

# MODERNIST ISLAM, 1840–1940

A SOURCEBOOK

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## Renewal, Renewing, and Renewers

Muhammad Rashid Rida (Lebanon-Egypt, 1865–1935) was a prolific writer and one of the most important figures in Islamic modernism. Born in Tripoli, Rida attended a school established by *Shaykh* Husayn al-Jisr (Lebanon, 1845–1909), who believed in the need to combine religious and modern education. Rida therefore acquired a fair knowledge of modern sciences and European languages, while studying also the works of Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (1058–1111) and Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), which reinforced his reformist and antimystical tendencies. Rida was greatly influenced by the reformist message of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (chapter 11) and Muhammad 'Abduh (chapter 3), and he moved to Egypt in 1897 to join 'Abduh, becoming one of 'Abduh's closest disciples and his biographer. Rida's monthly periodical, *al-Manar* (*The Beacon*), which he published from 1898 to 1935, was widely read and highly influential, disseminating the ideas of Islamic reform throughout the Islamic world. Like Afghani and 'Abduh, Rida believed in the compatibility of Islam and reason, science, and modernity. He advocated return to the original sources of Islam and the reinterpretation of the Qur'an to meet modern demands. Yet Rida was critical of some of 'Abduh's disciples who took modernist ideas to secular and liberal conclusions. He rejected the growing attempts to subordinate Islam to modernity and Westernization and in his later years tilted toward religious conservatism. The speech translated here, from late in his life, reflects Rida's vision of Islamic renewal and his concerns about the increased secularization of Muslim society.<sup>1</sup>

### Part I

This is a lecture the publisher of this periodical [*al-Manar*, or *The Beacon*] delivered at the Royal Institute of Geography at the invitation of the Society of the Oriental League on a Ramadan night in the year 1348 [early 1930]. A large audience of scholars, writers, students of al-Azhar [University], outstanding students of the high schools, and virtuous women attended it, as well as some eminent European Orientalists. They were asked for their opinion after delivering it and attested to its moderation.

In the Name of God, the Beneficent,  
the Merciful

The Society of the Oriental League has entrusted me to deliver a lecture tonight on the issue of "Renewal, Renewing, and Renewers." My colleague in its board of directors, Doctor Mansur Fahmi [1886–1959], has kindly mentioned its title to you. I appeal to you to overlook and forgive any shortcoming. I begin with an introduction of the topic and what needs to be explained and examined.

Muhammad Rashid Rida, "al-Tajdid wa al-tajaddud wa al-mujaddidun" (Renewal, Renewing, and Renewers), *al-Manar* (*The Beacon*), Cairo, Egypt, volume 31, number 10, July 1931, pp. 770–777; volume 32, number 1, October 1931, pp. 49–60; volume 32, number 3, March 1932, pp. 226–231. Translation from Arabic and introduction by Emad Eldin Shahin.

1. Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by*

Muhammad 'Abduh (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); Shakib Arslan, *Al-Sayyid Rashid Rida wa ikha' arba'ina sana* (*Rashid Rida and Forty Years of Fraternity*) (Damascus, Syria: Matba'at Ibn Zaydun, 1937); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798–1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 222–244; Emad Eldin Shahin, *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashid Rida and the West* (Herndon, Va.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993).

*Introductory Note on Our Need for  
Renewal in All Aspects*

In a time that is afflicted by ideological, intellectual, political, Communist, and Bolshevik upheavals; in a time that is strained by religious, literary, and social chaos; in a time that is threatened by women's revolution, the violation of marital vows, the disintegration of the family, and the bonds of kinship; in a time in which heresy and unfettered promiscuity have erupted, as well as attacks on the nation's religion, language, and values, and its customs, dress, and origins, nothing remains stable to raise our youths and teach them respect.

In such a time, which I have described briefly, and which you know even better, the concepts of renewal, renewing, and renewers have become widely spread amongst us. Truly, we are in a dire need for renewal and renewers. Anything that could preserve our national character and religious heritage, and promote us in the paths of civic advancement has been revoked and corroded. All of our historical origins, the true religion, our blossoming civilization, and great empire, we have worn out and depreciated, even abandoned and forgotten. In our attempts to acquire the novel and borrow the modern we have only clung to the fringes and have never been able to reproduce it fully. What we have of the old and the modern is a shell of imitation, like the shell of an almond or a walnut that lies under the outer wooden layer; it is useless in itself and cannot preserve the core.

If our al-Azhar and religious institutions are in need of reform to renew the guidance of religion, our public and private schools are in even greater need of reform to renew our civilization, regain our independence, and fulfill all our interests. The corruption of education and socialization in them includes two dimensions: positive and negative. Our complaint against defects in the religious institutions is almost entirely negative, and we will explain the harm later. People of vision and understanding in this nation complain about both and propose one reform after the other.

We need an independent renewal like that of Japan to promote our economic, military, and political interests and develop our agricultural, industrial, and commercial wealth. With this renewal we shall become a dignified *umma* [Islamic community] and a strong state, while preserving our nation's religion, culture, laws, and language, and its national charac-

ter of dress, good traditions, and values. [There is] no need for an imitative renewal like that of the Ottoman state, which ended in the disintegration of its vast sultanate, then in its termination and eradication from the world geographic atlas. Nor [do we need] a renewal like that of the Egyptian state, which started independently during the reign of Muhammad 'Ali the Great [ruler of Egypt, 1805–1849], then turned to imitation and ended with occupation and the loss of independence. If it had adhered to its initial plan, Egypt would have become a great sultanate consisting of the eastern part of Africa and the western part of Asia. It would have restored the glory of Arab civilization, and would have been charged with the leadership of the Muslim *umma*. It is still qualified to do so. All that it needs is to prepare, to exert the necessary efforts, to seek this goal when the time is ripe, and to achieve it with a worthy leader. On the throne today there is a king [Fu'ad, reigned 1922–1936] who demonstrates the willingness to do so, as everyone knows.

We need this glorious renewal, one that combines the modern and the old. We need renewers of civilization, like Muhammad 'Ali the Great, and renewers of knowledge and wisdom, such as Muhammad 'Abduh [Egyptian scholar, 1849–1905; see chapter 3] and Jamal al-Din [al-Afghani, Iranian pan-Islamic activist, 1838–1897; see chapter 11]—not the renewal of heresy and promiscuity, laxity and profligacy, espousing depravity in the name of the liberal arts [literally “naked arts”] and discouraging virtue under the pretext of freedom, liberation of the Oriental woman, and imitation of Western civilization. All these vices are old, not new, as known to those who are familiar with the history of Athens and Rome and other capitals of the ancient peoples. They weakened their states and eroded their independence. “And when We destroy a population, We send Our command to (warn) its people living a life of ease; and when they disobey, the sentence against them is justified, and We destroy them utterly.” [Qur'an, Sura 17, Verse 16] [This means:] We order them with obedience and virtue, but they defied our order and pursued disobedience and depravity, preferring their own lust over the public interest. Therefore they deserved our statement, “Verily We shall annihilate these wicked people”; [Sura 14, Verse 13] our statement, “We would never have destroyed cities if their inhabitants were not given to wickedness”; [Sura 28, Verse 59] our statement, “Shall any perish but the ungodly?”; [Sura 46, Verse 35] our

statement, "Your Lord would not surely destroy communities so long as the people are righteous." [Sura 11, Verse 117] This means that He [God] will not destroy them because of transgression on His part, when they are righteous in their deeds.

The modernizing reforms of Muhammad 'Ali the Great have become known, and the religious, political, and social reform of 'Abduh and Afghani are no longer unknown. His Majesty, seated on the throne of Muhammad 'Ali, as well as the princes and the nobility of Muhammad 'Ali's family, are the strongest basis for the military and civilizational renewal of the nation and the state, while preserving the nation's components and character, if the nation so requests. Muhammad 'Ali's folded turban, his wide garment, the garb of his officials and that of the students on his scientific missions [to Europe], did not preclude them from engaging in modernization, reviving the sciences, and achieving glorious accomplishments. But Amanullah Khan [ruler of Afghanistan, 1919–1929] lost his throne and shed the blood of his people in his attempts at imitative renewal by donning the [European] hat, adorning his wife, and shaving the beards of his statesmen!

Jamal al-Din [al-Afghani] and Muhammad 'Abduh have [formed] a scientific, rational, and reformist group, capable of following their footsteps and proceeding with their reforms insofar as the *umma* is willing to respond to them. The *umma* has seen the brilliance of one of them in political leadership,<sup>2</sup> which was inconceivable before [the *umma*] became ready to rise up with him and acknowledge his stature. Nonetheless, destructive individuals have assumed the leadership of renewal and monopolized the title of renewers. They urge the nation to abandon the guidance of religion, take off the apparel of virtue, take pride in the donning of the hat, allow the mixture of women and men in dancing [halls], swimming, seclusion, and travel, permit drinking and all types of sinfulness that follow. They criticize woman, who makes it her utmost concern in life to prepare herself to perform well what God has created her for, distinguishing her over man: that is, to be a good and virtuous spouse, an affectionate and educating mother, and an organized and frugal head of the household. They call the household her prison, even if it is like a garden palace, and the husband her jailer, even if he con-

siders her as an angel in goodly pavilions. They entice her to disobey and disregard him, to allow whom-ever she pleases to enter his home, and to enter the home of whoever she likes without [her husband's] permission and approval. They also tempt her with positions in the government and attorneys' offices, and urge her not to consider such impediments as the burdens of pregnancy and labor, breast-feeding and nursing. Some even say that she is fit for wars and fighting, leading land and naval armies, marine and air fleets. [ . . . ]

They also entice youths with heresy and praise the pursuit of lust, trying to turn them and women into soldiers blindly obedient to their leaders. Advice and preaching are useless once they have deviated from religion. No advice can be heard during the pursuit of moral chaos and whims. It is quite sufficient [proof] of moral degradation and intellectual decay to concede [to their claim] that the old is repulsive and must be abandoned and despised just because it is old, and to deride those who would preserve [the past] by calling them reactionary.

A horde of heretics in this great country are at present attempting to assume this honorable title [of renewer]. None of them deserves this title, not for excellence in knowledge or wisdom, guidance or virtue, or in revealing unknown truths; not for initiating practices useful to the *umma* in preserving its true nature, developing its wealth, or restoring its glory. (I seek forgiveness from God because restoring the nation's glory, with its conquests and civilization, is considered by them as reactionary, and they despise those who call for that.)

All their wares in this marketplace are but chatter, sophistry, audacity in mixing right with wrong, and insolence in criticizing their opponents or critics. They engage in flagrant slander, not correct evidence, for truth has no sanctity for them, and they praise the extremist Turks who have tossed Islam behind them, destroying all the cornerstones of freedom: freedom of religion, opinion, speech, writing, dress, and work—[the very freedoms] that are glorified by the leaders of knowledge and modern civilization whom they claim to be following. Had it not been for the excessiveness of the Egyptian government, these pretenders would not have dared to voice these heretic calls to destroy [the government's] religion, values, and traditions. Their praise of the excessiveness of the Turkish heretics is not novel. It began with an earlier generation, and its product in

2. Sa'd Pasha Zaghlul [Egyptian nationalist leader, 1857–1927].

this generation has been the extinction of the Ottoman sultanate, which was the greatest sultanate in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Nothing remained of it except for a small, poor republic, less in number, affluence, knowledge, and civilization than the kingdom of Egypt, which was once a province of this sultanate. Now [Turks] want [Egypt] to follow [the Turkish state's] footsteps—its heresy and disavowal of the guidance of religion—so that [Egypt] will not be able to replace [Turkey] in what it is now qualified to do, that is, assume the leadership of 400 million Muslims [around the world].

When similarly false renewers deceived Amanullah Khan, and he tried to imitate the present Turkish state, they showered him with praise for unveiling women and forcing his people to wear hats. His heretical renewal ignited fires of revolution in his country against him and his government. He was forced to flee and abdicate his rule. There has been no real renewal in Afghanistan, no inclination for [building] schools, a military system, industry, and the like, though this process started in the last century during the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman [Khan, reigned 1880–1901].

Since the last century, the Turks have embarked on all the earthly renewal that the heretics called for. Further, Islam has neither prevented the evils of renewal, which it condemns, nor [opposed] the positive aspects, which it requires. [The Turks] have not pursued an independent path of renewal, like Japan, which preserved its religious and national character. They were imitators, and, therefore, they clashed with the imitators among the clerical scholars. They should have combined religious renewal and earthly renewal, the same way Europe has done with religious reformation and modernization.

Egypt preceded the Turks in this earthly renewal. The clerical scholars neither opposed nor helped [the process,] because renewal was carried out by one side. Had it been carried out by both sides, it would have been accomplished in a short time, as I will explain later.

The false renewers here do not consider existing conditions, because they imitate the heretics of Europe in their hostility to religious scholars. This blind imitation has made them disincline [people from religion], casting doubt on the doctrines of religion, criticizing its rules and regulations, undermining its scholars, claiming that science and philosophy have annulled it, accusing its '*ulama*' [religious scholars]

of being an insurmountable obstacle to the progress of the *umma*, an obstacle that must be removed just as dirt is removed from the road. Had they called for practical reform in the name of renewal, and then found resistance from religious scholars, they would have been justified.

*The Alleged Renewal of the Heretics  
Constitutes a New Division of the Nation*

This so-called renewal is almost becoming a real renewal of divisive strife. This could be worse than the divisions of ethnic and national extremisms and of political parties. The presence of a new party appears to complete the roster of divisions. [This party,] in imitation of the heretics of Europe and its liberals, is hostile to religion and despises the devout, who constitute the majority of the nation. '*Ulama*', orators, and writers urge people to respond to this party, to declare their hostility and resistance to it. Leaders and elites are forced to call upon the government to prevent members of this party from pronouncing evil. This took place precisely as a result of the negative influence of someone who declared unheard-of rights for women at the University of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, someone at the American University [in Cairo], in a lecture which he published and distributed, argued the necessity of equality between men and women, even in divorce and inheritance.<sup>4</sup> I heard the Friday prayer speaker, in the mosque where I pray, pity Islam and urge the fasting worshipers to defend the Qur'an, which its enemies scorned and accused of transgressions against women, and so on, after some of the notables<sup>5</sup> renounced that lecture and the newspapers unanimously criticized such nonsense.

This sort of strife occurred in Europe during the Middle Ages, which were the worst centuries for Europeans. There was a dark sedition, during which much blood was shed in the conflict between the freedom of knowledge and government on the one hand, and the authority of religion and church on the other. Recently, a similar situation took place in Afghani-

3. Mr. Mahmud 'Azmi [1889–1954], whom we defeated in debate at the University, to judge by the support of the audience and his own admission.

4. Doctor Fakhri Faraj Mikhail al-Qibti.

5. His Highness 'Umar Pasha Tusun [1872–1944].

stan. However, I see the condition of Egypt as different from that of Europe during these centuries and that of present-day Afghans. We must repel this sedition before it spreads, to prevent this conflict before it escalates. This is exactly what I seek with this lecture. I see it as the greatest task that I can perform before the Society of the Oriental League, for the sake of dear Egypt and the entire Orient. [ . . . ]

## Part 2

All of creation is new. The absolute original is the Creator, most glorified and exalted. Among the created, new and old are relative. Every old creature was once new, and every new one will become old. As a folk proverb says: "Whoever does not have a past will not have a future." This is a wise proverb that the knowledgeable may understand in senses that the common people cannot approach.

Renewal and renewing of the universe are among the divine general laws, generating order in our world and change and transformation in the phase of our existence. They operate [today] just as they operated for our parents and grandparents. "No change will thou find in God's way (of dealing): No turning off wilt thou find in God's way (of dealing)." [Qur'an, Sura 35, Verse 43]. [ . . . ]

What I stated in the introduction to a previous lecture, on coeducational schools, may be appropriate to state here as a summary:

Renewing is a law of social association; renewal is part of nature and habit. It is counterweighed by the preservation of the old. Each has its place. There is no contradiction or opposition between them, provided that each is put in its place with no neglect or excess. [ . . . ]

Part of renewal in human action is achieved by the instinct of independence, which is opposite of imitation, and the tendency for discovery and invention. Without them, humans would be similar to flocks of birds; their dwellings would not be more advanced than bee hives and ant hills.

### Types of Renewal and Their Necessity

Social, political, civic, and religious renewal is necessary for human societies, in accordance with their nature and level of readiness. They enable societies to

progress through the stages of civilization and ascend on the paths of science and knowledge. Even divine religion, which is based on the revelation of the wise God, with His grace, to selected creatures whose holy souls He prepared to receive it, has advanced along with the nature of human societies in their progress from one stage to another, until it was completed by Islam when they reached the stage of maturity and independence. Despite this completion, the narrators of *hadith* [accounts of the Prophet] tell us that [Muhammad,] the Seal of the Prophets, peace be upon them all, said, "God sends to this nation at the beginning of every century someone who renews its religion." Narrated by Abu Da'ud [al-Sijistani, died 889] in his *Sunan* [*Hadith Collection*]; [Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah] al-Hakim [al-Naysaburi, 933-1014] in his *Mustadrak* [*Supplement*]; [Ahmad ibn al-Husayn] al-Bayhaqi [994-1066] in *al-Ma'rifa* [*al-sunan, The Wisdom of the Collected Hadith*], and others from the *hadith* of Abu Hurayra [companion of the Prophet, died 678]. [Jalal al-Din] al-Suyuti [1445-1505] referred in his *al-Jami' al-saghir* [*The Lesser Collection*] to its correctness. The renewal of religion means renewing its guidance, clarifying its truth and certitude, refuting the innovations and extremism that its followers accrue, or their reluctance in upholding it and following its rules in managing the interests of humans and the laws of society and civilization. [ . . . ] This is the meaning of renewal and renewing, and it leads us [to conclude] that both the new and the old have their place, and it is a matter of ignorance to prefer one over the other in absolute terms. [ . . . ]

### The True and Decisive Statement on New and Old

The true statement on this topic is that humans at all times need both the old and the new. In each there is good and ill, benefit and harm. Some people by nature tilt more to one or the other, in accordance with the nature of things and their type. Rarely is the new preferred, because of its newness, except by children and those women and men who are at their level. Rational and independent people do not shun the old and turn to the new unless there is a reason making it preferable, in accordance with the rule of logic. [ . . . ] A rational person may prefer the new for a reason related to its usefulness and utility, either in itself or for something outside it, such as the economy, appropriateness, patriotism, and nationalism.

*Preferring the National to the Foreign*

Preferring all that is national, either new or old, is a cornerstone of economic, political, and literary life in all vibrant nations, particularly the British, who became appalled by the spread of cheap German products in their country. They formed several associations to investigate means of prevention. I inquired in some pharmacies in Berlin and Munich about a French medication I usually carry during travel and keep back home. [...] The answer I received was, "It is French, it is French." They never denied its existence, but only gave as the reason [for its unavailability] that it was made by the French, not the Germans. I had to substitute that medication with a German one, a better one for that purpose. Had an Egyptian or Arab medication existed, I would have preferred it.

With this kind of nationalism and patriotism, the peoples of the West, faithful to their kind and devoted to their nation, have advanced. They prefer their own industries, commerce, laws, and other components and characteristics of the nation, over that which belongs to others. They preserve the regulations of the old British judges and their legal decisions more than we maintain the regulations that we believe to have been revealed by God, most exalted, let alone the regulations deduced through *ijtihad* [interpretation] by our leading scholars on the basis of our laws and principles. Our ancestors preceded the foreigners in taking pride in their legislature and other matters in the early years of Islam. An example is what happened between 'Umar [ibn al-Khattab, second caliph, 634–644], may God be pleased with him, and Mu'awiyya [a later caliph, 661–680]. When 'Umar arrived in Syria wearing his patched garment and riding his camel, Mu'awiyya observed: "O, Commander of the Faithful, the people of Syria are accustomed to seeing their rulers in splendid clothes. They do not fear anyone who is simple in attire and appearance." 'Umar responded, "We came to teach them how we rule, not to learn from them how they rule."

Similarly, ['Umar's] instructed his governors in foreign provinces to observe Arab garb. He wrote a letter to his governor in Persia, 'Utba ibn Farqad, forbidding [Muslims] to wear the dress of the Persians and ordering them to preserve their Arab customs. Part of what he said in the letter: "follow your grandfather Ma'add ibn 'Adnan [patriarch of the northern Arab tribes] in his toughness, perseverance, and harsh life style." The Arab descendants of Ma'add are like the

Spartans. [...] The Arabs were able to preserve their national character in the provinces they conquered, so long as they obeyed these instructions and maintained their character, especially their language and religion. [Other] nations assimilated into them and were Arabized and Islamized. Those who abandoned these features were assimilated into other peoples. The foreigners imitated our ancestors in this respect, particularly the British. The heretical false renewers try to convince us to abandon all that, even rules of inheritance, in which the British differ from the laws of all other nations, allowing the eldest son to acquire the entire inherited estate of his parents, while the rest of his siblings receive nothing.

*The Contempt of the Heretics and Copts for the Muslims in Urging Them to Abandon Their Religion*

The contempt of the false renewers for us, the Muslims in this country, has reached such an extent that heretics and Copts have spoken at podiums and schools urging us to abandon our religion and our entire *shari'a*, not just the rules of inheritance. They argue that the government has abandoned the rules of the *shari'a* in such and such cases of the penal code and finances, and that we remained silent and accepted its judgment. Therefore, we must abandon all the rest of God's regulations regarding the personal status code, inheritance, marriage, and divorce. There is no difference for these renewing *muftis* [religious officials] between the two types of regulations. [...]

## Part 3

In clarifying the need for religious and earthly renewal, and Islam's perspective and encouragement, I need to begin with a brief introduction on the stagnation of the religious scholars and its negative impact on rulers and seekers of political and social reform. [...] I include [...] statements by two Turks, [the first] by one of the most enlightened scholars of Islam and [the second] by an outspoken proponent of heresy. I then mention a statement of the wise man of the Orient [Afghani] about them.

[The first scholar] is the *Shaykh al-Islam* [chief Ottoman religious official] Musa Kazım [Turkey, 1858–1920; see chapter 23], God bless his soul. In



his home in a suburb of Istanbul, he was explaining to me his plan for the reform of the government of Yemen. He formulated all its laws in accordance with the *shari'a*. [He also planned] to establish a unified commercial court to specialize in reviewing the cases related to foreigners and Jews. I suggested to him, "If you agree not to commit yourselves to Hanafi doctrine, I guarantee you that I can deduce from the vast Islamic *shari'a* all the rulings that the sultanate needs and that address the conditions of the present time, and so on." He responded, "I realize that this is possible, but what can we do with the official scholars of *fatwas* [religious rulings]?"

He means that the Islamic clerical scholars charged with the issuance of official *fatwas* for the state would oppose [such reforms]. Among the things I learned about them, and about the *Shaykh al-Islam*—who is restricted by them in the issuance of *fatwas*—is that they do not issue *fatwas* in accordance with the rules of the [Ottoman] *Mecelle-i Ahkam-ı 'Adliye* [Compendium of Legal Statutes, 1876], all of which conforms to *shari'a*, because it contains rules that contradict established statements of Hanafi doctrine. [ . . . ]

[The second scholar] is Doctor 'Abdullah Bey Cevdet [Turkey, 1869–1932; see chapter 21], editor of a magazine [*İctihad*, or *Rational Interpretation*] that he used to publish in Egypt before the [re-promulgation of the Ottoman] Constitution [in 1908], because he was persecuted and not allowed to enter the Ottoman state. He is one of the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress [CUP, which came to power in the Ottoman Empire in 1908].

This man, who publicly declares heresy, helped me in Istanbul with the project of *al-Da'wa wa al-irshad* [Propagation and Guidance, an elite school that Rida established in Egypt in 1912]. He informed me that "if you succeed in this effort and establish an Islamic college, I will volunteer to teach there and deliver my health and science lessons in accordance with your approach in religious reform." I responded, "How is that possible, while you oppose religion?" He explained, "I oppose the religion of the *shaykhs* of Fatih and Sulaymaniyya [historic mosques in Istanbul], because it is impossible for us to progress while we follow the ideas of those people. But the understanding of Rashid [Rida] *Efendi* and *Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh* of the religion of Islam helps progress and benefits the state. I would be the first to wish to serve Islam under your auspices." [ . . . ]

The '*ulama*' of Istanbul had a great influence on the nation and the government. The '*ulama*' of Egypt do not enjoy the slightest share of such an influence—how can they be accused of blocking civic progress, and where is this progress? When did they put up such a practical resistance that the government feared [to make reforms]? When I presented the project of *al-Da'wa wa al-irshad* to [Ottoman] Prime Minister Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha [1855–1922], God bless his soul, he told me: "This is a great project and necessary to the state. Its implementation depends on the acceptance of the '*ulama*' and the approval of the Committee of Union and Progress. I will speak to the *Shaykh al-Islam* to convince the scholars, and to [Colonel Mehmed] Sadık Bey [Şehreküstü, 1860–1940] to convince the Central Committee of the CUP. I will do my utmost to persuade them to use their influence on this matter." [General] Mahmud Şevket Pasha [Ottoman prime minister, 1858–1913], God bless his soul, also told me of the influence of the Turkish religious scholars, and then said: "The scholars in my country (Iraq) do not have such an influence. What is their status in Egypt?"

*The Statement of Sayyid Jamal al-Din  
[al-Afghani] on the Turkish Scholars*

The statement of al-Sayyid Jamal al-Din [al-Afghani], which I refer to here, and there are similar ones by him regarding the Muslim '*ulama*', concerns the following incident:

During the time [Jamal al-Din] was at Istanbul, the emperor of Japan [Mutsuhito Meiji, reigned 1867–1912] sent a letter to Sultan Abdülhamid II, reigned 1876–1909] seeking his friendship and saying that "each one of us is an Oriental king, and it is in our interest and the interests of our people to get acquainted, to establish friendly relations, and to promote cooperation vis-à-vis the Western states and peoples, who view us as one and the same. I see the Western people send missionaries to our country, evangelizing their religion because of the religious freedom we have. I see that you do not do the same. I would like you to send us preachers to evangelize for your religion (Islam), who can serve as an implicit moral link between you and us." The sultan was interested in this letter and ordered the formation of a committee of his advisors in Yıldız Palace for consultation. It included the *Shaykh al-Islam* and the minister of education, the two minis-



ters officially concerned with this issue, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, most qualified in all respects, and others. They met with the sultan at Yıldız Palace and the discussion started. The *Shaykh al-Islam* and the minister of education suggested the formation of a delegation of scholars from the schools of Istanbul to be sent to Japan. Sayyid Jamal al-Din remained silent. The sultan directed his gaze at him and asked his opinion. He said what may be summarized as follows: "Your Majesty, these scholars turn even Muslims away from Islam. How could they be charged with convincing the Japanese to adopt Islam? [My] opinion is to develop a cadre of intelligent persons and provide them with a special education that qualifies them to fulfill this duty in the present age. It might suffice for the time being, for His Majesty to send a courteous letter to the emperor, along with an appropriate gift, mention to him that his suggestion has received the highest approval, and say that you will look into its implementation in a satisfactory manner." The sultan adopted this view, but without implementing the suggestion of special education for Islamic evangelists.

#### *A Conclusion on the Objective behind the Two Renewals*

I have mentioned the *hadith* on religious renewal: "God sends to this nation at the beginning of every century someone who renews its religion." The words of this text are [directly] related to our topic. We have explained its meaning at the outset of the lecture. The objective of this *hadith* focuses on the return to the simplicity and guidance of religion as it was in the beginning; to reunify the Muslims around their commonality, prior to disunity and discord; to justify individual *ijtihad*, except where [the revealed text's meaning is] self-evident; and to justify those who engage in *taqlid* [imitation], following the doctrine or the scholar whose knowledge they trust, without a divisive extremism that turns the nation into factions and mutually hostile groups. [. . .] Some of the means for this renewal include the revival of the Arabic language, in vocabulary, writing, and speech; the writing of books in easy modern styles; the spread of education and socialization, according to scientific methods; and the spread of Islamic teachings in the world.

If the nation needs renewal in maintaining its religion, which God has perfected, prohibiting innovation, it is in even more need of renewal in earthly affairs. Its interests differ in accordance to changes in time, place, and the condition of the people. The *shari'a* has taken all that into consideration, as stipulated in the books of *fiqh* [jurisprudence].

There are two kinds of this renewal in this regard. One relates to the public interest and our need for legislation. The Lawgiver [God] has recommended this type of renewal in the statement of the Prophet, may peace be upon him, "He who introduced some good practice in Islam and was followed (by people), he would be assured of reward like the one who followed it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who introduced some evil practice in Islam that was subsequently followed (by others), he would be required to bear the burden like that of the one who followed this (evil practice), without theirs being diminished in any respect." Narrated by Muslim [ibn al-Hajjaj, died 875] from the *hadith* of Jarir ibn 'Abdullah [companion of the Prophet, died 640]. Among these general practices are the foundation of the principles of useful sciences and arts and the establishment of schools, orphanages, and hospitals. Everyone is equally [responsible] for this renewal: individuals, groups, and governments. Some are particular to government, such as military affairs, on which depend the defense of the country and the protection of the *umma* from aggression.

The legislation connected with this renewal is entrusted in Islam to those in charge and to the group known as *ahl al-hal wa al-'aqd* [the people who loosen and bind]. They approve the legislation on the basis of consultation and the exercise of reason, in issues that are not stipulated as self-evident in God's revelation or the practice of the Prophet, according to recognized criteria. The *shari'a* prohibits *ijtihad* and all human legislation in the presence of a [self-evident] text.

The second type [of renewal in earthly affairs] relates to matters of livelihood, such as agriculture, industry, trade, and the issue of harmless practices. The *shari'a* has left this to the experience of the people. The Prophet, may peace be upon him, said in this regard, "You are more knowledgeable about your earthly affairs." Narrated by Muslim from the *hadith* of Anas [ibn Malik, servant of the Prophet, circa 612–709] and 'A'isha [bint Abi Bakr, wife of

the Prophet, circa 614–678], may God be pleased with her. He commented on its meaning: "Whatever concerns the affairs of your religion is referred to me, and whatever relates to your earthly affairs, you are more knowledgeable about." Narrated by Ahmad [ibn Hanbal, 780–855].

In conclusion, legitimate renewal includes all that the *umma* and the state hold dear, such as the sciences, arts, and industries; financial, administrative, and military systems; land, naval, and air installations. All

these are considered a collective duty in Islam, and the entire *umma* sins when it neglects them. The *shari'a* does not restrict the *umma* in pursuing them. The only restrictions are to avoid inflicting or generating harm and transgression (for example, exploiting the condition of the financially needy by collecting usurious interest from them), to observe the [jurisprudential] principle according to which "Necessity permits the impermissible," to assess the extent of this necessity, and to follow truth and justice.