

**English Orientalist Alfred J. Butler, his life and Method in his book,  
Al – Arabs Conquered Egypt**

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**Abstract:** Alfred J. Butler is one of the English orientalists who played an important role in studying the history and civilization of Egypt, as he was an Egyptian mentally Arab in culture, spending the greater part of his life devoted to studying life in the Nile Valley and the history of his ancient civilization, as it traces the traces of Coptic churches and monasteries in Egypt, As the Orientalists in general, and the Englishmen in particular, did not call a scientific or epistemic aspect to the Muslims except to study it and write about it, they exerted a great effort in studying Islam and Muslims with an idea, belief and behavior, as these efforts were not all scientific and we find some of them have cognitive factors with Political, economic and colonial factors, and in this way their study included various civilizational and scientific aspects of the East, and Alfred J. Butler was one of these orientalists, as he primarily concerned with the study of Egypt and its civilization, and after his book Al-Arab Conquered Egypt his most important books, in this topic we discussed his life and his approach in his book Al-Arab Conquered Egypt, as he divided it to thirty chapters in which he dealt with the period before the Islamic conquest of Egypt, then he dealt with the Islamic conquest until he concluded the conquest process.

### **1-Introduction**

The English School of Orientalism included hundreds of English orientalists who had many directions and dealt with different topics and sailed in them, especially with regard to the East. Some of them were fair in it and some of them were intolerant towards it. Alfred J. Butler is considered one of the pioneers of this school, who focused his attention on studying everything related to Egypt and its conditions, so he developed several books for her, including Al-Arab Conquered Egypt, which we are studying, and life in the Egyptian royal court and the ancient Coptic churches in Egypt.

### **2- His birth and seeking knowledge :**

Alfred Joshua Butler is a British historian who was born in 1267 AH / 1850 AD and died in 1355 AH / 1936 AD <sup>(1)</sup>.

Butler received his university education at Oxford University <sup>(2)</sup> and continued his postgraduate studies, joining as a faculty member at the College of Branceaux in 1294 AH / 1877 AD <sup>(3)</sup>, and received his PhD in 1320 AH / 1902 AD. <sup>(4)</sup>

### **3- His writings:**

Alfred J. Butler is considered one of the English orientalists, who had a great role in the Orientalist movement. We find that he has paid great attention to Egyptian history and wrote several books including the pre-Arab and Islamic era of Egypt until the Middle Ages, and his books include:

- 1- The Herberts, by the Author of Elphin stone (1842).
- 2- Amaranth and Asphodel poems from the Greek Anthology (1881).
- 3- The Ancient coptic churches of Egypt parts (1, 2) (1884).
- 4- Life in the Egyptian royal court (1887).
- 5- The churches and monasteries of Egypt and some neigh bouring countries, parts (1, 2) (1895)<sup>(5)</sup>.

- 6- The history of Sheikh Abi Saleh, the Armenian, commented on him and put his notes and indexes to him (1895 AD).
- 7- The Arab conquest of Egypt (1902).
- 8- The origin of the ceramic lamp (1909)<sup>(6)</sup>.
- 9- The Treaty of Misr in Tabari (1913).
- 10- Islamic pottery a study mainly historical (1926).
- 11- Babulon of Egypt a study in the history of old Cairo.
- 12- court life in Egypt with illustrations.
- 13- Sport in classic times.
- 14- Midsummer Eve: A tale.
- 15- Brasenose college quarter centenary mono graphs volum2, parts <sup>(7)</sup>.

#### **4- His role in the Egyptian royal court :**

In 1298 AH / January 1880AD Khedive Muhammad Tawfiq <sup>(8)</sup> summoned Professor Alfred Joshua Butler to take over the education of his children and he remained in the job until 1299 AH / 1881AD<sup>(9)</sup>. Butler said: (In January 1880 AD I received a telegram urgently bringing me to Egypt to teach the children of the Khedive from Males Although a friend familiar with the Orient had instructed me that speed means for a month or two for the East, I have felt and care to literally stick to the text, or say that I had not yet learned the Egyptian proverb that says (the hurry is from Satan), so I soon found Myself on board a French parcel ship sailing from the Gulf of Naples, I am not sorry to say goodbye to this awakening scene, which was the last thing stuck in Europe in my view, and as the ship departed from the beach, our eyes fell on the view of the Red Palace with its splendor and splendor where the former Khedive Ismail 10 lived in trouble and resentment)<sup>(11)</sup>.

#### **5- His style and method in his book, Al-Arab Conquered Egypt**

One of the books of the English orientalist Butler, Al-Arab Conquered Egypt is one of the books of Egypt, as it provided information on the entry of Muslim Arabs to Egypt, and this book is considered one of the specialized and detailed references in the research of the Islamic conquest era in Egypt. This book was written in 1302 AH / 1902 AD and translated by Professor Muhammad Farid Beg Abu Hadid<sup>(12)</sup>.

It should be noted that Butler used the logical scientific method and collected information from several sources and then studied and built upon his conclusions, and also indicated that the purpose of his writing of this book is to build a broad history detailed the news to Al-Arab Conquered Egypt and no one, according to him, had written such a history except God Its authors are sporadic with some familiarity, and these messages are only some sections and brief texts that are included in written literature on the Roman state or the Arab state. <sup>(13)</sup> Butler also mentioned the purpose of his authorship of this book that when it is necessary to consider that there is no detailed research that has value Describes the date of that conquest<sup>(14)</sup>.

He also mentioned that he had authored this book and intended at least according to what he said, we planned for ourselves to reveal some of that darkness that spoils the matter in a way and to enter the topic with the results of the new research and to benefit from what was within reach of new news, and to compare what came in books The historians of the East are close to each other and then we treat it with examination and scrutiny, as we assess the history of this era on a scientific basis, as he said that I have compelled myself to violate most of the opinions settled in the topic of the Arab conquest<sup>(15)</sup>.

This is for the purposes that prompted this author to author this book.

Butler also noted that the reason for the lack of detailed research describing the history of the conquest is<sup>(16)</sup>:

1- According to Butler, we have little news that the average researcher can rely on

2- That wide disagreement between the narrators and the sources, including both the well-known and the unknown, and both the eastern and western ones.

Butler continued his speech that he wrapped the issue of opening Egypt into complete darkness, according to what Butler pointed out.<sup>(17)</sup>

As for the topic of the book, Butler also discussed it, as he talked about it, that writing the history of the Arab conquest of Egypt should not be treated as a discontinuous incident in relation to all other incidents of history, but rather an accident whose danger does not appear and its truth is not clear unless it was compared to the major historical events that struck the Roman and Persian states. And the two olds to collide with the emerging Arab state <sup>(18)</sup>.

He also reviewed during his talk about writing the sources and references that he referred to in the history of this era, starting with the literature of the people of the West and the Greek and Armenian references, The

Copts' sources and their manuscripts then conclude his talk on Arab sources, as he gave his point of view for each type of these sources and references <sup>(19)</sup>.

Despite the title of the book (Al-Arab Conquered Egypt ), the author elaborated a long way in presenting the history of Egypt for a long time before the Islamic conquest of it, so we found a limp on the history of Egypt and included thirty chapters that included the departure of Hercules to Egypt and dealt with a summary of the rule of the Roman emperors and the testimony of the Afol that began to appear on the Romanian state and the exit of Hercules and his plan to eliminate his rivals and the wars he fought in the villages of Egypt <sup>(20)</sup>.

Butler described to us the entry of the Romans to Egypt and the march to it as a struggle for it, then he lists the state of Hercules on Egypt and crowns him as emperor <sup>(21)</sup>. Butler then elaborates on his talk about the Persians opening the Levant and describing their march from them to Egypt to open it, as he described the case of the Copts and others with these invaders <sup>(22)</sup>.

Butler lists the civilizational aspects in Egypt of art, literature, history, medicine, and other scientific, urban, and industrial aspects <sup>(23)</sup>. Then Butler resumed his talk about the struggle of the owners of the cross over the pagan Persians until the victory of the Romans and they celebrated the high of the cross in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Then he gave his speech on the call of the Messenger Muhammad ( Peace be upon him ), then he touched after the Arabs 'conquest of the Levant to resume his talk about Egypt and what the Copts met with persecution at the hands of Cyrus. Then he draws the course of the Islamic conquest after it, tells us the story of the Arab conquest of Egypt and what happened in it and the expectations and lethality of the Romans by capturing Egypt a great lethal <sup>(24)</sup>, Butler continued his talk to the Arabs to conquer Egypt until their arrival in Alexandria, and what happened to them were the repair of bridges and their continuation of the conquest process, after which Butler stopped his talk of the conquest process, to explain to us what happened in Constantinople, the capital of the Roman state, and the emperors are punished to the throne <sup>(25)</sup>.

Butler resumed his talk about the conquest of Alexandria and its handing over to Muslim Arabs, after which the Muslim army would continue to conquer the Sahel <sup>(26)</sup>.

Butler continued his detailed account of Alexandria's description when it was opened and its library and disagreement about its burning story <sup>(27)</sup>

Butler did not exclude the issue of conquest, by sending the Baath to the countries of Morocco, afterwards to talk about restoring freedom to Benjamin after his disappearance <sup>(28)</sup>. Then he dealt with the Islamic rule of Egypt and the systems that the Muslim Arabs followed when ruling Egypt, to narrate the revolution that took place in Alexandria under the leadership of Manuel and the elimination of Muslims, to conclude his speech with some miscellaneous issues such as the treatment of Muslims for the people of Alexandria and the prisoners <sup>(29)</sup>.

## 6- Conclusion

1- Butler, the historian, traveler, and translator, was an English man of the nineteenth century AD who was an Egyptian of Arab mentality, Arab culture, who spent much of his life devoted to studying life in the Nile Valley and the history of his civilization.

2- The study showed that Butler was distinguished by his multiple interests and various fields of writing. Despite the limited number of books published throughout his life, he was able to improve his choice of topics that perpetuate his name in history to this day.

3- Most of Butler's writings were about Egypt, as he wrote down his observations of it and studied its history during his time in Egypt after Khedive Muhammad Tawfiq called him in to teach his children.

4- Butler used the logical scientific method and collected information from several sources, then studied and built upon his conclusions.

5- Butler based his book on the foundations of the Copts, the Armenians, the Syrians, and the Latin, and also referred to the literature of the Arabs.

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