nature du signe aux Frontieres du sens*, vol. 1, Tunis : Universite’ de Tunis 1, Faculte des lettres de la Manouba, p.25.

have an advanced knowledge of the Qur'ān. It can also help him to understand some of the underlying meanings and implicit wisdom found in the Qur'ān which those who do not master these tools cannot know.

Among the things that could benefit the Muslims when they master the modern techniques is the knowledge of the verdicts and how to apply them. The problem is not to know the verdicts, as they are clear and have been uncovered by earlier scholars. The issue that we face and which needs a better understanding according to our fundamentals is the understanding of our state and the choice of the right verdict according to the new issues in accordance with the objectives of Islam and the interests of the Muslims.

It is also necessary to develop a new understanding that enables us to decide the suitable verdict according to the circumstances and according to the objectives of Islam. However, this has the following regulations and conditions that should be respected;

a. These sciences should be fully understood so that it is possible to master them and even transcend them. This is a responsibility lying on the shoulders of the scientific and Islamic institutions concerned with this mission. This could be achieved by making capable scientists and creating a healthy scientific environment that is not under the influence of imposed directions.

b. To have a good training in the scientific tools so that they could be well used so that the concerned scholars do not fall into the category that Tāhā 'Abd al-Rahmān described in these few lines: "they did not prove that they have good training in using the adopted rational tools (such as) the artificial
concepts, assumed rules and used methods and devised theories or that they have mastered completely these techniques and how to operate them perfectly operated. This is a very fertile field of research that requires great collective efforts to fully explain and master so that in the end it will be used to serve the religion.

These are the most important findings that I wanted to stress in the end of this thesis, hoping that they could be useful indications of the path that should be followed and hoping to benefit this important field - the field concerned with renewing methods of Qur'ānic interpretation that still need sincere and major efforts. Our weapon should be science, our flag the truth and our objective to serve the 'Ummah and the human nation in general by showing the amazing features of our holy book.

In the end, this has been a humble effort hoping that Allah would accept it and asking for His forgiveness and His acceptance of our deeds.