

Fethullah Gulen's Methodology of Interpreting Quran

Faruk Tuncer

This paper will examine how F. Gulen perceives and describes Quran as a thinker, which methodology he uses and give examples from his understanding of interpretation demonstrating his place in Quranic sciences. It should be mentioned in advance that Gulen's interpretation shows parallel lines with the earlier interpreters of Quran. Nevertheless, it should also be expressed that he differs from them, especially in terms of his explaining today's problems in the light of Quran verses and bringing up new dimensions and authentic ideas. This examination is about his difference in the method and style that he first improved and then applied while interpreting Quran verses as a thinker. In fact, the aim of this essay is to broaden this statement.

In this essay, F. Gulen's views on Quran and interpretation will be examined with the help of his published works. It should be noted that since all of Gulen's published works are gathered from his articles that are published in magazines and his speeches, it is hard to get his point exactly about a particular issue. Thus there will be a missing part in this essay. Nevertheless, among his almost 70 published works, one of them is solely about Quran methodology: "Fatiha Uzerine Mulahazalar". This book will be our starting point. His work "Kurandan Idrake Yansiyenlar" also includes valuable information about interpretation. Since we will focus on his methodology Fatiha Uzerine Mulahazalar has much more important information. Nonetheless, we will benefit from other works as well that are related.

Indeed, Fatiha Uzerine Mulahazalar is Gulen's only work solely dedicated to surah interpretation. In the beginning of the book, Quran, its definition, the idea of the Quran as a miracle, as well as the interpretation of the verses that are related to scientific developments are given in detail. Before moving to the Surah of Fatiha, Euzu Besmele is explained in 50 pages and some new and authentic ideas and views which do not exist in classical interpretation books are developed. Finally, Surah of Fatiha is issued. His explanation and interpretation of the Surah of Fatiha, which is one of the short surahs in the Quran, in terms of the relation between verses and surahs are the outcome of his approach towards Quran. There is also information about the topic under the heading of fikih orders. This information is plain but authentic.

Description and Definition of Quran

Let us examine how Gulen describes and defines Quran:

Quran is a translation of this universe as a book. Yes, the universe is a book. It is needed for a reader to read this book, which is well-organized with all of its verses and pages. The reader is human and the interpretation of this book is Quran. Allah has sent Quran as a translation of the universe to the human beings who can not grasp the universe's immense, deep meaning and its huge vision. This meaning that we cannot easily understand by looking at the big pages and phrases of the universe, we can see at a first glance in the Quran, the Miraculous. This is a favor for the human beings. Allah is the one to make the universe book speak. As the others' thoughts upon the universe would be wrong, it is also the same with humans. The Universe is the universe of Allah, Quran is the speech of Allah and humans are the slaves of Allah. Allah is the one to establish the interrelation between these three."¹³⁵

It can be seen that Gulen's understanding of Quran is rather vivid and related with life.¹³⁶ Instead of describing only the Quran, he attempts to demonstrate the interrelation of humanity, the universe and Allah.¹³⁷ As it can be understood from the definition, his interpretation of Quran is based on these three. He is slightly different from the early Quran interpreters. He refers to dictionary interpretation from time to time but it is rare. His way of interpreting verses is a reflection of the co-usage of these three principles. Gulen focuses on the necessity of an interpretation being human-centered because of the desperate need for a Quran interpretation.¹³⁸

Gulen takes these three as a starting point in evaluating history and our contemporary age. According to Gulen, there have been many disasters in terms of individuals and nations when Quran, universe and human are separated from each other, whereas peace and silence have been established when these three were close.¹³⁹ He states about their relation in terms of science that: "Sciences having just avoided crawling try to stand up. Up to now may be just a few of the theories come up as a truth and

¹³⁵ Fatih Üzerine Mülâhazalar, p. 25

¹³⁶ One of the important thing in interpretation of Qur'an is that its "dynamic interpretation". Seyyid Kutub, Mevdudi and others such them see that as an essential element in their commentaries. . Qur'an is not away from the life and activities in life. It is an addressing which requires implementation. Qur'an was revealed gradually within a harmony with life and activities, where it shapes the life and the activities in life. (*Kur'andan İdrake Yansıyanlar*, p. 7)

¹³⁷ Fatih Üzerine Mülâhazalar., p.23-25

¹³⁸ Zaman, Akademi, 26 February 1997.

¹³⁹ İnançın Gölgesinde, 2, 139

match with Quran. In the future, with the help of the improvements, it will be approached to the truths of Quran and the science facts will find a place for themselves in Quran and will remain as truths. Today, far way galaxies we are talking about may be that far from truth. But may be by the time we get nearer to them, our information and words about them will be nearer to truth and then will remain forever. Thus by the time sciences come closer to facts and to Quran, there will come up everlasting truths and Quran will be the real speaker. By that time, human will speak no more about theories but truths and these will be verses about creation. At that point Quran, human and universe who seem to be at three different directions or without knowing each other will be seen that they basically tell about the same truths and call out their names. Yes, that day, the one who understands the universe will get the world and the one who understands Quran will get afterlife and the one who holds the two will get both world and afterlife."¹⁴⁰

Another point that Gulen sees as important in perceiving and interpreting Quran is co-existence of heart and soul. According to Gulen, the only way to enter the magical world of Quran is to unite heart and soul in interpretation of Quran. Thus, he states insistently that psychological interpretation of Quran is so important, particularly since it has not been done. Although a contemporary interpreter Seyyid Kutub has psychological analysis in his interpretation, Gulen thinks that there is not any psychological interpretation of Quran al-Kerim as a whole.¹⁴¹

His Style and Methodology

Gulen's methodology is rather plain and simple. According to the science of interpretation, to be able to understand and interpret Quran truly, there are some rules. Gulen diminishes the long rules to a minimum. First of all, he states one must know the language of the Quran, Arabic, thoroughly. Second, one must read Quran constantly as if it is brought to one's self to know prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h), to know sciences like Esbab-I Nuzul and Usul-u Tefsir.

According to Gulen, no matter what the time period is, an interpreter makes the biggest mistake if he/she says that "the meaning of this verse is this" despite constantly developing sciences. Therefore, it is better to interpret the verses like "it can mean this or it may mean that".¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ İnancın Gölgesinde, 2, 139

¹⁴¹ Fasıldan Fasıla 1: 195

¹⁴² Fasıldan Fasıla 4, 82-83

There are two important aspects of Gulen's understanding Quran and methodology. One of them is "Everything either wet or dry exists in Quran al-Kerim, and the other is to keep a balance in explaining all kinds of matters with Quran verses."¹⁴³

In the light of these two principles, we can list the characteristics of Gulen's interpretation of Quran under 4 main headings.

1. Quran as a miracle and Quran's telling many things with less words.
2. Contextuality among verses
3. Interrelation between modern sciences and Quran verses
4. New and authentic views in the interpretation of Quran

Now we will broaden these.

1. Quran as a miracle and Quran's telling many things with less words:

Gulen focuses on the miracle aspect of Quran and examines this from different points of view.¹⁴⁴ In the articles he writes and in his speeches about Quran, he puts forward that it does not resemble any book in terms of language and expressions. Moreover, he states that Quran is unique in terms of style, meaning and content.

There are certain differences between Quran's way of expressing and Prophet Muhammed's way of expressing.

Poetry was central to way of life at the place and time the Quran was revealed. The mystical and magical expressions of Quran sounded like neither the poems nor sonnets of the time; however it astounded everyone with its poetic originality.

There may not be a single book that can be read without getting bored except Quran. Quran is read over and over again, either in prayers or in other ways but no one ever gets bored.

¹⁴³ Zaman, 4 October 1999

¹⁴⁴ Some of the verses, which Gülen mentions in the context of its being a miracle; Ankebut.29.48; Bakara. 23; Yunus.38; Nisa. 82; Ankebut.48; Hakka.44-46.

There has never been a book which people from all ages and from every status can understand and derive meaning either ignorant or educated, drop-out or undergraduate, physician or shepherd. Quran is book that provides this.

Quran's uniqueness is obvious in that it is explaining humanity from all aspects either material or spiritual, bringing solutions to all social, economic, political and governmental problems and including principles for happiness in the afterlife together with happiness in the world, satisfaction of the mind together with satisfaction of the soul.

Quran uses exact expressions about Genesis and the afterlife, creation of the human and his future life. This is "a sign for its not being a human work".

Quran brings principles to all aspects of life in terms of society, economy, psychology, politics, military, medicine, physics and biology, and it states the basic truths of these aspects and tells about their past and future.

Quran's expressions about creation, giving life and taking it away are extraordinary. The ones about life are especially powerful. What kind of a writer threatens or makes himself threaten even for another one?

In the Quran, it is stated that Prophet Muhammed(p.b.u.h) is illiterate and neither has read a book nor written a book¹⁴⁵ and that he does not know about past events.¹⁴⁶

Every writer produces his/her book in the very moment of high concentration and mentions about the events that makes him sad or happy. However in the Quran, there is no mention of Hadija who is Prophet Muhammed's sorrow sharer or of Ebu Talib's death. There is no mention of the boycott towards Hashimis or of the assassination of Prophet Muhammed's uncle, Hamza.¹⁴⁷

Except these views about Quran's being a miracle, we see that Gulen mentions in his other works and in the answers to the questions that are asked to him about Quran's being sent, his defense of the Quran as a miracle.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ankebût, 29/48

¹⁴⁶ Âl-i İmran, 3/44, Hûd,11/49, Kasas, 28/44

¹⁴⁷ İnançın Gölgesinde, 2 , 99-115

¹⁴⁸ For more information see: İnançın Gölgesinde 2: 116-142; *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* 2: 1-8, 9-25; *Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler* 1: 7-16; *Zaman*, Akademi sayfası, 13 Mayıs 1998 ve 12 Nisan 1999; *Zaman*,

Here are two examples of his interpretation that shows Quran's beauty to help our understanding.

Example 1:

53rd verse of Surah of Fussilet is among the verses that he uses to point to the beautiful expressions of Quran: *"Soon we will show them our signs both in their regions of the world and in their own souls until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?"*

He states that in the interpretation of this verse: "It is a matter of fact that, by the time scientific facts that are sown into the universe by Allah are understood and summits of the hills are reached, Quran will be younger and will be refreshed which had more water, heat and light and will distribute its light to the minds and hearts with its full brightness. Who knows what truths and

unknowns it will serve to people...! "Soon we will show them our signs both in their regions of the world and in their own souls until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?" (Fussilet 41/53). Yes, in the Arabic verse, words like "senuri" are used that tell the Companions that " You do not know about many of our verses, but we will show you later" and "hum" is for "not you but others, in the future" and "yetebeyene" is for "may be not soon but with the help of the research that are made one after another will show that Quran is the Truth".¹⁴⁹

Example 2:

"Those whom Allah willeth to guide, he openeth their breast to Islam those whom he willeth to leave straying he maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies: thus doth Allah keep the penalty on those who refuse to believe."¹⁵⁰

What kind of a trouble does an unbeliever get? Quran describes this as follows: "He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies."

Akademi sayfası 28 Ağustos 2000; *Zaman*, Akademi sayfası 4 Ekim 1999; *Fasıldan Fasıla 2*: 173-175; *Fatiha Üzerine Mülahazalar*, 50-51, 236-237; *Kur'an'dan İdrake Yansıyanlar*, 1:29.

¹⁴⁹ İnancın Gölgesinde, 2, 138

¹⁵⁰ Surah Enam; 125

There is a simile in the verse. It is necessary for a resembled to be clearer than the ressembler itself. When we tell about the clearance of the weather, it means something to the hearer if we say something like 'it looks like the atmosphere of Mars'. We can tell something to our hearer by using facts they have previous experience or knowledge regarding..

Here Quran resembles breast's being closed to something and we see Quran uses a scientific fact.

Quran points out three issues:

First, the word sky is used.

Secondly, it is a characteristic of the word 'yessed' to mean a trouble. Thirdly, the verse has in itself breast's being close when going up the sky.

There was not a single person to know that the amount of oxygen is low when going up towards the sky before the 14th century. This could only be known in the 20th century with the help of technical possibilities and of the experiments like sending balloons and airplanes to the sky.

Quran al-Kerim tells us the fact that oxygen amount decreases on going up the sky by making a good resemblance to an unbelievers breast.

In this matter, Quran gives priority to the suffocation of today's people and calls for us. Because this fact is only something that 21st century person can understand and so it means that close breast is like the trouble one experience when going up the sky.¹⁵¹

2. Context

Context means to use words in a text in relation with other parts of a sentence. Quran has context within all surahs and verses. Quran looks as if it is sent for once and for one matter only.¹⁵² Therefore one should consider this while interpreting. An issue in the Quran is examined from different aspects. The same issue is analyzed from different perspectives in different places.

A surah ends as it started. Quran wants the reader to see this wholeness in its style. Therefore context is a branch of science that shows this unity within verses and surahs.¹⁵³ Thus Gulen states that "Quran

¹⁵¹ Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar, p. 29-30

¹⁵² Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar, 96

¹⁵³ Dr. Faruk Tuncer, Kur'an Surelerindeki Eşsiz Ahenk, Işık Yayınları, 2003, İstanbul, p. 198

should be studied from beginning to end and be considered as a whole. It cannot be understood with a verse from here, another from there.¹⁵⁴

According to Gulen, Quran has an immense interrelation among verses and surahs.¹⁵⁵ He points out how this changes from time to time depending on the importance of the matter. He gives such importance to this issue that while interpreting surah of Fatiha he considers this aspect.¹⁵⁶ That is, he relates a verse with the previous and latter. In other words, a surah has context. In order to grasp the meaning of Quran al-Kerim, Gulen proposes to understand the meaning of the words, sub-meanings, the issues that relate to them and the aspects they show. He states that when these are known each verse of Quran starts to twinkle to the reader as a system or star in the sky. He discusses this in another instance: "For example, if you see and introduce Prophet Moses (p.b.u.h) as an ancient prophet in pages of Quran, you can not benefit much. What must be done is to bring him to our age and feel him among ourselves. Yes, while interpreting Quran, we should keep in mind that each word appeals both to ourselves and to our age and should get rid of the alienation between us and Quran which will make changes like huge waves. Yes, while reading Quran if we can not make connections between our time and the time of the event took place, we can not understand it in its own depths. As it is seen, his methodology about context has a different approach towards not only what is within verses but also relating the past with the future."¹⁵⁷

3. His understanding of scientific interpretation:

Scientific interpretation means that Quran covers all sciences. That is, it contains topics not only religious but also diverse topics like physics, chemistry, astronomy, biology and medicine.¹⁵⁸

Indeed, this inclination is rather contemporary. Although there have been interpreters who tend to explain scientific issues in the verses and to demonstrate how various sciences are present in the, this approach has accelerated in the 20th century with the help of science and technology.

The existence of the information of canon law, Quran, Sufism, history and also medicine, astronomy, geology, physical and psychological information led many scientists to study and interpret Quran.

¹⁵⁴ Fasil Fasıla, 2: 170

¹⁵⁵ Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar, p. 200

¹⁵⁶ Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar, p. 99-237

¹⁵⁷ Fasıldan Fasıla 1, p.188

¹⁵⁸ Suat Yıldırım, Kur'an-ı Kerim ve Fenni Keşifler, Ankara, 1990, p.7; Davut Aydın, Tefsir, Tarihi, Çeşitleri ve Konulu Tefsir, s. 95, Işık Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004.

There is no doubt that scientific interpretation faced criticisms. In this frame the ones who agree with the scientific interpretation may sometimes tend to see Quran as a main source of everything whereas those who disagree tend to dismiss all evidence of science in Quran, even reasonable and balanced insights. Gulen is in the middle of these two sides. He sees both separating science from Quran and religion as well as taking Quran as a book of physics, chemistry, medicine, mathematics and astronomy as two kinds of exaggeration. His ideas about this topic are as follows:

“There is everything in Quran; but as much as there should be. What is the most important issue? Oneness of God, Priesthood, Resurrection, Being a Slave of Allah, to win the everlasting happiness and to be saved from torture. Moreover, some technological improvements which will arise in some other time period are mentioned in Quran.

There is everything in Quran but everybody can not get everything in it. However they are like signs and clue which experts can find out with studying, thinking on it and inspiration.

There is everything in Quran but they are not there for their own sake but for the sake of showing Allah’s glory.

Although Quran is not a book of physics, astronomy or medicine, they and the issues related to them will find their places in Quran with the help of all technical aids sometimes as signs and sometimes as formulas.¹⁵⁹

Gulen’s answer to the ones who ask why Quran does not mention scientific improvements in detail is “sciences resemble human beings in the sense that they have

periods like birth, infancy, crawling, childhood, teenage hood and maturity. Which period can we expect Quran to mention?¹⁶⁰

Gulen gives an answer to the opposite view. He states that the ones who do not see any necessity of Quran’s mentioning sciences such as physics, chemistry and medicine that Quran mentions everything as much as their value and meaning: “Quran serves matters to the people of all ages, all settings, all status as digestive compromises by touching upon the scientific facts and using metaphors, similes, personifications without exaggeration”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ İnancın Gölgesinde 2, p. 118-119

¹⁶⁰ İnancın Gölgesinde 2, p. 121

¹⁶¹ Yeni Ümit, Kur’an-ı Kerim ve İlmi Hakikatler,1992; 16, p.2-6.

Solution for Scientific Interpretation

This kind of interpretation which was popular in the beginning of 20th century confuses the minds of Muslims. Therefore Gulen proposes a solution in between the two views. It is united in one point: "to keep balance in interpreting scientific facts with related Quranic verses."¹⁶²

According to Gulen, universal statements of Quran should be examined in the face of constantly changing and improving sciences as follows:

1. We should consider the contribution of scientific facts to Quran but not the Quran's to scientific facts.
2. We should trace scientific improvements and inventions after Quran
3. We should place Quran as a mirror before scientific interpretation.¹⁶³
4. The interpreter of Quran should have a broad objective perspective.¹⁶⁴

Gulen does not approve of explaining Islamic matters towards the impressive superiority of science and technique. The critics of science interpretation see it as a weakness and as forcing Quran to their own age's subjects. Gulen states that "...The readers of the works which have been written in the light of that age's science and culture have been doubtful about them. Especially the works which examine some theories for real and try to apply these to Quran had been destroying and humiliating Quran."¹⁶⁵

Gulen accepts the critics' points, but at the same time he focuses on the necessity for scientific interpretation. It is seen many times that Gulen makes use of this style in interpreting verses.

An example for scientific interpretation:

*"And verily in cattle too will ye find an instructive sign. From what is within their bodies, between excretions and blood, we produce, for your drink, milk pure and agreeable to those who drink it."*¹⁶⁶

The nutrition that human beings consume contain the body's necessities like protein, vitamins, calcium, iron, copper and so on. On the occasion that one of them is missing, some problems occur. When it is needed, Allah creates milk in the bodies of the creatures from the nutrients they ingest. Some of the

¹⁶² Fasıldan Fasıla 1,189

¹⁶³ İnancın Gölgesinde 2, p. 133

¹⁶⁴ A.Getirdiği Tereddütler 1, p. 11

¹⁶⁵ Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler 3, 130-131

¹⁶⁶ Surah Nahl, 66

things that human beings consume dissolve in the mouth, some in stomach and mostly in the intestines. After they are sucked from capillaries in the intestine, there occurs a second change when they stop by the milk-makers in the blood. Some of the materials go to the necessary parts in the body and are distributed to cells, some of them become milk in milk-makers. Then this milk goes to the breasts of mammals, and we get energy and protein from this milk.

This point that we have touched upon briefly is a matter that science accepts. Here are the some other verses of Quran that fall under the same view:

"In cattle, in their lives, feedings will ye find instructive signs." "We produce within themselves some of them for you not all." Quran tells us how the things within them are produced:

Here the word 'beyn' means between two things. In Arabic, if there are not two things, the word beyn is not used. Here there are two items. One of them is excretions and the other is milk. We make the first distinction between blood and excretions and the second from blood. First of all, nutritions are sucked by intestines and enter inside. Secondly, purification is done in blood cells. In the end there comes pure and clear milk.

In fact excretions annoy human beings. Therefore Quran uses the word 'halisan' to point that it comes out from blood and the word 'saigan lissaribin' to erase the idea that it troubles the throat. Milk comes out among excretions and blood but shows the characteristics of neither blood nor excretions.

Everyone, either a believer or an unbeliever or a hypocrite agree on the idea that he was illiterate. So we hear a verse from that kind of a person and we see some scientific facts that can only be understood after 14 centuries with studies and x-rays. This very fact clearly shows that Quran is divine and spiritual. It is possible to derive this meaning even from the shortest interpretations.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ For more examples see: Fussilet, 41/53; (Â-i İmrân, 3/190; En'âm, 6/125; Zâriyat, 51/49; Sebe', 34/3; *Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar*, 25-40. Kur'andan İdrake Yansıyanlar, p. 244-245

Two Examples for New and Authentic Interpretation Approaches:

Example -1:

"Furthermore I call to witness the setting of the stars. And that is indeed a mighty adjuration if you but knew, that this is indeed a Quran most honourable"¹⁶⁸

The most important characteristics of Gulen's interpretation methodology is his having new expansions besides his views benefiting from classical interpretation. The best example for this is his interpretation of the phrase of "mevakiun nucum" which is in the verse above. Here he proposes all possible aspects in terms of interpretation. His interpretation as relating to stars is of the brightest, being the Prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h), the other stars being the other prophets, and even believers' clean faces (p.b.u.h), other prophets, stars, verses' being orders, even believers' clean faces, being a locality for Quranic stars. He touches upon another aspect: "Oh you whose heart is darkened! Allah knows this with His eternal knowledge and he uses sacraments on telling something. So one should be ashamed, sweat, shake and shiver. His God tells him over and over again to make you accept that Quran is a glorious book so He starts His words with a big sacrament". He finishes the interpretation of this verse after examining it in 11 points and different aspects: "For all these meanings and may be for others that we did not know Allah gives sacraments to stars. He himself tells us that it is a big sacrament. We believe in the secrets that we can not know as much as the ones we know and feel the expression with all our hearts that "Should you know, this is a big sacrament"¹⁶⁹

Example – 2:

Some of the contemporary interpreters understood the phrase 'dabbetul ard' in the 72nd verse of Surah of Neml as AIDS. Here is Gulen's point of view on 'dabbetul ard' and AIDS:

"Today, AIDS is being resembled to 'dabbetul ard' in Quran. Quran says that 'dabbetul ard' will come out when Allah wills and it is understood from the context that it is one of the signs of apocalypse. It is told in Quran that when it comes out belief will be wiped out from earth' unbelief will be immense...that is, when 'dabbetul ard' comes out the world will be complete its function and believers will not be sincere. Thus, in the light of this verse and related hadith, we will try to find an answer to the question of can AIDS be a 'dabbetul ard'?"

¹⁶⁸ Surah Vâkıa, 56/75-77

¹⁶⁹ Kur'andan İdrake Yansıyanlar, s. s. 244-245

Before everything it is possible to say that 'dabbetul ard' will definitely come out and may be in various sizes like a virus or a big animal.

Truly, 'dabbetul ard' may be a virus that spreads epidemic illness among people but it cannot be said that it will definitely be AIDS. One could also have argued that it was another illness such as malaria, Black Death or tuberculosis, as they seemed devastating and without cure during their outbreak. It is also possible to call the illnesses as 'dabbetul ard' after the arrival of Messiah. There have been many illnesses that we could not discover the reason for despite many medical improvements. For example, anarchy in the blood cells called cancer. If we call AIDS as 'dabbetul ard' as it is cureless, cancer is also. It should be wrong to make a claim that there will not be a cure in the future. It is also against to the hadith of the Prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h), which informs us that there is always a cure for everything but old age and death.

Therefore, resembling 'dabbetul ard' to AIDS or to any other illness will oppose to the broad, immense, objective characteristic of Quran and narrow the meaning.

Statements of Quran al-Kerim and hadith do not need aid or support. They are bright enough to be perceived in a man's heart even if they cannot be seen. These kinds of results and arguments can just be brooms to clean the dust and soil in our minds and also they are too weak to shoulder these facts.

In Addition, making a resemblance to AIDS or to another disease is like a blow to our hopes. It is stated in the verse that there would be silence and withdrawal when 'dabbetul ard' comes out. In that sense we expect 'dabbetul ard' in dark times, that apocalypse will explode on the heads of unbelievers. So in order to keep balance in the matter of 'dabbetul ard' we can say that: AIDS like any other dangerous disease can be a branch of 'dabbetul ard'. Yes, AIDS is one of the items that will serve for it. But we cannot say that 'dabbetul ard' is definitely AIDS.

Here is another aspect: currently, technology has developed so much that it has penetrated everywhere, from factories to watches, even humans are starting to be replaced by robots in some spheres. Technology owners immediately use their inventions against humanity and to destroy it. So who cannot tell that maybe one day robots will become serial killers or become principal of institutes? Who cannot claim that robots will become 'dabbetul ard' that use space technology and communicate with each other via telepathy?

There was once a science fiction movie about 13-14 scientist placing micro people into a man's body to remove the damage in his brain. This kind of thought reminds us of the hadith that Satan travels in the blood of the vessels of a human. Today scientists are trying to invent tiny equipment to raise humans

in tubes, fertilize sperms, enter into the vessels, to open the congested parts and to perform all kinds of operations. Maybe in the future these kinds of operations will lead people to say that "I made up a human being" and apocalypse will occur. Now, can someone disagree with the idea that they cannot be 'dabbetul ard'? What will our answers be if someone views communism as the biggest 'dabbetul ard'? Thus how can we name such a broad issue as this or that?¹⁷⁰

Other Characteristics in His Interpretation and Style:

Gulen's understanding of Quran and interpreting it has some more characteristics. They are too broad to mention in this study. However in this section we will point out some others.

Reading Quran: Gulen emphasizes reading Quran. In this frame he makes very assertive statements such as: "Quran is like a musical as a whole". One of the important dynamics in understanding Quran is reading it according to a specific reading. Gulen who believes that the existence of different reading styles is one of the richnesses of Quran brings another point of view. He stresses the importance of reading Quran. For example, the reader should reflect the determined mind and worried psychology of Prophet Joseph in front of the unbelievers and Zeliha¹⁷¹. He gives such important to reading that unlike other interpreters he sees it as equal to Esbab-I Nuzul. "Allah's messenger advices reading Quran in a soft, sweet voice and with good intention so that it helps people to love it. Quran is sent in sorrow should be read with an upset heart."

On the other hand, he touches upon the other kinds reading Quran. Gulen even states that these differences in reading contribute to the beauty of both Quran and interpretation of it.¹⁷²

Esbab-i Nuzul (happenings that made verses come): Esbab-i Nuzul is about the background of each verse, the reason of their coming. Some of the verses of Quran had come because of some certain reasons. Interpreters have examined this under the heading of Esbab-i Nuzul. This is one of the interpretation methods that Gulen uses frequently. His ideas about Esbab-i Nuzul are as follows:

"There are 15 verses in Quran that includes the questions that are asked to Prophet Muhammed and the answers that starts with the word (gul) which means tell. It is obvious that Allah answers them.

¹⁷⁰ İnancın Gölgesinde, 2, p.133-139

¹⁷¹ Fasıldan Fasila 3, p. 177

¹⁷² Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhazalar, p.166, 200

Because it is impossible for a person to answer all questions properly and to send a verse that contains the best and the beneficial answer. It was the same when he was asked about spirit.¹⁷³

“Esbab-i Nuzul served as an encyclopedia in understanding the events. If one gives attention, it is seen that the events that made the verses come are shocking. Therefore the orders that come afterwards are not easily forgotten like the events. That may be one of the wisdoms of sending reasons.¹⁷⁴

Esbab-i Nuzul are similar to the kind of events that may happen in all ages. Thus with the help of Esbab-i Nuzul, rules and principles can be established all over the world.

Quranic Stories: “Which aspect should we look Quranic stories from? What should we consider in evaluating them? Quran is humanity’s light, guide, spirit and tale forever. Thus everything in Quran appeals to humanity. If we look at the stories in Quran from this aspect, it is certain that there are and will be lessons which can take. So it is one of the main reasons of Quranic stories. However it should not be forgotten that stories depend on time, setting, person and the society. To be able to get lesson from them, we should keep in mind these 4 elements. Or else we get wrong conclusions. I want to emphasize a characteristic of Quran: Quran uses such a style of speech that one thinks that he is the one to addresses and behave so. That is, he can take the message without thinking about time, setting or person. At the same time it is obvious that it is not something that everybody can do easily.”
“However these stories need to be emphasized. They are not symbols like some people think.¹⁷⁵

They are true events and Quran just narrates. Secondly Allah makes us see the tip if orders that will continue until apocalypse. That is, these kinds of events had been started with Adam and will continue until there is one person left on the world. In fact if we look at the material that Quran uses, we see that they do not belong to any time or place.”¹⁷⁶

Interpretation of Quran with the help of Sunnah and Companions: there has always been a necessity for sunnah in order to be able to interpret the orders in Quran. Since the beginning of Quran, sunnah has been second source of Islam.¹⁷⁷ Therefore to understand Quran one should know sunnah

¹⁷³ İnancın Gölgesinde 2, p. 113

¹⁷⁴ Fasıldan Fasıla 1: 183

¹⁷⁵ Prizma 3: 96-98; Kur’an’dan İdrake Yansıyanlar, 2:331-332

¹⁷⁶ Kur’an’dan İdrake Yansıyanlar, p. 7

¹⁷⁷ İsmail Cerrahoğlu. Tefsir Tarihi. V.II. p. 46

well. Sunnah means the application of Quran into life. So the culture of Quran cannot be understood without knowing it.¹⁷⁸

Sunnah and Prophet Muhammed (p.b.u.h.) are the first elements of Gulen's Quran methodology. On explaining and interpreting each verse, he gives examples from both hadith and sunnah. He summarizes his ideas as follows: "Quran's making sense to us depends on perceiving it with companions' understanding, philosophy and cognition. Prophet Muhammed(p.b.u.h.) is the first example in interpretation. Thus first of all, one should look for his life, then should apply to companions, lastly should apply to Quran and sunnah thinking that human thought and criticism are important. In his interpretation, Gulen makes many references to the interpretation of Quran in terms of sunnah, Companions, Tabiin that is called report interpretation. His interpretation style is closer to perception interpretation because he derives interesting meanings in interpreting verses.

Sacraments in Quran: there are sacraments upon sun, moon, olive, fig and the Urus. He states that "There are many sacraments like this in Quran. Allah swears sometimes on the stars, sun or the whole sky and sometimes on day and night. There is no doubt that these sacraments bear lots of secrets and wisdoms."¹⁷⁹

Interpretation of Personification Verses: Personification verses focus on the meanings of attributions of Allah. Expressions like "hand of Allah" or "face of Allah" are examples of these verses. Gulen points out in this matter that "they mean the same thing for Allah as an attribution proper for His own glory and sacredness. In a sense, hand is a symbol of power and strength. Face shows the self with all characteristics. The meaning of face always comes first in dressing up"¹⁸⁰

Quran's was being sent step by step: Quran had not been sent as a whole and at once. It took 23 years. Issues like change in the Kiblah and the prohibition of alcoholic drinks are explained with its being step by step.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Fasıldan Fasıla 2: 170

¹⁷⁹ Kur'an'dan İdrake Yansıyanlar. 2: 363-365

¹⁸⁰ Ali Ünali Bir Portre Denemesi, p. 96-97,130

¹⁸¹ Asrın Getirdiği Tereddütler 2, 115-121

Attitude towards old, wrong stories: Here Gulen gives the example of Surah of Neml, which means Ant. For example, it can be told about the recent scientific discoveries about the ant and the importance of surah's beginning with certain letters. However if one starts telling the story of yellow ant, red ant verses are left up in the air. In short, we must be austere about verses.¹⁸²

Finally, we should touch upon these points as well: While interpreting, Gulen makes use of language and elocution rules. Sufism is also another topic that he emphasizes. Sufism has a certain place in his interpretation method. It is also seen that Gulen makes some references to canon law of verses.¹⁸³

Conclusion

In this essay, we have focused on Gulen's method of understanding and interpretation Quran. Since interpretation of Quran is related foremost to the understanding of it, it is necessary to be aware of the relation between the two. We emphasized Gulen's style of interpreting Quran. We should confess that we could not get into his understanding and perception of Quran. We have neglected this point. The reason for this omission is that understanding and perception is a matter of inner listening and intuition. Therefore it is hard to write without making a deep analysis upon his spiritual life. That's why we emphasized only his methodology.

Gulen is a kind of scientist having resemblances with classical thinkers. Among the source of interpreters influencing his thought are Fahreddin Razi, Elmalili Hamdi Yazir, Seyyid Kutup and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. However, it is obvious that he has authenticity and originality in his interpretive methodology. In particular. The style that he developed in the interpretation of contemporary issues with Quran verses draws great attention.

Gulen has a broad scale in terms of the characteristics if interpretation. We only just drew attention to the three important points of his Quran methodology. We have examined Quran's being a miracle in general. However his opinion can be the subject of a PhD study. Second methodology is context. Gulen thinks that each of 114 Quran verses is related to each other. We tried to examine this issue.

¹⁸² Fasıldan Fasıla 1, p. 188

¹⁸³ Fatiha Üzerine Mülâhalar. p.124.128

Thirdly it is obvious that Gulen gives special importance to scientific interpretation. Despite the fact that he is a man of religion, he knows positive sciences very well. He has offered many important explanations about scientific interpretation. However, contemporary interpretations experience contradiction within themselves. There are a vast number of studies in the field regarding this topic.

It can be said in a nutshell that the most significant characteristic of Gulen's Quran methodology are these three. We should confess that we could not exemplify enough the topic we discussed under the three headings. There has been just one example and not much analysis.

We have also draw attention to the other important characteristics of Gulen's interpretation of Quran. Interpretation of Sunnah and interpretation of Quran, old stories, reasons for Quran's being sent' ,personification verses, stories from the Quran, interpreting language and elocution rules and sufi interpretation are some of them

Sunnah and Companion's interpretation of Quran are important criteria in understanding his interpretation. Unfortunately we could not deal enough with this issue. However the 3rd volume of Gulen's work, Infinite Light, is about this issue separately.

In this essay, there has been an important issue that we have just touched upon. It is Gulen's being against to the usage of the old stories in interpretation of Quran. It is probable that the interpreters who will study on this topic will examine it in detail.

We hope that the topic of interpretation of Quran al-Kerim, the main source of Gulen will be studied in new projects with all aspects.