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Modernity, Its Impact on Muslim World and General Characteristics of 19–20th-Century Revivalist–Reformists’ Re-Reading of the Qur’an

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Abstract: The 19th and 20th centuries were times of great change and transformation for the Muslim world. The salvation of the ummah—which is getting politically, militarily, and economically more backward against the West, terms such as revival (*ihya*), renewal (*tajdid*) and reform and reconstruction (*islah*)—have occupied almost all intellectuals and ulama. Many prescriptions have been proposed on this subject, the most vivid examples of which are mainly related to new approaches to the Qur’an and its interpretation. This article deals with the innovations put forward by reformist–revivalist leaders in different Muslim geographies regarding the interpretation of the Qur’an under the influence of modernism. We see that these approaches, which are basically based on the assumption of the inadequacy of classical methods and understandings, open up to questions and discussions for many hermeneutical devices that have become entrenched in the classical period and even argue that they are now unnecessary. Contrary to classical Qur’anic exegesis, reformist *tajdid*-centered suggestions of polyphonic modern Qur’an interpretations, the theological reflections of these suggestions, and most importantly their effect (or ineffectiveness) on Muslim societies are among the main topics of the article. In the beginning, the pressure of modernity, which should not be ignored in the perception and interpretation of the Qur’an, has become an indispensable element in the course of time. This new phenomenon and changing conditions have forced many Muslim intellectuals to compromise on principles that have become norms. The result, instead of a healthy reform, consisted of eclectic innovations and only saved the day and could not find a serious ground for itself in the grassroots.

Keywords: the Qur’an; exegesis; *ijtihad*; revival; renewal; modernity



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1. Introduction

One of the most important common features of the contemporary reformist–revival scholars and movements under their influence manifested in different Islamic geographies is the need for a new way of re-reading the Qur’an. Almost all of them have taken the Qur’an as a basis for the *tajdid* (renewal) and improvement to be realized. In this article, firstly the developments that came with the Renaissance and enlightenment in the West and their impact on the Islamic world will be discussed. Then, general discussions about the perception of modernism in the Muslim world will be summarized. Finally, the reflections of the reformist and revivalist perception on the re-reading of the Qur’an, which is the main dynamic in various renewalist and revivalist movements, will be covered. In doing so, besides Qur’an and exegesis, approaches to the other major sources and related disciplines will also be discussed. It should be noted at the outset that we use terms such as reformist, modernist, revivalist or renewalist in a very general sense because of the transitions and intersections between them. It is also important to note that we will not be discussing the revivalist movements in which traditional Qur’an readings are continued. We will not focus on those who show new approaches by dressing classical instruments in modern clothes. The main approaches we will concentrate on are how changing conditions of modern periods have forced many Muslim intellectuals to compromise on principles that

have become norms. The result was that, instead of a healthy reform, eclectic innovations only saved the day, and could not find serious ground for itself in the grassroots.

2. Modernism in the West

At the beginning, it should be emphasized that modernism is not a concept which has had its boundaries drawn in a very clearly defined manner. In fact, it is a term which is defined in different ways by different people—both in terms of etymology and as a technical term. It is possible to summarize a special yet comprehensive definition of modernism, which is the development of a new point of view, as opposed to classical, traditional and ancient beliefs, as follows: ‘the ideology and way of life brought to light by the mental transformation of the West which came with the Age of Enlightenment’ (Demir and Acar 1992, p. 251). According to another description, modernism is both a philosophical and an art movement that refers to a global transformation in Western society and culture that from the early decades of the 19th and 20th centuries sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life. It is an anthropocentric world view which is based on the foundations of humanism, secularism, and democracy, which gives supremacy and freedom to humankind, and seeks salvation in science rather than religion (Demir and Acar 1992). This, together with the fact that the comparison of all types of new things with the traditional, old, or ancient evokes modernism, modernity is presented to us as a never-ending process (Soyan 1993). In other words, modernism appears to us as a notion which is permanently constructing itself, in opposition to its old self. For this reason, post-modernism or post-post-modernism and the following processes are inevitable phenomena.

When we go back to the above definition, it does not evade our attention that enlightenment is a notification of modernism. The most radical change in this process is made to the traditional understanding of religion,—in particular, pietism, which views individual morals as the fundamental element of religion, and rationalism, which refutes all forms of orthodoxy have cracked the dogmatic structure of Protestantism (Erkilet 2001) and gives it a more liberal character (Saribay 1995). An important result of the emphasis on extreme rationalism, which we can call the corner stone of enlightenment, is its noteworthy variance from the status (authority) of the Bible. First, a limited God acting according to the laws of nature, and then many so called irrational Old and New Testament passages describing the transgression of these limits were tried to be presented in a more reasonable framework. In short, Christianity becomes historical and then history itself is given a more secular structure. According to A. Davutoğlu this is a revolution which allows the West to move from mythology to history (Davutoğlu 2001). However, it should not be forgotten that it is religion and faith which have been damaged the most from this revolution. That is because at the start of the Age of Enlightenment certain liberal thinkers, such as Baron d’Holbach, proposed that religion should be completely abandoned in order to be able to reach a full accord with nature, and this is extremely important in terms of how it exhibits the approach of the messengers of modernism. Even though they refuse to accept the authenticity of the religions, and despite the existence of certain pragmatists, such as Voltaire (Outram 1997),¹ who stated that the existence of religion should not be ignored as it ensures social order, it had almost become fashionable to associate the cause of all types of negative factors with God.²

On the one hand, religion seems to have lost its privilege and old value within the community—or, to put it in more cautious terms, the existence of religion simply became a vehicle—while on the other hand, the rationalization of society, which is acknowledged as the most important gift of modernism, has especially tested the incidents surrounding modern human, and then presented it in a dominant way. This shows the degeneration of metaphysics and an uptrend in positivism. Mind shows that knowledge is power. Within this process secularization carries the role of a catalyst in the ever-decreasing religious practice. Meanwhile, the separation of public and private areas by Weber played an important role in religion being seen as something which is personal or to do with one’s

own conscience, or, at the very least to be considered separate from the state and communal life. Clearly, whatever exists that is not in accord with the rational knowledge standards that come with the Age of Enlightenment, or, indeed, in conflict with them, now belongs in the individual area (Poole 1993). In a mentality where reason (intelligibility) is the sole measure of everything, it should be natural not giving the necessary place to religion. In a world where people possess the self-confidence, and unlimited right to criticize, for these people to exist and act constantly in accordance with their own subjectivity, God needed to die (Soyan 1993).

Further, the contemporary trinity (humanism, secularism, and democracy) upon which modernism is seated continuously evolves and transforms everything and makes it obligatory to move forward. Indeed, the fundamental reason underlying the emergence of many of the sciences in the West during the 19th century, such as historical philosophy, sociology, anthropology, the history of civilization, religious history, etc., is known to be the attempts to verify the correctness of the beliefs of progress, development, and modernization (Bulaç 1996). However, the essentiality of this change should not be limited just to religion. It is possible to observe changes in every area of social life, especially in sciences, politics, technology, architecture, morals, arts, aesthetics, etc. Additionally, the difference between economic (technological) and social (political, cultural, legal, artistic) modernism shows the intellectual transformation of modernism within a more categorical framework. With modernization, which has been shaped by the fundamental propositions of the philosophy of enlightenment, the West has achieved economic welfare on the one hand, through the industrial revolution, and on the other hand the democratic administrative structure which is present in the political arena. Further, being protected from social and political instability, avoiding the tyranny of an all-powerful state, and guaranteeing peace and ensuring the balance of power, which they achieved after the Vienna Congress in 1815 (Altun 2002), which had met for that very purpose, has led Westerners to obtain self-confidence and made them believe that the developments they would achieve in the commercial and industrial arenas via their well-organized states, and the financial development which resulted from this would be irrevocable. Further, both the administrative imperialism and the commercial dominance (colonialism) (O'Leary 1995) the West achieved over the rest of the world meant that they were placed in the very center of history and led them to view history through a one-sided perspective.

The clearest traces of this multi-sided development were felt much more within the social and cultural life. The progressive and evolutionary understanding which continued in a straight line forced some (such as August Comte) to see this process (theological, metaphysical, positive) as something that all communities must experience, and that otherwise they would disappear (Bulaç 1996). Therefore, the West has seen modernism as the peak point which could be achieved by any community. Indeed, some have even evaluated the attempts of other communities to undertake the Western-centered modernization as a national conversion into becoming civilized without hesitation (Davutoğlu 2001).

Scientific and technological developments are also important motives which led to a speedier transformation. The father of the atom bomb, Julius Robert Oppenheimer, argued that 'the technical progress made by mankind in the last 40 years is greater than the developments achieved in the 40 centuries' (Izzetbegovic 1989, p. 61); this is an important evaluation in that it shows the extent of the mentioned transformation. As well as creating communities which produce more and consume more, this speedy transformation caused serious damage to traditional views of religion and of the world. Modernism incited the individualistic and egotistical characteristics of humankind and broke their ties with the traditional community. Modernization caused individuals to act as if they were each some sort of small God, and as well as not refraining from devouring and obliterating natural resources in order to meet the economic demands of some societies led to unfair competition and exploitation through the cooperation of centralized state power and bureaucracy (Dallmayr 2001). Many critics of modernism state that it has not met every

need of humankind, and that, indeed, it has led to a more materialistic world, and a world which has become a commodity with human being at its center (ibid.).

Together with this, the problems faced on this matter by the West who experienced modernism considerably earlier than the Islamic world, are somewhat more. The emphasis on extreme positivism, the attempts to find the absolute universal truth based on experimentation and experience, causing the engineering of artificial communities by ignoring the existence of many factors which shape human life, by implementing scientific symptoms similar to those lost in the physical arena to social sciences and humanities, the continuous attempts to evaluate others in line with their own value measurements, and the acceptance of Western based communal, political, cultural and legal developments as the only measure has caused modernization to arrive at various impasses. Furthermore, the two important World Wars (I and II) caused by the West, and the serious economic crisis caused by the free market in America in 1929, together with this scientific and economic development, has led various philosophers to seriously question whether rational Western people possess the qualifications required to oversee science and its data (Davutoğlu 2001).

Added to this is the fact that contrary to Newtonian understanding of physics, Einstein's theory of relativity draws attention to the presence of more than one framework of time, etc., and these developments can also be seen as among the important factors disproving the accent on only one truth (Murphy 1995). This new era can be called post-modernism, or it can be referred to as ultra, neo or post-industrial or digital periods, but the fact is that the assumption that a different time is being experienced can be very clearly seen. However, this does not mean the arguments for modernism have disappeared completely. While post-modernism is, in contrast to modernism, carries a more relativistic, pluralistic truth claims, and allows for God in the life of the individual and of the community,³ its many meta-statements, on the other hand have also been able to carry subjectivity and distinctiveness.

3. Muslim Perception of Modernism/Modernity

It will be beneficial to touch on the Muslim world and its experience of modernism, which is more important in terms of our subject matter discussion. The Muslim geography has spent the last three centuries in a very deep political, ideological, social, and commercial crisis. It cannot be said that they have come out of this crisis, even today. In particular, the intervention of Western powers has caused Muslim states to weaken, and even for much of the established and cultural heritage to be turned upside down. While on the one hand Western nations used their economic supremacy to control local industry in various regions such as the Ottoman lands, Iran, Indian Subcontinent, Egypt, North Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, etc., on the other hand they have succeeded in entering into local culture through the schools they have established in these regions (Lapidus 1996).

In Subcontinent, the Westerners, who were employed in the political and military arena by the weakening Moghul governments established schools in the region where they ensured that children grew up into intellectuals who could translate their own views. The Muslims, who had been the dominant class in the region, lost this distinction, especially after English became the only language used in state authorities and schools. The truth is that Hindus found more openings for themselves within the new structure of the region, in place of Muslims who lost their importance, both in the financial sense, and in their social status (Ahmed 1990).

The situation is no different in other regions either. Westerners established a school in Lebanon as early as 1728, and this school was followed by Maronite colleges established in 1735 and 1795 (Lapidus 1996). The intellectuals who became a sort of volunteer ambassadors of the new Western values played an important role in the cultivating nationalism and secularism in the lands where they lived. The effects of these individuals are not limited to just modern Western education either. This new elite who ensured that goods from the West were sold in the local markets, also published numerous newspapers and magazines to try to affect the structure of thought of local people in favour of the liberal Western

thought. If we look in particular at the media sector in various different Muslim regions, it is seen that the effective activities of the non-Muslim minorities in this sector were not a coincidence (ibid.). An interesting point about the economy is that all Muslim countries became completely dependent on the West in the second half of the 19th century. The Ottomans were in a state where they were unable to pay even the interest of the loans they took from Western countries in 1882. In 1875, Egypt was under the complete control of public debt (ibid.). The situation in Iran and India was no different to that of the Ottomans and Egypt.

The Muslim civilization, which had been continuously dominant against non-Muslim nations in both the East and the West for centuries entered into such a defeated relationship with the dominant West that this has led Muslim intellectuals to try to find ways out of this situation. During this period, when the defeated were forced to imitate the victorious, it was observed that the first reforms were in the field of the defense industry, due to the fact that military insufficiencies were given as the reasons for lost battles. In Ottoman case, Selim III. employed Swedish, French, British and Hungarian engineers and established military and naval schools, and those similar structures were implemented in the Egypt of Mehmet Ali Pasha and in Tunisia where a large number of Italian engineers were employed (Hüseyn 1986). As well as reforms concerning defense, many reforms followed in various fields, in these regions. The reform movements initially carried the idea that they could take the scientific techniques of the West and combine these with Islamic morals, but as the speedy decline of the Muslim world continued and spread even further, it is observed that Western civilization, which was at first seen as an unavoidable evil, became transformed into an indispensable good (Kara 1986). The following comment made by Ö. Çaha, shows the status of the attempts of the Ottoman State, which was in very close contact with the West, to modernize, very clearly: 'The laws enacted during the period between 1840 and the declaration of the 2nd Constitution (1908) were more numerous and more comprehensive than the laws cited during the Republican period' (Çaha 2001, p. 273). These new laws, in some instances a more eclectic and radical reform, rather than a more European or more traditional Islamic understanding of law, were aimed for in different areas (social, political, administrative, family law, penal law, citizenship, etc.).

In the meantime, an important point that needs reminding is that, contrary to the West, modernization and revivalist movements in Muslim countries appeared, and continued as a sort of religious movement (Kara 2001). That is why the role played by the traditional scholars (*ulama*) during this process is extremely important in terms of our subject. While it is not possible to define a single attitude amongst the *ulama*, in general their relationship with the modernist experience of Muslims presents a tragi-comic structure. It is true that the Ottoman *ulama* supported the reform movements to a certain extent. However, on the one hand the *ulama* were accused of being short-sighted when they supported innovation and Western style new laws in the country, and on the other hand, when they did not support it, they were accused of being against the reform. Religious foundations and trustees (*awqaf* lands and properties) are very good illustrations in this regard. Colonial powers could not intervene the *awqaf* because Ottoman lands and very important real estates were in *awqaf* status. The elimination of the ruling in these religious foundations and institutions would mean the removing of a serious obstacle in front of the colonization. While some revivalist scholars were aware of the danger, many liberal and reformists considered this in the context of personal liberties, property ownership, freedom, etc. This situation resulted in the cancellation of this feature of foundation properties and lands. Turkish exegete Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, who worked as a minister of religious foundation during late Ottoman government, described the situation by saying that eastern table (*maide-i şark*) has been made ready to be to be eaten by the colonial powers (Öztürk 1993, p. 196).

It is possible to see a similar attitude in other Muslim regions too. Further, the more active role played by intellectuals, who had been brought up in the West, in the social and political life of the countries. They caused the existing status of the *ulama* to weaken

and a new elite, apart from the traditional ulama, about to be born. While one group aimed to modernize Islam from within by taking fundamental religious principles as their basis in the reform movements, another group was proposing a modernization where secular and nationalist sentiments were at the forefront, at European political and economic forums (Lapidus 1996). Further, while the thoughts of some on change were within the framework of ethical and religious reforms, others were hoping to make the socio-cultural structures of Muslims in the communal area fit in with the requirements of the modern era (Merad n.d.). As a result, the reform and revivalist movements undertaken by the seemingly more conservative attitude and those whose approach was more liberal, in the face of the West, caused semantic changes in many of the key terms of Islam (Bulaç 1996; Kara 1986). For instance, the identifying of Islamic Law with the rules of logic on which Western civil laws are based, or the attachment of Muslims to their religion with that of the attachment Westerners felt for the love of their countries by the Egyptian scholar Rifaa Tahtawi, who lived in Paris between 1826–1836 are good examples of this semantic change (Hüseyn 1986). Additionally, this required the Qur'an being interpreted in a new way, and its meanings being developed using modern approaches.

The return to the Qur'an and attempts to have it stated in a way that can be perceived in the modern century, which was supported by all religious, secular, and even atheist individuals living on Muslim soil, came about in the same way everywhere. We now want to touch on, albeit briefly, the conspicuous differences amongst Muslim intellectuals on Qur'anic readings, in this critical process of modernization. In order for it to be a systematic presentation, it is possible to list the mentioned differences under principal headings, and within the framework of some examples (Mertoğlu 2001, 2010). However, together with this, the inference must be made that the fundamental characteristics in modern revivalist Qur'anic readings are the shared characteristics of many reform-minded Muslim intellectuals (Mertoğlu 2001, 2010). That is because, as we will see later, the Muslim intellectuals in the 19th and 20th centuries exhibited a point of view, which, rather than being a single type of approach to interpretation, was at times even contradictory to its own systematic or inconsistent in its commentary. That is why it would be beneficial to perceive the fundamental characteristics of modern Qur'anic readings as the more frequent approaches to interpretation rather than as generally valid or as indispensable. It is possible to summarise these distinctive characteristics and renewal spirit in modernist Qur'anic exegesis as follows.

1. Qur'an centric reading of the Qur'an in modernity

One of the most fundamental characteristics of modern Qur'anic readings is that they are centered on the Qur'an. As an extension of the emphasis on the Qur'an which came with Shah Wali Allah, modern Muslim intellectuals say that because Muslims have been occupied with many Islamic disciplines the turn of the Qur'an did not arrive, and that an important amount of time has been spent on studying in other areas, and that is why not enough accent has been placed on the Qur'an. They further state that the Qur'an is not limited to just being in the monopoly of the ulama, experts and the jurists, but that it is the natural right of everyone (even non-Muslims) to give consideration to its meanings. Therefore, the modern Muslim reformer does not accept an approach such as the obliqueness of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the clearest text; it can be understood without the need for external sources. Within this context re-reading and interpretations of the Qur'an are valued highly. The reader should be faced directly with the Qur'an, and should deliberate, reflect, discuss, and contemplate on it. Indeed, some intellectuals believe that even the *mutashabihat* (ambiguous or verses with multiple meanings) in the Qur'an possess the characteristic of being easy to understand which exceeds the classical understanding of them (Saeed 2005; Koç 2012; Kayacan 2013; Gökkır 2014). For instance, while Parwiz interprets *muhkam* as reality (*haqiqat*) and *mutashabih* as research (*tahqiqat*), we witness that Ahmad Khan interprets the former as fundamental principles and the latter as symbolic verses. Egyptian scholar Jawhari, however, possesses a more interesting point of view; the former points to existing species, while the latter refers to evolution (Baljon 1961).

A natural conclusion of this method of reading which is centered heavily on the Qur'an is that the sceptic approach among modern thinkers towards hadiths has become more prevalent. Even though the observed effects of the classical orientalist criticisms, such as the delayed codification of the hadiths, the insufficiency of the *isnad* (chain of transmitters) system(!), and sometimes the presence of some reports which are difficult to compile with the content of the Qur'an, cannot be denied, it is also true that modern Muslim revivalists have been giving direction to each other on the matter too. The most interesting attitude on this matter is the use of Qur'anic verses to disregard or ignore the hadiths. Scholars such as Ahmaduddin, Cheragh Ali, Parwiz, Chakralawi, Mashriqi, etc., are the first to display negative views on the prophetic traditions (Birşık 2001). Mashriqi, for instance, associates the interpretation of the Qur'an in the light of the prophetic tradition as a sign of seeing the Qur'an with the insufficient perception (Birşık 2001).

2. Critical evaluations of the traditional schools of thought

They do not accept traditional juristic schools and consensus. Their opposition to innovation and imitation are somewhat dominant in their writings. Additionally, their emphasis on new judicial opinion or reasoning is almost like an indispensable characteristic of all modern intellectuals. The opinions of past scholars are not valid today, because these opinions are historical, and they have been based on the time and situation which existed in the past. Islam, on the other hand, is a religion of logic and has structured itself on top of *ijtihad*. Hence, opinion has been seen as the essential condition of this great religion. However, as stated by many individuals, it should not be the duty of individual religious scholar to form *ijtihads* (new judicial opinion or reasoning), but of committees made up of experts in different fields (Jansen 1993; Siddiqi 1982). The door to *ijtihad* must be reopened. Some argue that this *ijtihad* will be realised through new Islamic legal studies which are centered on the Qur'an, rather than through traditional Islamic schools' methodologies such as the way of *mutakallimun* (theologians) or *fuqaha* (jurists). However, in such a project all Islamic legal sources other than the Qur'an may be ignored. Another point that needs to be reminded here is that contemporary scholars who are attempting to realise a new legal understanding centered on the Qur'an contradict even each other. Two important examples on the matter are Ahmaduddin's statement of the ritual prayer being performed to be three times a day, while Chakralawi says that there is nothing in the Qur'an about the call to prayer and concludes that it is tantamount to blasphemy (Albayrak 2004).

3. Criticism of Qur'anic sciences and sub-disciplines

The insufficiency of the Qur'anic sciences is another of the important subjects paid attention to by modern reformist scholars. According to them, the existing material should be evaluated in a systematic and critical manner, and a new method of interpretation should be developed. The most striking approach on the matter is displayed by Mashriqi and Fazlurrahman, who argue that the traditional Qur'anic sciences are pushing people away from the Qur'an (Rahman 1990; Çoruh 2019).

They do not in general accept the existence of *naskh* within the Qur'an (Rahbar 1956; Çoruh 2019; Şimşek n.d.). The subject of *naskh* is defined as one of the most difficult areas of exegesis in chapter three of *al-Fawd al-Kabir* of Shah Wali Allah (al-Dihlawi n.d.). Wali Allah argues that because of disagreement about exact scope of the notion of the *naskh*, some people increased the number of abrogated verses up to five hundred. Suyuti, in line with the exegete Abu Bakr b. al-Arabi, reduced this number from five hundred to twenty, and states that he himself has issues with this figure, namely twenty, before proceeding to look into the subject matter verses one by one, and reducing the number of abrogated verses to five (al-Dihlawi n.d.). This approach displayed by Dihlawi has encouraged his successors to evaluate the notion of *naskh* as a matter of *ijtihadi* (based on analogy and rational reasoning) issue, and even some to completely deny its existence within the Qur'an. For these many modern intellectuals and reformers, the Word of God is so great that it cannot be abrogated based on the views of people. Together with this, and there are also many modern Muslim

thinkers who do not deny *naskh*, there are also those whose approach is that it is the abrogation of the books of former religious traditions (Albayrak 2004; Şimşek n.d.).

Due to the providence concerning the hadiths, the reports of the occasion of revelations cannot be accepted when trying to understand the verses. In general, these modern scholars try to obtain the historical background of the Qur'anic passage from their textual context. Further, by frequently referring to certain issues in daily life, they have attempted to apply the verses to events that occurred during post-revelation period despite the existence of various subjectivity and ungrounded claims. Nevertheless, together in particular with the insistent emphasis of pro-historical hermeneutical readings of the Qur'an, the importance of the reports of the occasion of revelations have begun to re-emerge and increase in recent times (Albayrak 2004).

Another important point in the writings of the reformist scholars in Qur'anic exegesis is the notion of *tanasub/munasabat* (thematic and textual unity). The classical exegetes acknowledge *tanasub* (thematic unity) to be the most honourable of Qur'anic sub-disciplines, but which has not been able to achieve the necessary level of recognition in the commentaries of the Qur'an. Even though it is said that their recent insistence on *tanasub* is due to the fact that they are trying to establish an anti-thesis to the argument of some Western scholars that the Qur'anic verses, passages, and chapters were brought together in a disorganised way, there are other reasons too. The most significant one is that, as opposed to the approach of classical interpreters, who viewed the verses and passages separately and interpreted them part by part, the approach by modern intellectuals, where they looked into the Qur'an as a whole, has resulted in observing a large number of elegant and deep meanings in this unity (Albayrak 2004; Çoruh 2019).

There is a serious reaction against the *isra'iliyyat* reports (Biblical materials) in Qur'anic exegesis. The knowledge among some modern exegetes of the Qur'an of foreign languages or their grasp of the content of the sacred texts in the Hebrew or Syriac languages makes them different from classical counterparts. For example, Charagh Ali and Farahi used to know Hebrew as well as some other Western languages (Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2001). Due to this, they have been able to read the Bible in its original or translated versions. Baljon states that modern Muslim intellectuals concentrated more on the Bible than extra-Biblical materials, such as the Talmud (Baljon 1961), or non-canonical writings of Christians. The most important pillar of the modern period of Muslim enlightenment is the total rejection of these exegetical narrations (Albayrak 2004). Sometimes, while criticizing the narrators who transmitted such reports with a heavy language, they sometimes make diachronic comments: 'this *ummah* cannot compete with or struggle against the state of Israel without fighting the reports of *israiliyyat*.' (İslamoğlu 2017a; Metin 2021). Some go further and use some provocative expression to mix *israiliyyat* reports with modern state of Israel: 'Coca Cola belongs to Israel, to whom do *israiliyyat* reports belong?' or '*israiliyyat* is a state of Israel that fled into the Muslim communities' (İslamoğlu 2017b). These tragi-comic comments consider *israiliyyat* reports as an under-cover Mossad agent. This is an interesting anomaly in modern times.

The classical emphasis on the lofty rhetorical nature and literal dispensation of the Qur'an has been ignored in a considerable way in modern times. According to modern reformist, there is no difference between the Arabic spoken by a fluent Arab who lived during that time and the language used by the Qur'an. They openly expressed their dissatisfaction with prioritizing of the Qur'anic Arabic to other languages. As stated by Mashriqi, the rhetoric of the Qur'an is not to be sought in the composition of the text or the literary style, but in the manner in which it is seeking the right path. Importance should not be paid to the linguistic analyses of the Qur'an based on its wording. The message is more important than the literal imitability of the meaning of the words (Baljon 1961; Albayrak 2004). The Qur'an has explained many events by using different words and statements. In relation to this, it is also seen that modern intellectuals either have not made particular use of classical Arabic dictionaries or have frequently stated their inadequacies (Baljon

1961; Çoruh 2019; Albayrak 2004). Similarly, they also disregard various other linguistic apparatus of classical scholarship.

4. Reading the Qur'an in the light of modern sciences

The interpretation of the Qur'an is based on intelligence and the data contained within modern science. The Qur'anic expression *furqân* (the capability of human being to tell right from wrong) in the 4th verse of the chapter Al Imran, the importance of which is stated by Muhammad Abduh, is well-known to be also defined as intelligence (Jansen 1993). Karamat Ali states that the Qur'an contains numerous passages about physics and mathematics, and even that it discusses the old systems of philosophy from all their angles (Ahmed 1990). Interestingly, for him, this is an important piece of evidence as to how much importance has been attached to scientific rhetoric rather than literary rhetoric of the Qur'an. It is argued that reason cannot contradict the revelations, and that therefore many Qur'anic explanations are presented within the framework of intelligent definitions. Should any disaccord between modern science and the verses of the Qur'an be noticed, this must have resulted from a misunderstanding of the scientific data or from scientific opinions which have yet to be completely proven (Siddiqi 1982). As a result of these obsessions with the modern science and radically positivistic attempts to read the Qur'an, it is observed that with many scientific remarks where the text of the Qur'an suffers great difficulties because many new meanings produced from the Qur'an are foreign to the text of the Qur'an itself.

Some of the examples in which the miracles of the Qur'an are rationalized and presented in a scientific context are as follows:; Qur'anic *jinn*s (unseen beings or spirits) being defined as savage or Bedouin groups of people rather than invisible beings, the *Iblis* (Satan) being defined as an internal force within human representing his or her evil side, the parting of the sea at the time of the Prophet Moses' leaving Egypt as the tide, the Prophet Solomon's corpse not rotting after his death due to it being kept in candle wax. Similarly in the chapter Naml (27:18) the statement by one ant to the others 'go to your homes so that Solomon and his armies do not notice you and crush you', as showing ants to be germ bugs which spread bacteria, and the statement in the chapter al-Baqara (2:195) '... do not lead yourselves into danger by your own hands.' as related to hygiene or preventative medicine) (Baljon 1961; Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2004). The scientific explanations concerning the theory of evolution and the use of the Qur'anic material do not escape notice either.

At a time when the extremely rationalist point of view developed by the West after the Age of Enlightenment has been replaced by questioning positivistic nature of the science and its absolute truth claim together with that science has not clarified everything, the absolute confidence and reliance shown by Muslim intellectuals on the power of science and intellect forms an interesting irony (Baljon 1961). Further, the famous motto of Ahmad Khan, where 'The Word of God and the Works of God cannot contradict each other' (Rahbar 1956) identifies revelations with events in nature, and as a natural result of this many modernist readers of the Qur'an display a negative attitude towards traditionally accepted miracles. Baljon explains that there are three approaches on the matter: i. the complete refusal of the miracles; ii. showing that the miracles are in accord with the laws of nature by using rational explanations and iii. accepting the miracles but only affording them the minimum of importance (Baljon 1961). For instance, some refute the prophetic traditions on the heavenly journey (*isra* and *mi'raj*) because they find it contrary to the laws of nature, while some have perceived it as a mystical inner experience of the Prophet. As for those who accept the miracles, it is said that they do not afford it the highest significance in terms of proof of the status of the Prophet, because the Qur'an is addressing the intelligence of people, and encouraging them to think in a sensible way (Mertoğlu 2001). In fact, many modernist thinkers consider the most important miracles to be the Qur'an and the Prophet themselves, and that there is no need to chase after external signs in order to appreciate Islam. For instance, Muhammed Husayin Haykal states that there is no miracle within the Qur'an to prove the status of the Prophet Muhammed, and that the only miracle sent to him was the Qur'an itself (Siddiqi 1982).

Another important feature of modern reformist reading of the Qur'an is to metaphorize and allegorize the meaning of the various verses in connection with the above point. It has been seen that these types of explanations, which are somewhat relative and arbitrary, are attempting to empty some verses about the unseen and hereafter. Parwiz perceives the verses which are to do with heaven and hell as being about the peace and problems on earth, or as stated in the verse 2:36 'However, Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. Additionally, We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time." Parwiz interprets this *ihbitu* (go down) as the immature (*ghayr mukallaf*) becoming liable (*mukallaf*) is a good illustration of it (Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2004). These are some of the important examples of symbolic readings of some Qur'anic words.

Debates concerning the historical authenticity of the narratives of the Qur'an: The most important representative of this approach is the Egyptian scholar Muhammed Khalaf Allah. He sees the events experienced by the previous Prophets and described in the Qur'an as a series of tales reflected in the heart of the Prophet and says that these parables gave comfort to the Prophet. He also states that these parables are not obliged to be based on the truth (Baljon 1961; Şimşek n.d.). Although this is a marginal approach for many reformists, it can easily be said that this view is supported by a certain group of Muslim scholars. What kind of contribution this understanding made to contemporary Qur'an readings is another matter of discussion? However, it offers very important clues in order to learn the general perception of the Qur'an by those who adopt such approaches.

5. Trials of new hermeneutic approaches

One of the important approaches is the adoption of the historical hermeneutical interpretation of the Qur'an by some Muslim intellectuals, especially influenced by the works of the Biblical hermeneutical studies. Traces of the debates on historicist readings of the Qur'an, which we see more frequently in recent times, are evident in earlier times as well. The matter which is debated concerns in particular the Muslims' point of view of the nature of Qur'an and its binding status. The Shi'ite author Amir Ali states that 'the assumption that all Qur'anic propositions are forced not to change is an unjust intervention both on history and on the development of human intellect' (Ahmed 1990, p. 109), and, in this way, points to the difference between the unchangeable (fixed) provisions of the Qur'an, and those which are changeable (open to new interpretation). Asaf Ali has a clearer approach and goes into making difference between legal order and moral order (Albayrak 2004). There are also some authors, who, while not displaying a systematic approach, use an atomic approach from time to time in order to imply that some Qur'anic verses are no longer valid in the modern world. Halim Sabit defines the law of natural disposition in creation (*qanun al-fitrah*) as changing judgements in the face of time, place and status' (Mertoğlu 2001). Bashir Ahmad Dar observes the verse on the people who are warming towards Islam as a provision or those whose hearts have been reconciled (*mu'allafa al-qulub*) which later loses its meaning (Baljon 1961, p. 61). This type of approach is seen too in Parwiz's explanations about the necessity for men and women to receive equal shares of inheritance (Baljon 1961). Further, some modern reformist evaluated the fact that Arab culture at the time of the revelation was included in Qur'anic narratives within the framework of the relationship of the Qur'an with the past events (occasion of revelations). Thus, for them, this indicates not universality but the locality of some Qur'anic commandments.

6. Taking social realities and contemporary situation into account

In contrast to classical interpretation, there is more attention paid to social, political and actual fields. This is one of the most important aspects of the revivalist reading of the Qur'an. The education of Muslims, the status of women within the community (divorce, family planning, polygyny, the right to inheritance, equality, etc.), types of government for Muslims (many debate the advantages of democracy over monarchy or the separation of the affairs of state from religious affairs), the economy, and in particular the matter of interest

have been dealt with very frequently. It is necessary for the ayahs of the Qur'an to be interpreted again in the light of new socio-political context. For instance, verse 42:38 about the administrative responsibilities of public, where the statement: '... those who deal with matters among themselves in council ...' is said to be pointing to the parliamentary system (Jansen 1993). Further, many believe that modern economic life makes financial interest necessary. Redefinition of the meaning of interest inevitable. Of course, this new conceptualisation brings many other anomalies together. For instance, as regards the interest, the basis for its legitimacy is shown in the verse 2:185, where it says, 'God wants to make things easier for you, not harder ...'. This is somewhat interesting (Baljon 1961; Jansen 1993; Albayrak 2004). Moreover, the modern thinkers can comfortably use numerous verses to validate their own opinions. Within this context, one of the important areas of emphasis of modern scholars is their attempt to actively include Muslims within history. The argument that those that are not of the earth or worldly cannot be present in the hereafter either is repeated frequently. The Qur'an does not prescribe just the ritual prayer, fasting or almsgiving, it also prescribes progress. Additionally, progress is only realised when Muslims become wealthier and more advanced. It is possible to sense progressive and revivalist state of mind in the comment by late Ottoman Sheikh al-Islam Musa Kazım that, '... money is something that enables life to be lived; it is necessary for salvation, in fact it is life itself (*ma bihi'l-hayattır*); and it is necessary to be wealthy ...' (Kazım 1909, p. 52; Mertoğlu 2001, p. 137; Albayrak 2004). Further, playing with semantic definitions of some key terms and concepts, they prioritise the world over the hereafter. For the interpretation of the expression *atqakum* (most devoted, God-conscious) as *as'âkum* (the most hard working one and the new meanings gained by the word *kasb* (earning) (Mertoğlu 2001). The explanations of Parwiz concerning the word *muddathir* (the cloaked one) shed light on the matter too. *Disru'l-mâl* is seen as 'a revenues officer' (Baljon 1961). Thus, Parwiz presents the Prophet not only as the founder of a new religion, but also as the leader of material means, which is the key to worldly prosperity (Baljon 1961, pp. 99–100). He takes out the word in question not only from the textual context, but also from the socio-historical framework and gives it a new meaning. Even if we cannot define this as being totally secularised in the modern sense, these types of approaches are important in a way that they vary from the line taken by very well-established classical scholarship.

The serious criticism of mystic approaches: Especially in classical interpretations, these mystical interpretations are mentioned after the linguistic, historical, and rhetorical interpretation as a richness of the meanings. However, in reformist mind, these comments, as well as the mysticism which they feed off are rejected as causing slackness among Muslims (Albayrak 2004). Disaccord in religion is not a hurdle to equality. There are attempts amongst citizens, and therefore also within the framework of brotherhood to evaluate the subject in some way (Mertoğlu 2001). In other words, Mystics do not fit the active Muslim perception in the minds of reformer scholars.

The modern revivalist interpretation is very selective. That is the reason they have paid great attention to the verses which discuss the provision of social justice, equality (Mertoğlu 2001; Albayrak 2004) friendship, brotherhood/sisterhood, unity, etc.

Another area where the effect of modernism is very clearly (and perhaps over abundantly) seen on modern reformists is the more moderate or humanist approach to the interpretations of the concept of *jihad* (struggle and fighting) within the Qur'an, or the verses where the punishment handed out by God to the unbelievers is discussed. *Jihad* is only to be used as a form of defense; God is not a Creator to be frightened of, He is a creator to befriend. His Grace comes before everything, even Justice. These and other similar types of approaches are emphasized very frequently (Baljon 1961; Ahmed 1990; Albayrak 2004). As an extension of this the distances between the religions have sometimes been decreased, and that shared values (the universality of fundamental moral principles) have been paid attention to, increasing the explanations that these values are the same in every religion, and separating religion and *shariah*.

It displays approaches which are centered on man, which attach a great deal of importance to the free will of human and evaluates him as an individual who is aware of his responsibilities. It will be beneficial here to remember in particular their active approach to the concepts of fate and destiny.

The wealth of meanings of the text in the Qur'an has been widened with psychological comments as well in many revivalist scholars' writing. Sayid Qutub's exegesis is full of this kind of examples which is alien to its classical counterparts (Düven 2020).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

So far, we have tried to summarize the process of modernization in the Islamic world and the attempts of Muslims, who live this process in a more passive structure compared to the West, to get rid of the current situation and crises with special references to the Qur'an. Before discussing the general structure of reformist–revivalist Qur'an readings in the light of the articles about the main paradigms of modern Qur'an reading, it is useful to clarify a few issues. First of all, it should be noted that expressions such as reformist–revivalist and renewal(ist) can be deceptive due to the breadth of their content and application areas. When we take into account not only such statements, but also their fellows (modernist, restorationist, renovationist, liberalist, progressive, rationalist, moderate(ist), secularists, reawaken(ist), revitalization(ist), constructivists etc.), we can witness intersections and divergences in many *tajdid* and reform movements (Haddad 1986; Ali and Orofino 2018, p. 27; Ali 2011). While an individual scholar may exhibit a very traditional attitude on one subject, he may adopt a liberal attitude that goes beyond the text of the Qur'an on another subject. On another issue, it is seen that he prefers to be renewed within the tradition. For this reason, as stated at the beginning of the article, we tried to use the aforementioned expressions in a very general sense. The 'revivalist-reformist' in the title of the article also refers to the dichotomy that expresses these intersections.

The article, which summarizes the views put forward about the new Qur'an readings and exegetical methods in the contemporary period, in the context of modernity, draws attention to the differences between the old and new hermeneutical perceptions, and from time to time pointed to the specific scholars who hold certain opinion. However, since the main target is the search for new methods rather than the commentators, the individual views of revivalist–reformist commentators and scholars have not been systematically analyzed with all their features. Because the aim of the article is the critical re-evaluations of the mindset and thought that reduces the experience of modernism and the social, economic and political problems of Muslims to the problem of understanding the Qur'an. However, it is a fact that the individuals in question also affected some of the masses that came after them. Abduh and the modern Salafi approaches or Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school and many educated Muslim elites are typical examples of this. It should be noted that this interaction was not specifically mentioned in the article. In summary, when we say reformist–renewalist or revivalist, we do not mean groups such as *Tablighi Jamaat* or *Ikhwan Muslimin* that emerged in the contemporary period. As Ali Jan said, the main purpose of these groups is to inculcate Islamic orthodoxy in the masses in the Muslim world as well as in diaspora communities through institutional developments, socio-political activities, missionary preaching, and propagation. Rather, we mean those who seek to get rid of intellectual stagnation, put an end to transmission and narration of the predecessors and develop a new methodology of interpretation of the Qur'an at the hermeneutic level. In other words, we target the group that wants to realize the renewal at the epistemic level first. However, it should not be forgotten that some of the searches for the methods of understanding the Qur'an mentioned in the article are also seen in the conservative or more traditional revivalist movements.

Revivalist–reformist Qur'an readings aim at adapting the verses of the Qur'an to changing conditions and ensuring renewal (*tajdid*). There is no doubt that such Qur'an readings and understanding of exegesis bring a dynamism to Muslims' relationship with the Qur'anic text. However, the most important difference from traditional revivalist ap-

proaches is how much autonomy the unchanging Qur'an expressions are applied to changing conditions. As the article draws attention to the approaches of reformist–revivalists with some extreme examples, it is seen that open-ended and uncontrolled interpretations force the imagination of the classical perception (the Qur'an, sunnah, ijma and qiyas are accepted as the criteria and the Qur'an is the eternal word of Allah and it is always contemporary). In other words, a change in *tajdid* (renewals) is normally a gradual, brings a new perspective to the assimilation of the main Islamic sources (Qur'an, hadith) whereas in reformist–revivalist, it can be fast and sometimes top-down and radical. Revivalist–reformist thinkers include a wide spectrum and although some of them have traditional revivalist reflexes (only rejecting the taqlid, imitation), mostly with the influence of modernity, their conclusions go beyond the borders of the Qur'anic text. This new approach, in which the mind is prioritized, and the human being is put in the center, contains many different colors and tones.

We have observed that there are endless suggestions and practices in the context of progress, modernization and understanding the Qur'an in accordance with the contemporary modern life, of very important concepts such as *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (restitution and reconstruction). It is an indisputable fact that the Islamic civilization, which is a fiqh civilization (Jabiri 1997)⁴ in the traditional sense. By the civilization of fiqh, we mean the more practical aspect, and from one's individual life to social and political life, a Muslim responds to everything s/he encounters in his daily life with an Islamic 'judicial mind', that is, a fiqh coding. Everything he encounters is either halal (lawful) or haram (unlawful) (Aktay 2008, p. 46). However, this understanding has gradually moved away from the classical method in the contemporary period. It can be observed in this context that the hierarchy of evidence in the methodology of jurisprudence is overturned. For example, while the basic evidence of the methodology of jurisprudence such as Sunnah, ijma and qiyas are pushed into the background, controversial secondary evidences among the juristic schools such as maslahat, custom, istihsan, etc., has been brought to the fore (Kavak 2011, p. 161). More interestingly, it is the clearest evidence of paradigmatic shift that the main works within the traditional juristic schools, which are accepted by everyone, have been replaced by names such as Ibn Hazm, Shatibi, Tufi, Ibn Qayyim and Shawqani (Kavak 2011). As stated in the article, while the juristic schools and their views were completely evaporated, a new trend of *ijtihad* centered on the Qur'an but with uncertain methods and open-ended borders began. This new perception of *ijtihad* limited to the Qur'an, on the other hand, is a significant issue in that it shows the profound influence of modernity on the contemporary scholars and reformist–revivalist thoughts. For this perception, which accepts every interpretation of the Qur'an as a contemporary *ijtihad*, sects lose their meaning. We can easily see in some of the leading scholars of this reformist–revivalist an approach that attributes the bill of backwardness to the wrong religious education and perception of religion and sees it as the main obstacle to progress instead of updating classical methodologies. In the search for alternatives, it was first started as the inadequacy of classical Islamic disciplines and resulted in the making of Qur'anic exegesis, which is a secondary discipline compared to Islamic jurisprudence and theology (*fiqh* and *kalam*) as the primary and only discipline. Paçacı explains it eloquently 'As a result of modernity, the relationship among Islamic disciplines in question has deteriorated, and exegesis (*tafsir*), for example, has gained a prescriptive feature, as opposed to its descriptive character in the classical period, under the influence of Protestant scripturalism and textualism. In addition, theology (*kalam*) and especially jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which were the rule-making binding disciplines of the classical period, have largely lost their functions in the contemporary period' (Paçacı 2003, p. 85). In summary, the last two centuries of Muslim renewal and revivalist thoughts and some movements carried out the alleged reforms through the interpretation of the Qur'an. Of course, there are exceptions, but many reformists from Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Abduh (Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism is also included although he did not write a complete commentary) have made exegesis an indispensable part of reform movements. The efforts of these reformist approaches are admirable, as they have been

instrumental in the study of the main source (the Qur'an), which has been neglected for many centuries. In addition, efforts to appropriate the main resource in question should not be overlooked. Perhaps this is the first time in the history of Islam (post-prophetic period) that such a close relationship with the Qur'an is encountered. On the other hand, the fast and cheap spending of 12–13 centuries of Islamic knowledge and intellectual accumulation is an interesting development seen in some of the reform and renewalist movements of the last two centuries.

In this new understanding, where the methodology of the jurisprudence and similar disciplines and their methodologies have almost lost their meaning, the revivalists have mainly concentrated on the Qur'an and exegesis. Representatives of the Qur'an-centered renewal movements reduced all the problems of the Muslim world to the methodology of understanding the Qur'an in particular and Islam in general. It should be also noted that they, as individuals, have high self-confidence on themselves and their new approaches. Some even become obsessed with their methodologies in their re-reading of the Qur'an. Therefore, for a new reform and renewal, the main text, the Qur'an, should be understood with modern methods and new and constant *ijtihad*s that take into account the needs of the contemporary world, independent of traditional knowledge. According to them, it is impossible for a substantial reform or renewal to take place without independent *ijtihad* or more correctly interpretation. However, it is a fact that there are nuances among the modern reformers who embarked on a new *tajdid* and *ijtihad* on the basis of the Qur'an. The tension between the contemporary issues, developments and challenges and classical Muslim intellectual traditions and accumulation, and sometimes the anachronism observed in classical sources seem to have forced these modernist scholars to gradually change their methods in understanding the main sources of Islam while preserving their Islamic identity. For many cautious and traditionally trained scholars and thinkers, the biggest risk here focuses on the degree to which the fine line between the changeable and unchangeable Islamic principles and Qur'anic rulings will be preserved. While the aforementioned reformist–revivalist leaders sometimes exhibited conservative reflexes, sometimes they undermined almost all the unchangeable normative rules in the Qur'an with very advanced liberal proposals. This, on the other hand, was perceived by conservative circles as the secularization of Islam and its contamination. Maybe they helped people get rid of imitation, but at the same time, they could not bring those people to strong faith and strong understanding (*tahqiq*) with the new way of reading they developed. To put it more clearly, while the traditional disciplines, the hierarchy among them and the classical methods they developed were destroyed, a specific and robust methodology could not be developed to be replaced with them. This has left the contemporary Muslim in a purgatory or limbo where countless views are displayed.

Subjectivities, eclecticism, and individualities have affected the bindingness of the revivalist movements specific to the Qur'an in adapting the unchanging provisions to the changing time and space. Although almost all reformists consider common good of the contemporary Muslim (*maslaha*), it is one of the indisputable facts that many subconsciously believe that classical literature is outdated. For this reason, it is clearly seen in the above-discussed features in all articles that an attempt is made to develop a new theology, jurisprudence, and even a mystical imagination by centering discussion on the Qur'an. In addition, as can be seen in the above items and articles, it has become a common view that every single Muslim will contribute to this vision in contemporary reform movements. In other words, every Muslim with a simple education will be able to contribute to these revival movements specific to the Qur'an. In summary, contrary to the classical perception, in this new understanding, which observes everyone as a potential *mujtahid* (authoritative interpreter of the religious law of Islam), every Muslim has a say on various issues with the exception of the rulings regarding creed and worship. In this new understanding of reading the Qur'an and *tajdid*, people are freed from all kinds of traditional juristic or theological school attachment. Of course, in this perception, the important mission given to the reformist–revivalist modern Muslim in order to read the conditions of the day (since they are the imams of their own madhhab now-juristic schools) does not escape the attention

that the distance between the sacred and profane is gradually narrowing. The notion of sacredness, which was the dominant perception in giving judgments in the classical period, turns into daily intellectual exercises in the modern period. In some of these extreme approaches, we observe the prioritizing of worldliness and heavily human-centered Qur'an readings and exegesis. One of the major side effects of such an approach is to witness the evaporation of unchangeable religious rules in the Qur'an. The best examples in this regard are the legal verses and the notion of miracles in the Qur'an in the reading of Amir Ali and Sir Seyyid Ahmed Khan.

This understanding of reformist–revival, which is to abandon imitation in modern Qur'an readings and build a more dynamic Qur'an perception, includes the danger of ignoring all Islamic discipline and hermeneutical tools created by the classical scholars and live long up until the contemporary period. Thus, the text of the Qur'an, which has become passive with the resetting memory, is transformed into a secondary structure that is forced to keep up with the age rather than giving direction to the age. As it is pointed out from time to time, such an approach undermined the classical notion of consensus (*ijma*) and caused polyphony in the modern period. In our opinion, the modern period shows a dialogue of discord and incoherence (individualistic) in contrast to the classical (even if it contains different sounds) symphony and harmony. In Egypt, the Indian subcontinent, and elsewhere, countless views and approaches with independent and divergent priorities have been put forward in the name of re-reading of the Qur'an in modern context and religious renewal, some negating others, while others almost completely ignoring distinctively Islamic identity. Similarly, they have also imposed their non-Qur'anic proposals and approaches on the Qur'an while ignoring the explicit ruling (*hukm*) of the Qur'an. To do so, they sometimes manipulate Qur'anic evidence.⁵ This is the main dilemma of the modernist and reformist–revivalist reading of the Qur'anic text. Most interestingly, as with the Christian reformation, the longing for a Muslim version of Martin Luther is one of the prominent phenomena in many *tajdid* movements, *Sola Qur'anicus*.

While the inadequacy of the classical Islamic disciplines that have been created in the contemporary perception of *tajdid* and *ijtihad* has been highly emphasized, the issue of how these authors will carry out the reforms that concern everyone in the modern period has remained rather obscure. In the contemporary period, many classical hermeneutical devices such as abrogation, reports of occasion of revelations, clear and ambiguous verses, *israiliyyat* reports (Biblical materials in the Qur'anic exegesis), the notion of inimitability (*I'jaz al-qur'an*), disciplines such as *usul al-fiqh* (methodology of jurisprudence), *hadith* (prophetic traditions), etc., are almost completely ignored. This kind of methodical blindness has caused not only the shallowness of the reforms but also the sterilization of the rich Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, in modern times, the rich tradition of exegesis has seriously lost blood in terms of content. However, while the reformists' emphasis on modern science and reason brings dynamism to the new approaches to some extent, it is seen that the balance is lost from time to time and the scripture that God sent as a guide has been transformed into a science book or manual for political constitution. While there are those who balance this issue in the reformist–revivalist scholars, there are also those who go to the extreme and draw attention with very absurd comments.

Finally, a more peaceful perception of religion is observed among the reformist thinkers of the Islamic world, which was defeated and withdrawn against the West in the last two centuries. We also witness interesting socio-psychological analyzes in these approaches that are more inclusive, world-peace-centered, environmentally friendly and human-well-being-prioritizing. Such Qur'an readings, which we do not see in classical *tafsir* (exegesis), increase gradually in the modern period are important issues in terms of showing that the reformists take the conditions of the day very seriously. In addition, it is worthy of attention that it carries not only exegesis, but also the Islamic belief to daily events in order to raise practical and responsible individuals. As a result, many reformist–revivalists, who sought a way out under the intense pressure of modernity, tried to bring dynamism to the current situation of Muslims by putting the Qur'an in the center. Sometimes, even

with good intentions, they might be destructive, and sometimes they breathe new life into believing people. Especially, the reformist–revivalist scholars of the 20th century to some extent preferred to ignore the rich Islamic disciplines’ knowledge rather than revise it.

In the real sense, revival and renewal should be a phenomenon to be built on Muslim intellectual accumulation. Otherwise, it is certain that the renewal to be conducted by demolishing or denying the major devices of the exegetical traditions (such as occasion of revelations, the notion of abrogation, importance of the Qur’anic inimitability, etc.) will come with different problems. We are of the opinion that the reformist–revivalist scholars’ renewal to be carried out with interdisciplinary revision of Islamic intellectual tradition rather than only imported phenomena might be more acceptable and longer lasting than mere intellectual exercises. The last two centuries of reforms among Muslims are the best witnesses of this.

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Notes

- ¹ The data collected concerning the books read in this period are important also in terms of showing the point of view of the community to religion. More than 70% were made up of novels; 10% of history, biographies and travel and less than 1% of religious books (Outram 1997, p. 21).
- ² As a result of the earthquake in Lisbon/Portugal in 1755, 10.000 people lost their lives and the city was reduced to ruins. Voltaire asked, ‘How can we relate this to the idea of the existence of a merciful Creator’, blaming God for the event. (Outram 1997, p. 43)
- ³ According to Jencks the door to pluralism has been opened as a result of postmodernism and history has been allowed inside, as well as tradition, rhetoric, iconography, colour, convention, statues, and even the decoration that we were so scared of. See (Zeka 1994, p. 15).
- ⁴ Jabiri says ‘how we say Greek civilization is a “civilization of philosophy” and contemporary European civilization is a “Science and Technology Civilization”, similarly we can say that the Islamic civilization is a fiqh civilization’ (Jabiri 1997, p. 133).
- ⁵ The claim that there are three prayers in the Qur’an is a good illustration of this. However, from the point of view of the Qur’an, the night prayer (*tahajjud*) seems obligatory. Thus, if we leave aside the practice in the Sunnah and community, it is possible to increase the Quranic daily prayer times to six.

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