

AT-TAFSTR BIR-RA'Y: AN EXAMINATION OF MUHAMMAD 'ABDUH'S WORK

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Abstract

The aim and objectives of this paper is to examine the concept of Tafsirbir-Ra'y in the field of Qur'anic exegesis with special reference to the Tafsir al-manar championed by Muhammad 'Abduh. The brief accounts of the biography of the eminent scholar, Muhammad 'Abduh is recapitulated here. The paper also explains the intellectual contributions of Muhammad 'Abduh in his pioneering effort in his work: Tasir al-manar. A critical appraisal of the application of Tafsir bir-Ra'y in the Tafsir" al-manar of Muhammad 'Abduh is also undertaken. Suggestions and recommendations have been made to optimize the benefit of the readers of this exegetical work on Tafsir al-manar. It is expected that these given recommendations would aid the readers'comprehension and enable them to appreciate the scholastic efforts of our eminent exegete in rendering Qur'anic message comprehensible to the whole world.

Introduction

At-Tafsir bir-Ra'y (rational *Tafsir*) has become an integral part of science of *Tafsir* which attracts an intense debates and voluminous commentaries from the early and contemporary scholars. This branch of science of *Tafsir* was not popular during the time of early companions; the immediate custodians of *Tafsir* after the demise of prophet. (SAW).

It has infiltrated into the study of *Tafsir* right from the period of *Tabi'un* (the companions' followers) through the Iraqi School of *Tafsir* under the Students of 'Abdullah bn Mas'ud (R.A) (Adh-Dhahabi, 118). This School of *Tafsir* was a citadel of *Tafsir birRa'y* where human reason was greatly adopted as a powerful means of understanding the word of God in His Glorious Qur'an. Even, since then, scholars' opinions have not been unanimous on the genuineness and authenticity of this branch of *Tafsir*. Some see it as a bad innovation to the study of *Tafsir*: while others considered it a laudable development, which can make the readers understand the message of the Qur'an beyond the earlier dogmatic and narrow perspective of its readers. This branch of *Tafsir* remains, up to the present time, a central point of study viewed by the scholars of *Tasir* from different perspectives.

This work however, from the point of view of Ash-sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh, the authors of *Tafsir al-manar'*, has been one of the popular exponents, protagonists of at-*Tafsir bir-Ra'y* in the recent time.

The origin and development of *At-Tafsir bir-Ray* can be traced back to Qur'an, where Allah (SWT) declares that the Prophet has the privilege to know the ultimate aim of Allah in the Glorious Qur'an. Allah says:

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ۗ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

With Clear Signs and Books (We sent to Messengers). And we have also sent down to you (O Muhammad) the *Dhikr* [Message, reminder and the advice (i.e. the Qur'an)], that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought. (Q 16:44)

The scholars of *Tafsir* do not see anything wrong in applying reason to interpret the word of Allah, once the reason is equipped and guided by deep knowledge of the Qur'an, Hadith, Arabic language and other related disciplines. Any exegete

that possesses these qualities can acceptably apply faculty of reason to interpret the word of Allah. (Adh-Dhahabi, 255).

The scholars of this view justify their stand by the prayer of prophet Muhammad (SAW) offered for ‘Abdullah bn Abbas to acquire deep understanding of Islamic religion and knowledge of interpretation.

”اللهم فقهه في الدين وعلمه التأويل

“O Allah endows him with knowledge of jurisprudence and interpretation (of the Qur’an)” (Bun Hanbal 4:225, Hadith No: 2397)

The Early Life of the Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh

Muhammad ‘Abduh hailed from a respectable family worthy of nobility. His father was a farmer and one among the eminent personalities who placed high premium on upholding the virtue of justice and fairness (Shawqi, 718). It is for the cause of his abhorrence of injustice and inequities of the oppressive rulers of his home town known as *Mahalalu-n-Nasr*, a village in one of many villages in Bahira, that prompted the migration of his family to another village settlement known as Hissatu Shabshir, where Muhammad ‘Abduh was born, Muhammad ‘Abduh’s father migrated to the village along with his wives and children. (Iskandari, 337). Muhammad ‘Abduh was a great Egyptian, philosopher, sociologist and reformer, (Iskandari, 21); he was born in 1905 C.E. The early life of Muhammad ‘Abduh revealed the great concern of his father with education. His father invited teachers to teach his son in his home the art of recitation, writing, and memorization of the Glorious Qur’an under their custody. His father also groomed him for the skill of horse-riding and developed in him passion for horsemanship.

When the young Muhammad ‘Abduh attained the age of thirteen years, his father brought him to Tanta a centre for religious learning. Where he acquired the knowledge of *Tajwid* from famous reciters of the centres. He spent two years there before he attended modern religious school and spent another one and half a year. It could be established as a fact that Muhammad ‘Abduh’s early life was dedicated to the acquisition of the basic knowledge of Islam. This was greatly

influenced by his parental background which held education in high esteem. (Iskandari, 220)

His Education: Muhammad °Abduh encountered difficulty in his early period of education. This was not occasioned by obtuseness or any psychological cripple. Rather, it was due to sterility of religious learning in Tanta and other neighboring educational center. The method and approach used in imparting knowledge were complicated to the extreme. The instructional methods of teaching were not lucid enough to aid comprehension (Iskandari, 219). However, Muhammad °Abduh, was reportedly known for his acute intellect and high intelligence. The first work he was taught was

“Sharhu’lkafarawa ‘ala matni’ Ajrumiyyah” an exegetical work on *‘Ajrumiyyah*, a compendious work on Arabic grammar. Muhammad ‘Abduh could not assimilate the work due to the complexity of the presentation, which made him withdraw from learning it. He returned to his uncle in the nearby village, There he met with his *sufi* paternal uncle *Darwish* (Khidr) who influenced him to enter Al-Azhar University in 1866 Muhammad ‘Abduh toured several cities till he reached Libya. (Iskandari, 220)

It was at Libya where Muhammad °Abduh came into contact with Shaykh As-Sunusi, a *Sufi* leader. He learned *Sufi* teaching from the latter and read some *Sufi* works from which he scented traces of his educational aspiration. The influence of the great Sufi Shaykh’s teachings that were concurrent with Wahabiyyah a young visionary reformer. After his return to Tanta, he went to Azhar University in Egypt. He graduated at Azhar University in the year 1877 A.D (Shawqi, 220)

Another great personality who was to exercise influence on ‘Abduh’s education and to show him the way which he had to follow was Jamalu-d-Din Al-Afgani, who on arriving at Egypt drew many disciples around himself. Muhammad ‘Abduh gradually broke away from religious traditionalism and studied philosophy, mathematics, *mantiq* (logic), morals, and politics all outside the Al-Azhar’s curriculum. (Ahmad, nd) To Al-Afgani, he owed a taste for western works translated into Arabic. He also owed to him the love of liberty and the idea of

constitution regime. ‘Abduh actively involved himself in the political and social life of the east. Muhammad ‘Abduh was nominated professor of history at the college of Daru-l’Ulum, and professor of literature at the School of Languages. (Hashimi, 220). At the same time he continued with his journalistic activities which his teacher and mentor had already recommended for him.

In 1885, Muhammad ‘Abduh returned to Beirut where he was appointed a teacher in Sultaniyyah School. He also gave his famous course of lectures on theology, which served as a basis of his future treatise “*Risalatul At-Tawhid*” He returned to Egypt in 1888 and was appointed a judge in the native Tribunal and then counselor at the court of Appeal. (Shafil, 278)

His Works:

A considerable number of articles and works were credited to Muhammad ‘Abduh. He wrote an explanatory work on ‘*Aqa’iqul ‘I’ dadiyyah* (عقائد الإعدادية), which vividly demonstrated his resourcefulness in philosophy and theological science. He wrote numerous articles in *Al-Waqafi ‘iu I-Misriyyah*. He wrote an epistolary work on *Tawhid*, he wrote commentary on *Juz’u ‘amma* and *Al-Basair* (البصائر), a work on logic. He collaborated with his teacher in the production of ‘*Urwatul- Wuthqa* (عروة الوثقى) Journal. The commendable efforts which Muhammad ‘Abduh made in the newspaper of *Al-Waqaf’iul-Misriyyah* cannot be ignored. He contributed immensely to the disentanglement of the newspaper from turbid expression, in which simple style, free from rhetoric, comprehensible to a common reader in the public was chosen. (Alabi, 2:69)

Not only that Muhammad ‘Abduh engaged himself in authorship, but also taught great number of his students, some notable works credited to Muslim scholars of repute. Some of the works are: “*Tahdhil-Akhlaq* (تهذيب الأخلاق) by *ibn Miskawayhi*, *Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun* which he taught at Madarasarul Darul ‘Ulum Wal ‘Arabiyyah. (Alabi, 2: 69-70) Muhammad ‘Abduh was nominated as a member of administrative council of Al’Azhar University. There, he threw himself into an indefatigable activity in order to renew and raise the material, cultural and moral standards of this old Islamic University. The influence of the liberal

doctrines he professed was readily felt. He instituted course in the secular sciences such as history, geography, mathematics and philosophy. (Shawqi, 222)

In 1899, he was nominated as Grand Mufti of Egypt (Shawqi, 222). 'Abduh was one of the founder of the "Islamic Benevolent Society" which aimed at spreading education among the Muslims and giving moral and material aid to the poorer. He also founded a "Society for the Renaissance of Classical Authors". He also worked for the reform of the religious courts. He recommended the state to raise the intellectual and moral standard of future judges by improving their material condition and recognizing their recruitment on a better basis. The idea of creating a school for religious judges was also initiated by him.

Brief Introduction of the *Tafsir al-manar*

Tafsir al-manar is a culmination of intellectual efforts produced by a number of great Muslim thinkers of repute whose noble motive was to ensure that Qur'an is understood through their simplified interpretation, in such a way that it would reflect universal scope and continuing relevance of the revelation to mankind. One of such great intellectuals is Muhammad 'Abduh teaming up with *Rashid Rida*, leading to the emergence of *Tafsir Al-manar* between 1301-1303 A.H. Muhammad 'Abduh had conducted *Tafsir* sessions in Beirut which he based on the principle of application of Islam to all aspects of life as advocated by Al-Afghani. When 'Abduh moved to Egypt, he continued to hold *Tafsir* sessions between the period of 1371 and 1373 A.H. However, all these *Tafsir* sessions which 'Abduh gave in Beirut and lectures which he delivered at al-Azhar University, with his devoted disciple, Muhammad Rashid Rida wrote down and edited before he gave it to his magazine, Al-Manar. Later on, these articles were collected and published as a work and are called *Tafsir Al-manar*. (Shawqi, 222), Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ [1] وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُم مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُنِيمَ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Meaning:

O ye who believe! When ye prepare for prayer, wash our faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body; but if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands, Allah doth not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete His favour on you, that ye may be grateful. (Q: 5 V: 6)

Muhammad ‘Abduh comments on the above verse:

The Qur’anic exegetes hold that the intended meaning of the word القيام (standing for prayer) used in the text (under discussion) is an intention for it. What is intended by the statement: إذا قمتم الى الصلاة (when you get up for prayer), therefore is when you intend to observe prayer. This is in line with another statement of Allah (S.W.T) which reads;

”فإذا قرأت القرآن فاستعذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيمط

When you intend to read the Qur’an seek refuge from Allah against the *Ash-shytan* accursed. Meaning when you intend to recite it(Qur’an). This understanding make the majority of *mufassirun* (Qur’anic commentator) believe that he who intends to observe prayer can do so whether in a sitting position or in a lying state. In another sense the phrase (القيام الى الشيء) getting up for something sometimes may mean an inclination to such thing against another. Therefore, anybody who interprets القيام الى الصلاة (standing for prayer) to be intention to observe it such person in trying with his generic expression, to include the prayer of those who pray in sitting position or in a lying state for an acceptable excuse.(‘Abdulh, 6: 219-220)

Therefore, the statement (القيام الى الصلاة) (getting up for prayer) is used in a generic sense to include all the circumstance of prayers. It is pertinent to note

also that purify (ablution) is very necessary before any *Salah*. The opinion is firmly held by *Daud Az-Zahiri* (the Zahirite). ('Abdulh, 6: 220) ‘ ‘

On the other hand, majority of the Qur'anic Exegeses are of the opinion that the purification in term of ablution is not obligatory to renew every point of observing prayer except if such Muslim is in a state of impurity. That restriction put forward by the majority of the Muslims is based on the practice of the early Muslim generation during the prophetic era. In supporting their argument there is an *Hadith* related by Ahmad, Muslim and the traditionalist on the authority of Buraydah that the Prophet (S.A.W) used to perform ablution .for every prayer but on the day of the conquest he performed ablution wiped his *Khuff* (leather socks) and observed a number of prayers with one ablution only.

Then, Umar asked the noble prophet why he did what was not customary of him, and the prophet replied that he intentionally did so. The tradition was in varied versions but on the same meaning. ('Abdulh, 6: 222)

Also, Ahmad, Bukhari and Sunnah collectors reported on the authority of 'Amr bn 'Amir al- Ansari that he heard Anas bn Malik (RA) saying that the prophet used to perform ablution while observing every prayer. 'Amr then asked him how they did in observing prayer, and he replied him that we observe a number of prayers with only one ablution so far, it was also reported by Ahmad on the authority of Abu'Hurayrah with sound claim of transmission that the Prophet (S.A.W) said that "Had I wished inconvenience for my community, I would have instructed them to perform ablution for every prayer and brushing the teeth in every ablution. ('Abdulh, 6: 222). These narrations are pointers to the fact the Muslims during the prophetic era did not renew their ablution for every prayer unlike the prophetic practice that was on common ground and that the prophet observed a number of prayers on the day of conquest of Makkah with one ablution in order to show its permissibility. Some scholars are of the opinion that renewing ablution for every prayer was hitherto obligatory but was later abrogated on the day of conquest.

However, Muhammad 'Abduh states that if assertion of these scholars is true, he would have performed ablution for every prayer, but the reverse is the case. It

should be known therefore that renewing one's ablution for every prayer is a matter of 'Azmu (strong intention) and is utmost commended, but is rather obligatory upon who is impure as indicated in the tail end of the verse where in Allah mentions the two impurities (i.e. the major and minor impurities) and rendered (dry ablution) obligatory for he who did not find water to use for purification. Then it would be dedicated that whoever find water, ('Abdulh, 6: 223) is obligatory on such person to purify with it from the two impurities.

Had it been that the purification renewal is made compulsory for every payer, the import of concession would not have been borne out from the verse.

Read from the Arabic text below:

يأبها الذين آمنوا إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة" قال المفسرون إن المراد بالقيام هنا: إذا أردتم القيام إلى الصلاة، على حد قوله تعالى: "فإذا قرأت القرآن فاستعذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم" أي إذا أردت قراءته. على أن يريد الصلاة يقوم إليها من قعود أو نوم، وقد يطلق لفظ القيام إلى الشيء على الإنصراف إليه من غيره، ومن فسر القيام بإرادته، حاول أن يدخل في عموم منطوقه: صلاة من يصلي قاعداً أو قائماً لعذر، وظاهر العبارة أن المراد بالقيام إلى الصلاة عمومها في جميع الأحوال، وإن هذه الطهارة تجب لكل صلاة، وعليه داؤد الظاهري، ولكن جمهور المسلمين على أن الطهارة لا تجب على من قام إلى الصلاة إلا إذا كان محدثاً، فهم يقيدون القيام الذي خوطب أهله بالطهارة بالتلبس بالحدث، فالمعنى عندهم "إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة محدثين فاغسلوا وجوهكم وأيديكم إلى المرافق وامسحوا برؤوسكم وأرجلكم إلى الكعبين" العمدة في مثل هذا التقييد السنة العملية في الصدر الأول، وروي أحمد ومسلم وأصحاب السنن من حديث بريد قال: كان (النبي ص) يتوضأ عند كل صلاة، فلما كان يوم الفتح توضأ ومسح على خفيه وصلى صلوات بوضوء واحد). قال الله تعالى: "فاغسلوا وجوهكم وأيديكم إلى المرافق"

("Abdulh, 6: 227")

Muhammad 'Abduh list the obligatory parts of ablution, read from the Arabic text below:

فالفرض الأول من أعمال الوضوء: غسل الوجه، وهل يعد باطن الفم والأنف منه فيجب غسلهما بالمضمضة والإستنشاق والاستنشاق ام ليسا منه

("Abdulh, 6: 227)

The first among the obligatory parts of ablution is the washing of the face. However, despite the juristic divergent opinions whether washing of the face

includes the rinsing the mouth and sniffing of water into the nose or not, Muhammad Abduh's subscribes to the opinion making rinsing the mouth and nose as part of the face because it has been in the practice of the early Muslim generation. Therefore evidences of those who regarded them as *Sunnah* part of *wudu* are weak, because *Sunnah* in the usage of the early generation is of linguistic connotation referring to what steps or path to be followed.

فالفرض الثاني من أعمال الوضوء: غسل اليدين إلى المرفقين. وهل المرفقان مما يجب غسله أم هو مندوب؟ الجمهور على أنه يجب غسلها

('Abdulh, 6:227)

The second obligatory part is the washing of two hands to the elbows despite divergent opinion among the jurists whether it includes the elbows or not. He cited the opinion of some scholars in the science of language among of them was Sibawaih, that "any statement after the phrase of *Ila*", if it is a part of the previous statement, the judgment is inclusive. Therefore, washing the elbows is obligatory it is part of the hand.

فالفرض الثالث من أعمال الوضوء: المسح بالرأس "وامسحوا برؤوسكم" الرأس معروف ويمسح ماعد الوجه لأن الوجه شرع غسله لسهولته

('Abdulh, 6:227)

Wiping the head is the third obligation. He maintained that wiping the head does not mean that all the parts of the head should be wiped. Wiping "*Mashu*" in the connotation of the word means that movement of the wiping part of the body i.e. palms over the wiped (i.e. head). Therefore, placing one's hand or finger on the head, does not connote *mashu*.

الفرض الرابع من أعمال الوضوء: غسل الرجلين إلى الكعبين فقط ام مسحهما. قال تعالى: "وارجلكم إلى الكعبين".

('Abdulh, 6: 227)

The fourth obligatory part is the washing of the two feet alone or wiping them barely or covered with *Khuf* and its socks. Despite the divergent opinion whether washing or wiping should be applied to the case of the two feet, 'Abduh opined that Allah gives ruling on wiping the feet with wider in a general term just as it gives ruling on wiping the face during dry ablution in a generic term. If a performer of ablution does this, such person has carried out the instructions of wiping and washing, because washing them involves passing water over them or pouring water over them while wiping them has to do with passing one's hand or anything of its substitute over them.

Muhammad 'Abduh further explained that:

ولما فرغ من طهارة الوضوء بين طهارة الغسل وقال " وإن كنتم جنباً فاطهروا " أي إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة
وكنتم جنباً فتطهروا لها طهروا كاملاً بأن تغتسلوا.....

('Abduh, 6:252)

(If anyone is impure, let him clean himself) the ordainment of purification is of great attention and care which cannot be ensured except by washing the whole of the body.

Also, he mentioned that the stipulation on the obligation of two forms of purification is that Muslims must observe ablution at least once every day, on a common ground while bath must be taken place at least once in every week or month in a similar case, and that concessions of non-performance should be given in a straitened circumstances or in ease of incapability because the religion is based on the fundamentals.

In other words, he explained that if one is ill due to skin problem, scabies, wounds or any illness that makes application of water difficult, or embarked on a short or long journey hereby *ghusl* or *wudu* is not convenient or absence of water to carry out any of the two forms of purification, then dry ablution (*Tayamum*) should be applied. In his explanation about the legality of dry ablution, he mentioned that only one strike of the plain surface is recommended for wiping the face and two hands and that the traveler and non-traveler can apply the dry ablution in the absence of water. He equally maintained that the prayer said by the means to dry

ablution does not need restitution. Also, other legal rulings in relations to *Tayammum* (dry illness, equality of *Tayammum* to *al-wudu* during the exigencies and permissibility of performing more than one obligatory prayer with a single *Tayammum* are discussed at a great length in the sixth volume of the work between pp. 123-135.

وقد شرحنا آية التيمم في سورة النساء وقفنا على تفسيرها بعشر مسائل في بيان معنى التيمم اللغوي والشرعي، ومحلله الذي بينته السنة الصحيحة وكونه ضربة واحدة للوجه واليدين ولا ترتيب فيه، ومعنى الصعید وما ورد فيه، وكون المسافر والمقيم فيه سواء إذا فقد الماء، وكون الصلاة به مجزئة لا تجب إعادتها وبحث تيمم من البرد والجرح، وكونه كالوضوء في الوقت وقبلها، وفي استباحة عدة صلوات به، والمسألة العاشرة في بيان حكمة التيمم

(‘Abdulh, 6: 123)

The purpose of legislating ablution and ritual bath (*Ghusl*) including the dry ablution (*Tayammum*) is to ease the worship and remove inconveniences because Allah is Compassionate and only His legislates would bring favour to mankind. Muhammad ‘Abduh further says:

ما يريد الله ليجعل عليكم فيما شرعه لكم في هذه الآية ولا في غيرها حرجا وان ادنى ضيق وأقل مشتقة، لأنه تعالى غني عنكم، رؤوف رحيم بكم، فهو لا يشرع لكم إلا ما فيه الخير والنفع لكم...

(‘Abdulh, 6:225)

More importantly. he said that the completion of Allah’s favour upon the believers is more pronounced in the sense that purification of the soul, his manhood is incomplete until the purification of the two entities are ascertained. The virtue of prayer cannot be over-emphasized in the purification of soul from immoral habits, observation of divine commandments, nursing of fear and hope when one does wrong or light action including constant remembrance of Allah in absolute manner in attaining perfection.

Critical Appraisal of his application of *Tafsir bir-Ra’y*:

Muhammad ‘Abduh’s *Tafsir* is very educative and informative as can be seen in his interpretation on the verse under discussion. In this verse he introduced two

different cases of great importance to Muslims in their daily obligatory duties towards Allah. He interprets the statement of Allah إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة (when you get up for prayer) إذا اردتم القيام الى الصلاة (when you intend to observe prayer). This interpretation is not only fascinating but also logical, philosophical and rhetorical. It is fascinating because it shows deep knowledge of Arabic language and deep insight of its logicity because without intention nothing cannot be physically done. Intention stimulate the will of the doer and the will motivates ability to do the work. This natural phenomenon is manifest in the statement of Allah which reads. “إذا قمتم إلى الصلاة” (when you get up for prayer). Because you cannot get up for prayer without intention and without will to do so. It is the will or intention that will facilitate ability to observe the prayer at its stipulated time. Definitely ability to interpret (القيام الى الصلاة) “getting up for prayer) to be an intention for observation it is very philosophical and rhetorical as well.

In order to throw more light on the new meaning derived from the original meaning of القيام “our *Mufassir* quotes another verse from the Glorious Qur’an which gives elucidation to the derived meaning from the verse under study.

Allah says: “فإذا قرأت القرآن فاستعذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم” (When you recite the Qur’an, seek refuge with Allah against *ash-shaytan* the accursed). Definitely the import of the verse is that: when you intend to read the Qur’an seek refuge with Allah against *ash-shaytan* the accursed. Though, the statement (قرأت) is in past tense, yet it gives the meaning of intention to commence the reading. Because it is not logical to read the Qur’an before seeking refuge with Allah against *ash-shaytan*. (‘Abdulh, 6: 258)

Another issue introduced by our *Mufassir* is the issue of position of *Wudu’*, (i.e. ablution) to the prayer in *Sharii’ah*. Our *Mufassir* presents the opinions of the Islamic jurists on the issue. Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh argued that the renewal of *Wudu’* (ablution) is not compulsory at point of every Salat unless one is in the state of impurity. He quotes the

following ‘Ahadith (أحاديث) to justify this claim:

ورى أحمد والبخاري وأصحاب السنن عن عمرو بن عامر الأنصاري قال: سمعت انس بن مالك يقول: "كان النبي (ص) يتوضأ عند كل صلاة قال قلت: فأنتم كيف كنتم تصنعون؟ قال: كنا نصلى الصلوات بوضوء واحد ما لم نحدث. وروى احمد والشيخان من حديث أبي هريرة: " لا يقبل الله الصلاة أحدكم إذا أحدث حتى يتوضأ.

(‘Abdulh, 6: 223)

He also presented a contrary opinion to the former one which holds that *wudu* ‘ (ablution is very necessary before any *Salat* can be observed. The following Ahadith on the ablution are also quoted by the *Mufasssir* to justify the second opinion:

وروي أحمد بإسناد صحيح عن أبي هريرة قال: قال النبي (ص): لولا أن أشق على أمتي لأمرتهم عند كل صلاة بوضوء ومع كل وضوء بسواك

(‘Abdulh, 6: 255)

He also stated thus:

وكذا ابن حبان في صحيح من حديث عائشة فهذه الأخبار تدل على أن المسلمين لم يكونوا في عهد النبي (ص) يتوضؤون لكل صلاة وإنما كان النبي (ص) يتوضأ لكل صلاة غالباً، وصى الصلوات يوم الفتح بوضوء واحد أمام الناس لبيان الجواز.

(‘Abdulh, 6:255)

Tafsir al-manar is a modern work in the field of Tafsir. The work is very elaborate in interpreting the word of Allah to mankind in a manner relevant to the modern age. The value of the work occupies an exalted position because it is a sort of intellectual resurgence, striving to demonstrate to the contemporary age that Qur’an is the foremost source of guidance in every aspects of human life.

Being a collaborative effort of three eminent scholars, the work is highly superb in the sense that the Qur’anic message is interpreted purposefully to guide the society in all their affairs. *Tafsir al-manar* undoubtedly, is a justification of the common assertion that the *Mufasssirun* are influenced in their work by the socio-cultural and economic background of the society, *Tafsir al-manar* was produced

by these scholars, though pioneered by Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, with the noble aim of liberating the Muslim world from the western biologics which are antithetical to Islamic teaching and tenets.

Application of Ra'y (independent reasoning) by Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh is commendable. He does not interpret the Qur'anic message to the point of diversion from the scope of Orthodox Islamic tenets, doctrines and ideologies. In his application of reasoning, he made use of numerous sources from scholars of great thinkers to present his ideas.

Observations

We however observed that despite the fact that Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh exercised his independent reasoning in the interpretation, which is the main focus of this paper, he and his co-authors at times used sources that are traceable to the authority of prophetic companions. Therefore, *Tafsir al-manar* is a kind of *Tafsir* that combines both independent reasoning (*Ra'y*) and authentic source from the companions.

It is observed that the Shaykh would link the divided sections in a chapter with one another in order to show the connectivity of the divine message in each subsection in the chapter. This is done to probably simplify the interpretation in making his readers realize the linkage of the divine message so that their thought would not be fragmented. This serves as an introductory aspect of his interpretation to prepare the mind of his reader in assimilating the main point of the divine message. For instance, he believes that the connection between the verse of fulfilling the obligation and that of reminding the Muslim of the obligation at the end of the legal ruling on purification is for the purpose of calling the Muslim to embrace the divine message that is based on trust.

Recommendations

It is recommended that *Tafsir al-manar* is a classic exegetical work that should be stocked in the Universities' Libraries, because the work really depicts rigorous academic exercise of the scholars, providing sufficient information on intellectual and academic discourse.

More importantly, the work is highly recommended for the Islamic activist who champions the cause of *Da'wah* propagation in Nigeria. This exegetical work is relevant to *da'wah* works because it examines issues of contemporary age and gave much discourse on it from Islamic perspectives so that the Muslim society would not be carried away or destroyed by the westernized Islamic concepts which tend to de-Islamize outlook of the modern age.

Conclusion

Muhammad 'Abduh's approach to Tafsir shows that this *Tafsir is At- Tafsir bir-Ra'y al-maqbul* (acceptable rational *Tafsir*). His *Tafsir bir-Ray* is acceptable because he justified his rational *Tafsir* by the Qur'an sometimes or by the traditions of the statement of *Sahabah*. His own *Tafsir* is different from *At-Tafsir bir-Ra'y al-Mardzid or Ghair-l-Maqbul* (an unacceptable rational *Tafsir*) in the latter type of *Tafsir* personal opinion of the *Mufasssirun* are not justified neither by the Qur'an nor by the Hadith or statement of As-Sahabah.

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