

## Muhammad Abduh and the Conception of Science: The Framework of Maqasid and Sharia

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### Abstract

*This research uses a qualitative method with a library research approach and biographical analysis. Data were collected from Abduh's major theological and scientific works, such as Al-Islām wa al-Naṣrāniyyah ma'a al-'Ilm wa al-Madaniyyah, Tafsīr al-Manār, Tafsīr Juz 'Amma, and Risālat al-Tawhīd, and supported by relevant secondary literature. The analysis was carried out by examining the main themes related to rational thought, the integration of science and religion, and Abduh's contribution to Islamic modernity. The results of the study show that Abduh made an important contribution in developing a scientific approach to religious texts, especially through the interpretation of the Qur'an which emphasizes the superiority of reason ('aql), freedom of thought (taḥarrur), and rationality. His views not only integrated modern science with Islamic values, but also encouraged the revival of intellectual consciousness and the formation of a dynamic Islamic worldview (weltanschauung). In conclusion, Muhammad Abduh's scientific thought became an important foundation for the renewal of modern Islam. His ideas not only strengthened the rational approach to understanding religious texts, but also provided a new direction for the development of Islamic civilization that was able to dialogue with the progress of science and technology without losing the essence of its spirituality.*

**Keywords:** Muhammad Abduh, Islamic Philosophy of Science, Scientific Interpretation, Rationality, Islamic Renewal, Maqāṣid Al-Syarī'Ah.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (library research) dan analisis biografis. Data dikumpulkan dari karya-karya utama Abduh yang bersifat teologis dan saintifik, seperti Al-Islām wa al-Naṣrāniyyah ma'a al-'Ilm wa al-Madaniyyah, Tafsīr al-Manār, Tafsīr Juz 'Amma, dan Risālat al-Tawhīd, serta didukung oleh literatur sekunder yang relevan. Analisis dilakukan dengan menelaah tema-tema utama terkait pemikiran rasional, integrasi sains dan agama, serta kontribusi Abduh terhadap kemodernan Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Abduh memberikan kontribusi penting dalam mengembangkan pendekatan saintifik terhadap teks-teks keagamaan, khususnya melalui tafsir al-Qur'an yang menekankan keunggulan akal ('aql), kebebasan berpikir (taḥarrur), dan rasionalitas. Pandangannya tidak hanya mengintegrasikan ilmu pengetahuan modern dengan nilai-nilai Islam, tetapi juga mendorong kebangkitan kesadaran intelektual dan pembentukan pandangan dunia (weltanschauung) Islam yang dinamis. Kesimpulannya, pemikiran sains Muhammad Abduh menjadi landasan penting bagi pembaharuan Islam modern. Gagasan-gagasannya tidak hanya memperkuat pendekatan rasional dalam memahami teks agama, tetapi juga memberikan arah baru bagi pengembangan

peradaban Islam yang mampu berdialog dengan kemajuan ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi tanpa kehilangan esensi spiritualitasnya.

**Kata Kunci:** Muhammad Abduh, filsafat sains Islam, tafsir saintifik, rasionalitas, pembaharuan Islam, maqāṣid al-syarī'ah.

## INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 19th century, Muslims in various parts of the world experienced intellectual stagnation marked by backwardness in the fields of science, technology, and civilization. On the other hand, the Western world actually experienced the peak of progress through the Industrial Revolution and the development of modern science. This condition caused anxiety among Muslim scholars, which later gave birth to a movement to reform Islamic thought.<sup>1</sup> One of the central figures in this reform movement was Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian scholar and thinker known for his efforts to integrate Islamic values with the spirit of rationalism and modern science.

Muhammad Abduh believed that Islam has great potential to return to being a source of inspiration for the progress of mankind if its teachings are understood dynamically and rationally. For him, the Qur'an is not only a spiritual guidebook, but also contains scientific cues that can encourage Muslims to think critically and explore science.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, he rejects the literal and narrow approach of interpretation that has dominated the world of Islamic science. It offers a rational, contextual, and open interpretation approach to modern thought.

In his monumental work, *Tafsir Al-Manar*, Abduh and his student, Rashid Ridha, interpreted the verses of the Qur'an by prioritizing the values of common sense and scientific principles.<sup>3</sup> He believed that there is no contradiction between revelation and reason, but rather that the two must go hand in hand in leading humanity to the truth.<sup>4</sup> This interpretation not only provides an explanation of the meaning of the verse, but also answers the contemporary challenges faced by Muslims, such as colonialism, ignorance, and scientific backwardness.

One of the important aspects of Abduh's thought was his view of the relationship between religion and science. He strongly criticized the views of some people who consider that science is a Western product that is contrary to the teachings of Islam.<sup>5</sup> According to Abduh, Islam has encouraged its people from the beginning to examine the universe, use reason optimally, and explore the laws of nature which are manifestations of God's will.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Muslims need to free themselves from taklid and frozen thinking, as well as open up space for ijtihad and scientific innovation.

Abduh's thinking in the field of science did not stand alone, but was integrated into the great project of Islamic reform which included education, law, and social order.<sup>7</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> Johann, Bussow. "Muhammad 'Abduh: The Theology of Unity", in *Religious Dynamics under the Impact of Imperialism and Colonialism* (Brill, 2017), pp. 141-159.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad, Hamidullah. "Ernest Renan and Jamal al-Din Afghani: Foremost Representatives of Two Cultures", *The Islamic Review* (May-June, 1958), 33-35.

<sup>3</sup> Rida, Muhammad Rashid, *Tarikh al-Ustadh al-Imam ash-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh* (Cairo: Matba'at al-Manar, 1906).

<sup>4</sup> Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study on the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muhammad 'Abduh* (Russell & Russell: New York, 1933), vii.

<sup>5</sup> Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study on the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muhammad 'Abduh* (Russell & Russell: New York, 1933).

<sup>6</sup> Mark Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Imarah, *A'mal al-Kamilah* (Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2005).

encouraged the reform of the Islamic education system so that it not only contains normative religious lessons, but also rational sciences such as mathematics, physics, and philosophy.<sup>8</sup> Thus, future generations of Muslims can become scientists and thinkers who are able to compete globally without losing their religious identity.

The study of Muhammad Abduh's scientific thought has become very relevant in the contemporary context, especially in the midst of increasing polarization between conservative religious groups and those that prioritize rationality.<sup>9</sup> Abduh showed that the middle way can be taken by making Islam a religion that supports science, as well as making science a means to strengthen faith and improve the quality of human life.<sup>10</sup> He prioritized an integrative approach that could be a model for the renewal of Islamic thought in the modern era.

Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth the contribution of Muhammad Abduh's thought in bridging the relationship between religion and science. By tracing the historical context, method of interpretation, and philosophical basis of his thought, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of Abduh's ideas in building a rational, scientific, and still based Islamic scientific paradigm based on the values of revelation.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-theoretical approach that aims to examine in depth the scientific thought of Muhammad Abduh. The method used is based on library research, by tracing and examining various primary sources such as *Risalat al-Tawhid*, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma*, and *Tafsir al-Manar*, as well as secondary literature relevant to the context of Abduh's thought and intellectual contribution to the relationship between religion and science.

The approaches used in data analysis are phenomenological, historical, and analytical, to understand the structure of Abduh's thought in the context of his time as well as its relevance to contemporary discourse. The data were analyzed qualitatively by applying deductive (*istinbat*), inductive (*istiqla'*), and descriptive methods, in order to interpret the main characteristics of scientific thinking contained in Abduh's works.

With this approach, this study not only seeks to describe Abduh's thoughts in a systematic way, but also to formulate a scientific synthesis that is empirical and objective. The results obtained are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of the discourse on the integration of science and religion and offer a new understanding of the position of science in the interpretation of modern Islam.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Biography

This section discusses the period and background of Abduh's life and his clashes with his milieu, and some of his weighty writings, such as *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*, *Al-Islam wa'l-Nasraniyyah ma'al 'Ilm wa'l Madaniyyah* (*Islam and Christianity along with Science and Civilization*), *Tafsir Juz 'Amma* and *Tafsir al-Manar*. The focus is to highlight the social impact that this environment brings to the growth and formation of its thinking.

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<sup>8</sup> Albert, Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 136-139.

<sup>9</sup> Yvonne Yazbeck, Haddad, "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform", in Ali Rahnema, ed., *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (UK, London: Zed Books, 1994), 32.

<sup>10</sup> Livingston, John W., 1995. "Muhammad 'Abduh on Science", *The Muslim World*, Vol. lxxxv, no.3-4 (July-Oct, 1995), 215-234.

Muhammad ibn Abduh ibn Hasan Khayrullah was born in 1849 in Buhayra, a local farming hamlet in Mehallat Nasr, Tanta, Egypt. He was of original Egyptian descent, descended from the Fellahin who had cultivated and worked the Nile Valley for more than a thousand years.<sup>11</sup> His mother was from the tribe of Bani 'Adi, a line of descendants of the second Caliph, Saydina 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (rad). He received his early education from private teachers and memorizers of the Qur'an. At the early age of thirteen, he learned basic religious knowledge at the Ahmadi mosque, a well-known center of study in Egypt. He stayed there for three years, without showing any interest in the study instructions that were put to the students with his tedious teaching methods. After some time in the madrasah, he ran away and returned to his village to work on the farmland, and soon married a local girl.

With the intervention of his uncle Shaykh Khadr Darwish, and encouraged by his helpful advice and advice, Abduh returned to the madrasah, and the Shaykh remained his "spiritual guide and guide of the dhamir." This timeless experience was invoked by Abduh in connection with his later efforts in scientific pursuits: "All my cares vanished, and I thought of nothing but to equip myself with science and to improve my conduct. I have no one to lead me towards this new object of my desire other than Sheikh Darwish Khadr who first freed me from the prison of ignorance by opening to me the door of knowledge. He has broken for me the fetters that bound us when we blindly repeated all that was told to us, and has restored us to the true religion. This Sheikh for me is the key to happiness, if there is happiness for me in this abominable world. It is he who reveals to me my natural inclinations which I myself am not aware of."<sup>12</sup>

In 1866, he entered al-Azhar University taking up the subjects of mantik (logic), philosophy and Sufism (mysticism), and showed a deep inclination towards Sufism and samadi, "and turned into an imaginary world where he thought that he had spoken to the human spirits of previous generations... and attained the condition of the other world and hatred of mixing with humans" until he met Jamal al-din al-Afghani who eventually cured his extreme devotion to Sufism.<sup>13</sup> Abduh spent only two years at al-Azhar, and launched his critical attack on his conservative leanings and his old-fashioned religiosity, dismantling a widespread *taqlid* that was deeply rooted in its traditions and structures: "If I had a piece of true knowledge, I acquired it through ten years of praising al-Azhar from my brain, and to this day it is still not as clear as I would have liked"<sup>14</sup>

Abduh felt empty with the outdated and backward system and the archaic manhaj of memorization imposed on his students, in a decadent way of learning, as described by Dr. Mohammad Sabri: "They burden the student's memorization with a mixture of very complicated nahu knowledge and theological details done to stifle the spirit and inhibit its growth."<sup>15</sup>

After the presence of Jamal al-din al-Afghani, an accomplished Islamic reformer and philosopher known for his dexterity and outspoken opposition to Western colonial power, who launched his campaign in Cairo, Abduh became his strongest disciple and supporter. He began contact with al-Afghani in the month of Muharram, 1287/1870 and followed and underwent serious studies and studies with him. He continued to join him

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<sup>11</sup> Uthman Amin, *Muhammad 'Abduh*. Translated by Charles Wendell (Washington, D.C.: n.p., 1955), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Uthman Amin, *Muhammad 'Abduh*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, 32.

<sup>14</sup> Mark Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications.2010), 103.

<sup>15</sup> Uthman Amin, *Muhammad 'Abduh*, 4.

in the struggle and revolution waged against the British, until they separated when al-Afghani was expelled to Hyderabad. Afghani advocated the idea of pan-Islamism that attracted Muslims to establish a *Caliphate* after the fall of Ottoman rule. Under the influence of Afghani, Abduh developed his interest in education and strengthened his commitment to reform and his prowess in the fields of journalism, politics and mysticism. Abduh was trained as an *'alim* (scholar/cleric) and under the influence of al-Afghani, he developed a dynamic interest in Islamic philosophy and a rejection of the traditional methods applied in al-Azhar that hinder the development of the mind, encourage *taqlid*, obey authority and accept conventional views recklessly and without question.

Afghani's energetic and incisive efforts have had a lasting impact on Abduh's political struggle to solve critical problems in the Muslim world, and to develop new alternatives to catch up with the pace of achievement in the West. Muhammad Rashid Rida, in his brief article published in *al-Manar* entitled *al-Tajdid wa al-Tajaddud wa al-Mujaddidun* (Reform, Renewing and Renewal) accurately describes the contribution of al-Afghani and Abduh to the reform of Islam: "'Jamal al-Din [al-Afghani] and Muhammad 'Abduh has [formed] a scientific, rational and reformist group, which is able to follow in their footsteps and continue with their reforms to the extent that the *ummah* has seen the intelligence of one of them in the political leadership, which is unimaginable before [*the umma*] is ready to rise up with it and acknowledge its superiority.'" <sup>16</sup>

### **Islamic Science Theory and New Thought in Egypt**

Abduh's constructive view of science can be traced to his efforts to reconcile religious authority with scientific discovery and to harmonize the claims and arguments of reason with the text of revelation. Its scientific significance can be observed from its rational and scientific outlook which emphasizes the need to master philosophy as the key to drive and improve in the Islamic world. The modern reform movement he spearheaded proposed a scientific methodology to be applied in every primary school in Egypt. Abduh strives to uphold scientific discoveries and the use of intellect, the willingness to think, reason and reject the clash of madhhab and deny reckless adherence (*taqlid*) without any substantive and clear evidence. Akal has an essential importance in his writings which he emphasizes to trigger fundamental changes in the Islamic world.

The scientific legacy he developed and the influence of his intellectual power had great consequences in the quest to rediscover the Ummatic spirit and to make phenomenal progress in productive scientific discovery in the Islamic world. It made an important and meaningful contribution to Islamic modernism, as "the greatest religious reformer of Egypt and one of the most impressive figures in the modern history of Islam." <sup>17</sup>

Abduh is celebrated as the "pioneer of modern thought in Egypt", the "father of Islamic thought of the 20th century", the "reformer of knowledge and wisdom" and the "pioneer of the modern movement in the Arab world", whose legacy in the history of Islamic reform is quite significant, playing a dynamic role in the transformation and reinterpretation of Islam in contemporary thought, with his efforts to liberalize the education system, restructure the departments and duties of the mufti, transforming the Islamic worldview, defending and championing Islamic feminism and integrating Islamic and Western ideals and traditions, where "No one will deny that the story of Egyptian

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<sup>16</sup> Rida, Muhammad Rashid, "*al-Tajdid wa al-tajaddud wa al-mujaddidun*" (Renewal, Renewing, and Renewers), *al-Manar*. Vol. 31, no. 10 (July 1931), pp. 770-777; Charles Kurzman ed., *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Osman Amin, *Muhammad Abduh*, 165.

"modernism" is the story of "Abduh and its legacy".<sup>18</sup> According to Hamka: "Syekh Muhammad Abduh was the first to open new minds. Strictly young people in Egypt. In English it is written: *"The first leader of modern thought in Egypt."*<sup>19</sup>

His importance and intellectual influence in the revival and development of the modern Islamic movement is shown by Prof. Dr. H. Kraemer (1888-1965), the ecumenical figure of the Dutch Hervormd, in his book *The Religion of Islam* which analyzes the crucial role it played in the historical context of the reformation in Egypt. *"Actually, in the Islamic world, there is already an example of a new Islamic movement that means defending Islam against western influences that may threaten the position of Muslims. That is a new movement that emerged in Egypt under the leadership of Muhammad Abduh. The intention of Muhammad Abduh and his companions is to prove that Islam may match itself with the atmosphere of the new age because the basic basis of Islam is actually for all times."*<sup>20</sup>

Abduh's contribution in the proliferation and restoration of scientific idealism in the Islamic world and the wave of awakening it sparked in scientific breakthroughs in al-Azhar and the Arab world as a whole, has contributed to the empowerment and driving of his monumental scientific and Islamization aspirations in the contemporary century. It has mobilized great efforts in reconciling religion and science and harmonizing revelation with reason, which serves in reconstructing and reframing the foundations of Western science and technology with rational principles and Islamic ideals. His drive to reconstruct Islamic science was clearly based on the Qur'an and hadith (tradition of the Prophet [saw]) which strongly encouraged the exploration and discovery of science and the development of ideas and intellectual strength.

Abduh thoroughly supports the pillars of science and the rational foundation of religion. He showed the intellectual foundations and foundations of science and religion that embraced reason (*'aql*), revelation (*wahy*), knowledge (*'ilm*), rationalism and justice (*al-'adl*). Abduh does not see any contradiction or separation between religion and reason and firmly maintains that science is the intimate companion of religion and that there are no clashes and conflicts between the two. According to him, there is no contradiction between "faith" and "reason". If there is some kind of discrepancy between "reason" and "revelation" it should be assumed that one or the other has been misinterpreted; because they are basically two different ways of conveying one Divine truth.<sup>21</sup>

He emphasizes a transformative approach to religion, especially certain aspects that fall within the field of *al-mutaghaiyyirat* (the changing), which demands rational and perceptive thinking. He distinguishes between the fixed (*al-thawabit*) and the changing (*al-mutaghaiyyirat*), principles and models, which outline the essence of the absolute and eternal principles of sharia with the specific realities and conditions and needs of Muslims. The underlying principle is ideally the mobilization of scientific knowledge and freedom and the dynamic renewal of the forces of religion and civilization to respond adequately to contemporary challenges.

Abduh's understanding of rationalism arose in part from the influence of Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838-1897) who openly exalted philosophy in a significant and loud way.

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Cragg, "The Modernist Movement in Egypt", in Richard N. Frye, ed., *Islam and the West* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1957), 149.

<sup>19</sup> Hamka, *The History of the Development of the Purification of Islamic Teachings in Indonesia* (Djakarta: Tintamas, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> Hendrik, Kraemer, *Religion of Islam* (Djakarta: Gredja and Zending Publishing Agency, 1928).

<sup>21</sup> Abduh, *Risalah al-Tawhid*, 9.



In his appeal on the contradiction between dogma and philosophy, al-Afghani imagined: "As long as man lives, the struggle will not cease between dogma and the independent quest, between religion and philosophy; a serious struggle in which, I am afraid, victory is not on the side of free thought, because most of the masses do not like reason, and its teachings can only be understood by a few intelligent of the elite..."<sup>22</sup>

Abduh has sketched out a dynamic theological and philosophical understanding in his *Risalat al-Tauhid* (*Treatise on Tauhid*) which is in line with the universal fikrah of al-Afghani, through which he seeks to reconcile instinct and science, uphold the superiority of religion, emphasize the need for *ijtihad* (free reasoning), reforming and adapting Islamic ethics and legal prescriptions to modern practices, developing rational thinking, championing the agenda of tajdid and pioneering the development of science in modern life. His meaningful contribution to this field of thought has sparked strength and confidence in developing and promoting rationality, creativity and positive integration between science and religion.

In his quest to develop modern aspirations and scientific realism, Abduh has mobilized effective transformations that pave the way for thoughts and ideas to take root and grow. It mobilizes the search for rationality with a free spirit and outlines an ecumenical philosophy based on the premise that there is no contradiction between science and religion, and that both science and religion are rooted in reason, and that the Qur'an urges man to use his reason.<sup>23</sup>

The pervasive influence of this power of ratio is invoked in his work which shows the sustainability and continuity of the prescription of Islam in the modern era, which is formulated in his *Treatise At-Tauhid*: "Religion should be regarded as a friend to science, stimulating man to investigate the secrets of existence, telling him to recognize the established truth and to depend on it in his moral life and conduct."<sup>24</sup>

### **The Relationship of Science and Religion**

Significant ideas from Abduh's stance on science are many in his works such as *Al-Islām wa'l-Nasrāniyyah ma'al 'Ilm wa'l Madaniyah* (*Islam and Christianity and Science and Civilization*); *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh* [Biography of Muhammad 'Abduh, compiled by Muhammad Rashid Rida], and *al-A'māl al-Kāmilah* [His Collection of Works, edited by Muhammad Imarah].

In his attempt to respond to the truth of revelation, Abduh viewed the knowledge gained through rational human efforts and through the revelation of the Qur'an as complementary to each other. For him, both are 'signs from God' that allow man to study and understand nature and emphasize the coexistence of science and revelation. Abduh combines naturalist and traditionalist approaches in his movement which emphasizes beliefs in terms of religion and Scripture. With the history of Islam marginalized, Abduh actually mobilized efforts to reinterpret the Qur'an based on the understanding of modern science, and reasoned argumentation, as a fundamental yardstick to prove the relevance of contemporary Islam as a religion that is easy, tolerant and in harmony with the conditions of human life.<sup>25</sup>

His ideas found echoes from dozens of modern scholars who echoed the same magnitude of thought, highlighting Islam as the religion of reason and fitrah, and the

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<sup>22</sup> Nikki, R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"* (University of California Press, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Livingston, 'Muhammad 'Abduh and Science'.

<sup>24</sup> Abduh, *Risalah al-Tawhid*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islam and Modernities*.

fundamental importance of logic (*mantiq*) as the wisdom (*wisdom*) bestowed by God that is inevitable for scientific thought. For Abduh, religion should be considered the closest companion of science, which moves man to explore the secrets of the existence of this nature, tells him to recognize the truth that is revealed, and makes it a point of reference in his life and moral behavior.

Abduh's extensive contribution to science is reflected in his pragmatic views on science education, in which he asserts: "without the spread of education in modern science, the nation would have lagged far behind other nations, leaving identity and virtue in danger of disintegration".<sup>26</sup>

In his article on "philosophy and the call to modern science" Abduh expresses his astonishment at Muslims who refuse to teach logic: "If this is our attitude towards such a subject... I am anxious to think about how our perception of the new science that has become a daily necessity and the basis of happiness, wealth and power in the modern era... We should get this in the right way according to the guidance of our own people who want us to be aware of our need for that knowledge and the dangers of ignoring it".<sup>27</sup>

Abduh is positive about the capabilities and capabilities of science which he confidently proclaims: "science is a way of life rooted in freedom and progress; In its true form, science, when properly united with religion, leads society to perfection. Without freedom, science cannot exist, just as without justice, freedom and progress cannot exist. Freedom implies justice just as science implies freedom."<sup>28</sup> For Abduh, science has a close relationship with reason (*'aql*), and religion with moral consciousness (*wijdan*). The two provide filling to humans where they complement each other. It will not act or contradict each other, and the two are one in the human soul. He consistently mentions that: "both science and religion are rooted in reason, and that the Qur'an urges man to use his intellect."<sup>29</sup>

According to Abduh, in order to solve the current stagnation and neglect and backwardness in the Islamic world for a long decade, the ummah must embrace modern science and technology and reformulate Western ideas that do not violate the lines and provisions of Islam. The ideas of reform he introduced have spread widely in the Islamic world and his creative influence has contributed to the driving of science and recapturing the splendor and dynamic role of Islam on the global stage. Abduh's scientific and rational theoretical views and his philosophical breakthroughs on science marked a new transition towards the Islamization of science based on enlightenment and a dynamic understanding of the construction of Islamic science.

### **Analysis Results from Abduh's Scientific Interpretation**

This section highlights Abduh's significant ideas about science and his philosophy on the epistemology of science and history. He explores the essence and nuances of his scientific thought represented by his concise and authoritative commentaries (*Tafsīr Juz 'Amma* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*) which offer a fresh interpretation and reinterpretation of Islamic ideals and have consistently been the cornerstone and platform of his main ideas about science. The scientific elaboration of Abduh in this interpretation of the Qur'an is based on the rational manhaj developed in the interpretation of the text. It analyzes the impact of Abduh's scientific ideas and its significant influence in the revival of scientific

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<sup>26</sup> Khoury, Nabil Abdo. "Islam and Modernization in the Middle East: Muhammad 'Abduh, An Ideology of Development" (Tesis Ph.D., State University of New York, Albany, 1976).

<sup>27</sup> Imarah, *A'mal al-Kamilah*.

<sup>28</sup> Abduh, *Al-Ahram*, 1880, John W. Livingston, 'Muhammad 'Abduh on Science'.

<sup>29</sup> John W. Livingston, 'Muhammad 'Abduh on Science'.



spirit in the Islamic world, with a critical look at the structure and content of his *Tafsir* and its general themes along with an examination of the linguistic, literary, historical and doctrinal aspects of *al-Manar*. This helps in sketching and expressing a clear perspective on Abduh's thought patterns, as depicted in his work.

*His Tafsir al-Manar* has had an impact on the advancement of scientific ideas and knowledge in contemporary Islamic society, and contributed to its unprecedented intellectual expansion and growth, where: "his teachings, personality and influence [Abduh] constituted the single most decisive factor in the development of Arab Muslim thought and reform in the twentieth century."<sup>30</sup>

'Abduh's skill in science and the development of his scientific manhaj was evident in his efforts to reconcile reason and revelation and to find a new foundation for Islamic science to be restored based on the unification of reason, revelation and rationality. According to him, reason is the strongest supporter of Islam, and Muslims should re-embrace the substance, spirit and goals of shariah and earnestly realize its principles in modern *mu'amalah* (social affairs) practices.

In his attempt to synthesize between the premises of science and religion, he issued a scientific commentary (*al-'ilm*) that strategically led to the restoration of the rational spirit and to break down the fortress of *taqlid* and eliminate the lethargy and backwardness of the ummah, in which: "I cannot help but hope that the Muslims will one day succeed in breaking the chains of their fetters and advancing resolutely on the path of civilization according to the way of society West."<sup>31</sup>

His interpretation was quite instrumental in revealing the fundamental nature of science and the cosmic journey, the laws of nature, which have catalyzed and mobilized the progress of science in the Islamic world, which contributed to the restoration of religious and religious ideas and ideas that he tried to reconcile from the various factions and views of the Islamic school of fiqh, and unraveled the many conflicts and ideas that clashed in the interpretation.

Abduh has outlined an effective manhaj of akliah tafsir that is based on a critical and rational scientific foundation, as described in his discussion of the text in *his Tafsir al-Manar, Tafsir Juz 'Amma, Tafsir al-Fatihah, and Tafsir Surah al-'Asr* which lays out the important foundations surrounding his doctrine and scientific view of the Qur'an. *The Tafsir al-Manar* produced at the end of the nineteenth century worked on the rational understanding of the extensive tradition of thought and the classical essence of its culture and civilization.

Without drowning in debates about complex fiqh doctrines and practices, he bases his interpretation on scientific ideals supported by explicit Qur'anic verses and authentic hadith – monumental principles in upholding the idea of science and its power in textual debate.

In his analysis of the manhaj outlined by Abduh in the commentary of the Qur'an, Abdullah Mahmud Shihatah devotes a chapter to describing Abduh's hermeneutic tendencies and foundations. Examples taken from Abduh's interpretation include the Qur'anic khitaab [discussion] of an unknown city (qaryah) mentioned in surah al-Baqarah 2:58, the plague from heaven (rijzan min al-sama') [2:59], the food that the Prophet Zakariya (as) found in the monastery of Maryam [3:37]. He also discusses the limitations of Abduh's interpretation in dealing with eschatological issues (such as al-sirat, al-mizan,

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<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Cragg, *The Theology of Unity* (introduction).

<sup>31</sup> Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, 108.

al-jannah, al-nār, al-qada' wa'l-qadar).<sup>32</sup> 'Abduh often refers to classical works of tafsir with a particular focus on the dimension (bu'd) of time and place, the background of the descent of the asbab al-nuzul verse, emphasizing the literal meaning of the text and its context, and omitting the narration of israiliyyat (stories quoted from Jewish and Christian sources from biblical history and tradition) in its commentary. In his manhaj, "which is cleansed from fairy tales from without" he seeks to rediscover the original meaning of the Qur'an, which formed the generation of salih predecessors (al-salaf al-salih) and revived their spiritual morality for diffusion in modern society.<sup>33</sup>

He divides the verses of a surah into meaningful units and seeks to bring about the relationship between the surahs themselves, which shows, that the idea of context and integrity comes in as a hermeneutic principle and is expressed in terms of the superiority of the Qur'anic writing (*i'jaz*). The tafsir is written in the traditional pattern as interlinear tafsir (verse by verse) and has cross-references to other parts of the Qur'an that deal with the same topic. Its innovation and modern character extend from format to content.

A crucial part of his tafsir is the reform ideas he puts forward, proposing the need to understand the Qur'an from the perspective of the scientific world which demands a reinterpretation of the ideas of the Qur'an<sup>34</sup>, such as miracles, prophethood, religion and reason, science, philosophy and science. His interpretation expresses a modern understanding and an important aspiration that echoes a fundamental understanding of scientific verses. The idea of reform required a reassessment of the intellectual heritage of Muslims and demanded an abandonment of the practice of blind adherence or *taqlid*, in which "Abduh believed that the rigid structure of Islamic culture stood in the way of what was essentially a logical and flowing religion."<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the study related to scientific thought that Abduh put forward in his interpretation of the Qur'an, has given birth to brilliant ideas in shaping the modern and progressive civilization of the Islamic world. *Tafsīr al-Manār* is one of the important works in the authoritative and influential tradition of tafsir in modern interpretation which was later developed and pioneered by *Tafsir al-Marāghī* by Ahmad Mustafa al-Marāghī, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Majid* or *Tafsir al-Nur* by Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy, *The Message of the Qur'ān* by Muhammad Asad, *Tafsir al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* by Sayyid Qutb and others. The book of *Tafsīr* reflects the scientific manhaj of the interpretation of the Qur'ān, in projecting and formulating rational and innovative explanations of the text, which shows the intellectual power and breadth of its ijtihad in the nuances of renewal and integral understanding of the text. This study has shown Abduh's enduring contribution to the discovery of classical and modern science and reveals the universal values of science as detailed in his rational ideas and the progress of scientific science during his lifetime. Abduh expressed a critical view of science that was initiated from the fundamental knowledge of the Qur'ānik. His formulation had an important impact on the current political and da'wah nuances which were worked on from the idealism and philosophy of science inspired by al-Afghani and the scientific manhaj he formulated. In his writings, Abduh brought a competent scientific manhaj in line with

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<sup>32</sup> Shihatah, Abdullah Mahmud, *Manhaj al-Imam Muhammad 'Abduh fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Cairo: Matba'at Jami'ah al-Qahirah, 1984).

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Freyer, Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions and Interpretations* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 34.

<sup>34</sup> Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 209.

<sup>35</sup> Mark Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, 1.

the khittah and ideals of nahdah that he sketched out which has boosted the influence of reform and knowledge and introduced an effective philosophy of science in the Islamic world.

From this brief debate on Abduh's scientific aspirations, important and dynamic initiatives towards mobilizing and realizing the Islamization of science and the understanding and application of Islamic texts in a modern and pluralistic context should be taken based on Abduh's guidance, in order to refresh the intellectual dynamism of the ummah and contribute towards the formation of a science-informed civil society.

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