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Introduction

THIS IS A BOOK ABOUT THE CONTENT, RHETORIC, AND AMBIGUITIES of social and religious criticism in modern Islam. There is considerable contestation in many Muslim circles today on precisely what the "crises" are that afflict Islam and Muslim societies, at whose doorsteps the blame for the provenance or persistence of these crises should be laid, what Islamic norms, institutions, and practices need to be reformed, and on what authority such reform would take place. Muslims of varied intellectual orientations have long discussed such matters, and the debates continue, indeed with especial vigor, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Despite their centrality to any sophisticated understanding of religious and political thought, many crucial dimensions of these debates remain little understood, however. What are some major themes in reformist discourses on Muslim institutions, norms, and practices as they have been articulated in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries? What accounts for the persistence of some of these themes over the course of more than a century and in quite different locales? How do discourses on reform in South Asia and in the Arab Middle East – two regions of great historical, political, and intellectual significance in the modern world – compare with one another? In what ways has the Islamic tradition served simultaneously as the object of social and religious critique as well as the ground on which such critique has often rested? Put differently, what forms has "internal criticism" taken in modern Islam, how does it relate to the specificities of the social, economic, and political context in which it is articulated, and what questions of religious authority are at stake in such criticism? These are among the questions I propose to address in this volume.[1]

Certain facets of Islamic thought in the modern world have, indeed, been carefully studied by scholars. Classic studies by Albert Hourani, Malcolm Kerr, and

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[1] While recognizing that some scholars would wish to distinguish the connotations of *criticism* and *critique*, I will normally use the two terms interchangeably. On the idea and practice of internal criticism, although not always referred to as such, see Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, "Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions," in Michael Krausz, ed., *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 299–325; Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); idem, *The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Dilip Gaonkar and Charles Taylor, "Block Thinking and Internal Criticism," *Public Culture* 18 (2006): 453–5. I will return to a brief explication of this idea later in the chapter.

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Aziz Ahmad, as well as a number of other books, have examined the contours of *modernist* thought – that is, the work of those seeking to rethink or adapt Muslim institutions, norms, and discourses in light both of what they take to be "true" Islam, as opposed to how the Islamic tradition has evolved in history, and of how they see the challenges and opportunities of modernity. Such studies have necessarily commented, sometimes at length, on the wide-ranging social and political critique modernist Muslim thinkers have directed at representatives of the Islamic religious and scholarly tradition, the `ulama (singular: *`alim*), as well as at many others.[2] *Islamists* – who share much with the modernists in their intellectual backgrounds and in the novelty of many of the positions they advocate, although not the modernists' enthusiasm for the need to adapt Islam to conditions of modernity – have also engaged in searing critiques of the world around them. Indeed, as political theorist Roxanne L. Euben and I have argued in a recent work, it is useful to see Islamism in general as critique, and one that extends well beyond "Western" institutions, politics, and cultures.[3] Other overlapping targets of this critique include facets of the Islamic scholarly tradition, Sufism, particular customary norms as they exist in Muslim societies, Islamic modernism, the westernized political and cultural elite, and, not infrequently, fellow Islamists themselves. Although scholars of contemporary Islam have not usually defined Islamism in this way or explored the implications of this perspective, Islamist thought and activism have, of course, continued to be extensively studied.

It has seldom been adequately recognized, however, that it is not only the Muslim modernists, on the one hand, and the Islamists, on the other, who have engaged in critiques of the Islamic religious and the scholarly tradition. As I hope to show, the traditionally educated religious scholars, who may be thought to have a vested interest in the preservation and defense of their tradition, also have often been vigorous critics of particular aspects of that tradition and, by the same token, important contributors to the debate on reform in Muslim societies.[4] It is on the

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[2] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; first published in 1962); Malcolm Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad `Abduh and Rashid Rida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857–1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

[3] Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[4] As observed by Wael Hallaq, *Shari`a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–5, 443–6, the very category of "reform" is not without problems, for it often presupposes a colonial-era narrative in which any norm or practice that falls short of Western expectations is deemed to be in need of repair. Also see Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 9, 14. As should be clear, however, my primary interest in this book is not in the sort of reform that is dictated by westernizing, colonial, and post-colonial categories of analysis but rather in how the traditionally educated scholars – who themselves frequently invoke the idea and the necessity of reform – have tried to rethink their tradition from within. I do recognize, though, that it is not always easy to make sharp distinctions between the idea of reform as mobilized by, say, the modernists and how some of the `ulama have used it – a fact that has to do, inter alia,

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multifaceted critique encountered in the work of such intellectuals and scholars in the Arab Middle East and in South Asia that I primarily focus in this book.

My purpose here, it should be noted, is not merely to document the existence of social and religious critics among the `ulama, or even to show that a critique does not need to rest on secular grounds to qualify as genuine or interesting.[5] It is rather to try to open a new window onto the Muslim religious and public sphere, the debates on social and legal reform that have been taking place in it since the beginning of the twentieth century, and the accompanying contestations both on religious authority and on evolving conceptions of Islam. In rhetorical as well as substantive terms, many of these debates have remained inconclusive, and there is much by way of tension, ambiguity, and contradiction in them. As will be seen, such tensions are frequently a product of efforts to claim religious authority with reference to a hallowed scholarly tradition, to put it to particular uses, and to reorient it in various ways. They are also generated, of course, by the particular contexts – local, regional, global – in which the various debates take place. In following some key debates and the seemingly interminable disagreements within the ranks of those contributing to them, we will observe how new spaces have continued to be opened in Islamic thought and in the Muslim public sphere. Internal criticism is the lens through which I propose to survey this landscape. However, just as there is no necessary connection between critique and secularism, none should be assumed or expected between critique and "liberal" interpretations of Islam.[6] If there is much in the discourses of the internal critics that fellow `ulama have found unsettling, policy analysts seeking to identify which groups to bet on in "the war for Muslim minds"[7] are not likely to find

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with the occasionally blurred boundaries between the `ulama, the modernists, and the Islamists. On such fluidity, see Euben and Zaman, *Princeton Readings*, 5–19.

[5] For a sharp contrast between the religious and the "mystical," on the one hand, and the rational and the practical, on the other, with the latter alone seen as the site of internal criticism, see Nussbaum and Sen, "Internal Criticism," esp. 304–6. Even as they show that religious texts and traditions can also contain rational and practical elements, Nussbaum and Sen assume the latter to be clearly separate from the properly religious. Useful correctives to such assumptions are provided, although not with specific reference to this work, by Armando Salvatore, *The Public Sphere: Liberal Modernity, Catholicism, Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley: The Townsend Center for the Humanities, 2009).

[6] Cf. Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 136–7; Marc Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 26–7, 88. The term *liberal* can have quite different connotations, of course, although many of these are broadly shared. (See John Gray, *Liberalism* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986], ix–xi; Paul W. Kahn, *Putting Liberalism in Its Place* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005], 13–14.) With reference to Islam, I take it to mean understandings and approaches that are non-traditionalist and committed to ideas of the autonomous self as well as to secularism, democracy, and pluralism as they are commonly, if variously, understood in modern Western societies.

[7] I borrow this phrase from Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

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great comfort in them either. Although it will surely not meet everyone's expectations, this book will have fulfilled a good deal of its purpose if it can provide an understanding of some facets of modern and contemporary Islamic thought, its varied contexts, and the provenance and significance of the tensions that run through it.

HISTORICAL SETTING AND DRAMATIS PERSONAE

In 1912, Muhammad Rashid Rida, the editor of the Cairo-based monthly journal *al-Manar*, visited India. He had been invited by Muhammad Shibli Nu`mani (d. 1914), a prominent, traditionally educated religious scholar and one of the founding members of the Nadwat al-`Ulama in Lucknow, to preside over this association's annual meeting that year. Rida, born in a village near Tripoli, now the second-largest city of Lebanon (and not to be confused with the Libyan capital), was a disciple of the well-known Egyptian reformer Muhammad `Abduh, the grand mufti of Egypt at the time of his death in 1905. *Al-Manar* had begun publication in 1898, and it had come to establish itself as a leading Islamic journal not only in Egypt but also, thanks to new means of communication, wherever in the Muslim world people capable of reading works in Arabic were to be found.[8] Among non-Arabs, the `ulama were the people most likely to have that ability, although, as Rida liked to point out, much to the discomfort of many people, not all `ulama were equally fluent in the language.[9] One of the goals of the Nadwa was precisely to inculcate this fluency, and it has continued to be a distinctive marker of those graduating from this institution.[10] Unlike many other Indian madrasas, where the Arabic language was taught primarily to enable prospective `ulama to engage with the Islamic scholarly tradition, the Nadwa sought to make instruction in Arabic a bridge to the contemporary Arab world. Shibli, for one, was a contributor

[8] On Rida's life and career, see his autobiographical account in Muhammad Rashid Rida, *al-Manar wa'l-Azhar* (Cairo: Matba`at al-Manar, 1934), 133–200. Also see Shakib Arslan, *al-Sayyid Rashid Rida aw ikha arba`in sana* (Damascus: Matba`at Ibn Zaydun, 1937); Ahmad al-Sharbasi, *Rashid Rida sahib al-manar: `Asruhu wa hayatuhu wa masadir thaqafatihi* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-a`la lil-shu'un al-Islamiyya, 1970); Kerr, *Islamic Reform*; Ahmad Dallal, "Appropriating the Past: Twentieth-Century Reconstruction of Pre-Modern Islamic Thought," *Islamic Law and Society* 7 (2000): 325–58; Dyala Hamzah, "L'intérêt general (*maslaha `amma*) ou le triomphe de l'opinion: Fondation délibératoire (et esquisses délibératives) dans les écrits du publicist syro-égyptien Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935)," PhD dissertation, École des hautes etudes en sciences sociales and Freie Universität Berlin 2008; Ahmad Salah al-Mulla, *Judhur al-usuliyya al-Islamiyya fi Misr al-mu`asira: Rashid Rida wa majallat al-Manar 1898–1935* (Cairo: Matba`at Dar al-kutub wa'l-watha'iq al-qawmiyya, 2008); and Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity: A Critical Reading of the Works of Muhammad Rashid Rida and His Associates (1898–1935)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[9] He was also wont to point to errors in the writing of those nonnative speakers who wrote in Arabic: cf. *al-Manar* 30 (1929–30), 273–4. Also see Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi, *Shadharat-i Sulaymani*, 2 vols. (A`zamgarh: Dar al-musannifin, 1990–7), 1: 240.

[10] See Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Arabic, the Arab Middle East, and the Definition of Muslim Identity in Twentieth Century India," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd ser., 8/1 (1998): 59–81.

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to *al-Manar*, and his sustained critique of a book on Arab-Islamic culture by a contemporary Christian Arab was being serialized in *al-Manar* at the time of Rida's visit to India.[11]

Beside the Nadwat al-`Ulama in Lucknow, Rida visited the Dar al-`Ulum of the north Indian town of Deoband and the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh as well as several other institutions. The Deoband madrasa, as I would usually refer to it in this book, was founded in 1866, a decade after the formal establishment of British colonial rule in India in the aftermath of the abortive "mutiny" of 1857. Although Hindus as well as Muslims had participated in this ill-fated effort to dislodge the British from India, Muslims tended to fare much more poorly in the wake of the Mutiny. This was not only because its failure formally signaled the end of Muslim rule in India or even because the colonial officials were often more suspicious of the Muslims than they were of other inhabitants of the subcontinent. It was also because Muslims were considerably slower than many of their compatriots in warming to the new styles of education and other institutions characteristic of the colonial economy. The founders of the madrasa at Deoband were convinced, for instance, that the interests of the beleaguered Muslim community were best served not through a wholehearted embrace of English education but rather by way of Islamic learning. The madrasa sought to provide its students with a sophisticated grounding in the Islamic legal tradition, which, in this case, meant the doctrines and methods of the Hanafi school of Sunni law long dominant in India. Unlike earlier madrasas, Deoband also came to privilege the study of hadith, the reported teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, often with an effort to demonstrate their concord with Hanafi norms. Deoband's founders were guided by the conviction that Muslims ought to reorder their beliefs and practices in light of authoritative Islamic texts and turn away from the local customary norms that "true" Islam frowns upon. New generations of `ulama trained at this institution were to provide guidance to the believers in all facets of life, enabling them to live good Muslim lives in spite of the political adversity in which the community at large found itself. By the time Rida visited Deoband, a number of madrasas in other Indian towns and cities had come to be patterned on Deoband, all sharing the reformist Deobandi orientation that now occupies a large part of the Islamic landscape in contemporary South Asia.

The Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, founded by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) in 1875 in the north Indian town of Aligarh, was diametrically opposed to Deoband in its orientation.[12] As Sayyid Ahmad saw it, the only effective way in which Muslims could protect their interests under colonial rule was by learning the language and the ways of the British. He was guided in this belief not

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[11] The author of the work critiqued by Shibli Nu`mani was Jurji Zaydan (d. 1914). On him, see Thomas Philipp, *Ǧurǧi Zaydan: His Life and Thought* (Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979).

[12] For the early history of the college, see David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

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only by the sense that Muslims were lagging behind other Indian communities in dealing with the challenges as well as the opportunities created by colonial rule, but also by a dim view of what the `ulama and their institutions had to offer. The `ulama, Sayyid Ahmad and his modernist associates believed, were mired in an anachronistic tradition with little relevance to contemporary needs and, to the extent that they understood the momentous changes around them, their determination to preserve their own claims to authority precluded them from making substantive adjustments to their ways. The alternative, as it had developed by the time Rida visited it in 1912, was a college with an English principal catering to a largely Muslim student population and known above all for its English education.

As will be observed in the following chapters, Rida's views of the `ulama were often similar to those of Sayyid Ahmad. Like his mentor Muhammad `Abduh, who was sometimes compared with Sayyid Ahmad by their contemporaries,[13] Rida held the `ulama's intellectual sterility to have much to answer for in the decline of Islamic civilization, and he believed that their self-serving factionalism had grievously divided Muslims into hostile camps. Their failure to provide effective guidance to the community had also exposed Muslims to all sorts of cultural, political, and religious inroads, not least from Christian missionaries.

If there were commonalities between `Abduh and Rida, on the one hand, and Sayyid Ahmad, on the other, there were also significant differences. For all his severe criticism of his contemporary `ulama, especially those associated with the millennium-old Azhar of Cairo, `Abduh, in contrast to Sayyid Ahmad, was one of them. His efforts to reform al-Azhar earned him the bitter hostility of the more conservative `ulama, but he could speak their language in ways that Sayyid Ahmad and other modernists, in India, Egypt, or elsewhere, have seldom been able to. Rida, unlike `Abduh, was not educated at an institution as prestigious as al-Azhar and his intellectual formation was considerably more eclectic. However, despite his lifelong opposition to the traditionalist `ulama, he, too, is recognizable as an `alim. He had studied with a number of prominent religious scholars of his time, including Husayn al-Jisr (d. 1909) who, like `Abduh, was himself a graduate of al-Azhar. From al-Jisr, the founder of the Madrasa al-wataniyya al-Islamiyya, he had received a *shahadat al-`alimiyya*, certifying to his credentials as a religious scholar, as well as the permission to teach others.[14] Rida's juridical and exegetical discourses fell squarely within the purview of the `ulama even as his journalistic career went well beyond it. In a 1912 letter to an associate, the aforementioned Shibli

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[13] Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Ta'rikh al-ustadh al-imam al-shaykh Muhammad `Abduh*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-fadila, 2003; first published 1906–31), 1: 518; Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 2: 180.

[14] Rida, *al-Manar wa'l-Azhar*, 196; cf. ibid., 139–42. On al-Jisr, see ibid., 139–45; Johannes Ebert, *Religion und Reform in der arabischen Provinz: Husayn al-Ğisr at-Tarabulusi (1845–1909) – Ein islamischer Gelehrter zwischen Tradition und Reform* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991).

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Nu`mani had referred to Rida with some exaggeration as "the greatest religious scholar (`alim) of Egypt and Syria."[15] Never displeased with being counted among "`ulama who are famous in Muslim lands"[16] and appropriating that designation when it suited him,[17] Rida clearly saw himself as belonging to the ranks of the "good" `ulama whose mission it was to set the "bad" ones right as part of a larger reformist project.

A more important difference has to do with the intellectual and religious orientation of `Abduh and Rida, which, unlike Sayyid Ahmad's, is best characterized as Salafi. In contemporary parlance, the term Salafi has come to acquire many different connotations. It has been used to refer to some groups who consider it obligatory to take up arms against all those – non-Muslims and Muslims – who are deemed to challenge or contravene the dictates of the Islamic foundational texts, the Qur'an and the normative example of the Prophet Muhammad (the *sunna*).[18] At the other end of the spectrum, it refers to a politically quietist trend, typified by the Saudi religious establishment, that rejects all beliefs and practices seen as compromising the oneness of God (*tawhid*) while leaving politics largely to the ruling elite. But the term Salafi is also used for, and by, those who reject the authority of the medieval schools of law and insist on an unmediated access to the foundational texts as the source of all norms. In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, it was likewise employed as a self-designation by Rida and his associates to denote an approach to Islam that was anchored in the foundational texts and in the example of the "pious forbears" – the *salaf* – as contrasted with understandings of Islam "distorted" by centuries of legal, theological, and mystical debates, self-serving `ulama, and despotic rulers.

Not all Salafis agree on how far to go in rejecting the medieval tradition any more than they do on the implications of doing so. Many a Salafi would want to ground all belief and practice in the Qur'an, the sunna, and the example of the pious

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[15] Shibli Nu`mani to Mirza Salim, March 25, 1912, in Mushtaq Husayn, ed., *Baqiyyat-i Shibli* (Delhi: Azad kitab ghar, 1964), 213.

[16] This characterization was used for him, alongside the then Shaykh al-Azhar Muhammad Mustafa al-Maraghi, Muhammad Bakhit al-Muti`i (a former grand mufti of Egypt) and others, in a juridical query on financial interest sent to him by a mufti from Hyderabad, India: *al-Manar* 30 (1929–30), 273. For a discussion of this query and Rida's response to it, see Chapter 3. Also cf. *al-Manar* 17 (1914), 306, where Rida is introduced as "*al-`alim al-Islami al-kabir*."

[17] For instance, in his letter to Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, in June 1919, where he refers to himself as a "Muslim scholar" (*`alim muslim*): The National Archives, Public Record Office, FO 371/4232; published in Mahmoud Haddad, "Risalat al-Shaykh Rashid Rida ila Lloyd George fi 1919," *Chronos: Revue d'histoire de l'université de Balamand* 2 1999): 159–78, at 164, 177. Rida also makes it a point to mention in the letter that "he had presided over the conference of the Nadwat al-`Ulama ['the conclave of Muslim scholars'] in India in 1912" (ibid., 165, 177). Also see *al-Manar* 19 (1916–17), 26, where Rida takes it upon himself to respond to a Christian missionary attack on the authenticity of hadith because he did not want the missionaries "to say to Muslims that no one from your `ulama was able to defend your normative traditions and your shari`a."

[18] On "extremist Salafis" (*al-salafiyya al-mutashaddida*), see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-jihad*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2009), 1: 200 and passim.

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forbears as a way of rejecting the cultural, intellectual, and political innovations he sees around him. Others, however, have been convinced that, in clearing the debris of the medieval tradition, true Islam can be shown to be at home in the modern world, to be fully capable of keeping pace with the imperatives of changing times. Yet even as large swaths of the medieval tradition have been jettisoned, facets of it have continued to inform some Salafi discourses. The Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) received effusive praise from Rida, as he does from other Salafis, and Rida published an early collection of some of Ibn Taymiyya's writings.[19] Rida's discourses on *maslaha*, the common good, were deeply influenced by the Hanbali scholar al-Tufi (d. 1316), and he did much to establish the reputation of the Andalusian Maliki jurist al-Shatibi (d. 1388).[20] Significantly, Rida also drew frequently on the exegetical work of Fakhr al-din al-Razi (d. 1209), a Sunni theologian whose rationalist as opposed to narrowly scripturalist approach has usually not recommended itself to other Salafis.[21] An orientation that sought to draw on the foundational texts together with select facets of the Islamic tradition in responding to what it saw as the challenges of the modern world is the sort of Salafism that best defines the position of `Abduh and Rida.

Finding ways of being at once modern and authentically religious was always foremost among Rida's concerns, and he liked to both shame and inspire his audiences by pointing to non-Muslims as examples of that combination. While in Mumbai (then called Bombay) in March 1912, en route to northern India, he had been especially impressed by the affluence of the Indian Parsi (Zoroastrian) community. Unlike English schools, those run by the Parsi community also taught religion to the students. And even though he was not able to visit the community's schools, Rida had observed Parsi men and women praying at the shore at dawn. "If worshipping the sun and the fire and the ocean does not prevent their secular development (*al-taraqqi al-madani*)," he rhetorically asks, "how, then, can the [rational] religion of nature and God's unity prevent it?"[22] Yet unlike even the Parsis, the Muslim modernists and their English-style schools went too far in their quest for worldly progress, jettisoning Islam itself if it could not be shown to accord with their Eurocentric notions. A good deal of Rida's speech at Aligarh would be occupied by an insistence that his audience not compromise on the religious moorings of their identity, which decidedly came from the Islamic foundational texts.

[19] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmu`at al-rasa'il wa'l-masa'il*, ed. Muhammad Rashid Rida, 5 vols. (Cairo: Matba`at al-Manar, 1922–30); cf. *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 555–6.

[20] For Rida's use of al-Tufi and al-Shatibi, see Chapter 4.

[21] For Rida's invocation of Razi, see Chapter 2. Although it is true that `Abduh had a more expansive view of who the "forbears" were who ought to guide Islamic life and thought (Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 149, 230–1; cf. Muhammad `Abduh, *al-Islam wa'l-nasraniyya* [Cairo: Matba`at majallat al-Manar, 1905], 167–70), the medieval tradition that informed Rida's discourses was scarcely a very narrow one.

[22] *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 619.

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There was much political ferment in both the Arab Middle East and South Asia at the time of Rida's trip to India. Libya, part of the Ottoman Empire, was under attack that year and was soon brought under Italian rule. Emboldened by manifest signs of Ottoman military weakness, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro had forged alliances that same year to challenge the Ottomans in the Balkans. Here, too, the war had proved disastrous for the Ottomans.[23] Egypt had been a British protectorate since 1882, and Morocco, too, became a French protectorate in 1912. It was not only the Ottoman caliphate – for many the political and religious symbol of Islam even under the control of the secularizing Young Turks and their Committee of Union and Progress – but the Muslim world at large that was at a low ebb. As the American Protestant missionary Samuel Zwemer had observed at a conference in Lucknow in 1911, while reviewing opportunities for Christian proselytism in the "great, dark, despairing, defiant, desperate Moslem world": "Morocco . . . is typical of the *degradation* of Islam; Persia of its *disintegration*; Arabia of its *stagnation*; Egypt of its attempted *reformation*; . . . India [of] the *opportunity* to reach Islam."[24]

Rida, who published an abridged and annotated translation of Zwemer's speech in a 1912 issue of *al-Manar*,[25] was acutely aware of the challenges facing Islam. There is no simple way of characterizing his political attitudes, however. The very same year he traveled to the city where Zwemer had delivered his speech, Rida had founded the Madrasat al-da`wa wa'l-irshad (School for Proselytism and Guidance), a Cairo-based institution for training Muslim preachers and scholars capable, inter alia, of combating Christian missionaries. Yet, after his efforts at Turkish sponsorship of this initiative failed, it was British support that he had sought for it.[26] For all his anxieties about colonial rule, the Christian missionaries working under its protection, and a new generation of Muslims bent on "blindly imitating" all things Western, Rida was far from being implacably hostile to the British. Part of what made for a complex attitude toward them was a grudging

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[23] On the Libyan (Tripolitan) and Balkan wars, see M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 167–77.

[24] Samuel M. Zwemer, "An Introductory Survey" in E. M. Wherry, S. M. Zwemer, and C. G. Mylrea, eds., *Islam and Missions: Being Papers Read at the Second Missionary Conference on Behalf of the Mohammedan World at Lucknow, January 23–28, 1911* (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), 41–2; emphasis in the original.

[25] *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 608–14; for the full report on the conference, ibid., 605–19.

[26] Gerard Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, July 6, 1910, FO 407/175: 24872 (Confidential Print: Middle East [electronic resource], http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk/Introduction/Confidential_Print/default.aspx#MiddleEast). Also see Gerard Lowther to Sir Edward Grey, October 9, 1910, FO 407/175: 37536 (Foreign Office Files for India, Pakistan and Afghanistan [electronic resource], http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk/Introduction/FO_India/default.aspx). The madrasa was overseen by the Association for Proselytism and Guidance (*Jama`at* al-da`wa wa'l-irshad), founded a year earlier. On the Association and its madrasa, see *al-Manar* 14 (1911–12): 114–34, 801–21. The Association's foundation document was signed in March 1911 (*al-Manar* 14 [1911–12], 114–15), and the madrasa began its operation on March 1, 1912, just before Rida's departure for India. *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 226–7.

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admiration for the might of the British empire as well as for the Englishmen's commitment to their own culture and traditions[27] – which, like the Parsis of Bombay, again reminded him that progress and cultural authenticity need not be antithetical traits. An instinct for self-preservation also shaped Rida's views of the world he inhabited. As he told his audience in India, of all colonial powers, the British provided their subjects the most freedom, and "it was possible for those living under their shadow to develop themselves so long as they followed a rational and sagacious path."[28] His attitude toward the British was no doubt also informed by a poor view of the Young Turks. The latter's rebuff of his proposed madrasa was still fresh in Rida's mind when he had observed, in remarks that were not well received in some Muslim quarters in India, that "the British occupation of Egypt [had been] beneficial and the constitutional government of the young Turks [was] . . . injurious to the interests of the country."[29]

There was no mistaking the intrusiveness of even seemingly benign forms of colonialism, however. For instance, and again on a personal level, Rida had been aware of the colonial intelligence's interest in him while in India. As he saw it, he would not have made it to the Nadwa's Lucknow session at all if the governor of the United Provinces had not been persuaded that Rida was a religious rather than a political figure "who did not believe that pan-Islamism (*al-jami`a al-Islamiyya*) had any existence or that it posed any danger to European colonialism."[30] In the same vein, he liked to claim that his Da`wa wa'l-irshad initiative was "purely religious, with no trace of politics."[31] British suspicions would nonetheless prevent him from setting up an Indian branch.[32] During World War I, there may even have been some talk of exiling him to the Mediterranean island of Malta.[33]

His disavowals notwithstanding, pan-Islamism was, indeed, an important facet of Rida's thought. At the very least, it was the implicit pan-Islamic appeal of his journal that had got him invited to the Nadwa's annual session. Notable pan-Islamists like Amir Shakib Arslan (d. 1946) would long be among his close associates.[34] And, a decade after his visit to India and on the eve of the abolition of the Ottoman

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[27] See Chapter 5, n. 21.

[28] "al-Khutba al-ra'isiyya fi Nadwat al-`Ulama li-sahib al-Manar," *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 331–41, at 334–5.

[29] *Indian Newspaper Reports, c 1868–1942, from the British Library, London*, microform (Marlborough: Adam Matthew Publications Ltd, 2005–): IOR/L/R/5/87, reel 14: United Provinces Newspaper Reports 1912, 488 (citing Aligarh's *Urdu-i Mualla*, May 1912).

[30] *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 624. The governor had cited the noted British Orientalist D. S. Margoliouth in support of this view. Ibid., 624.

[31] *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 929 (Rida's speech to the 1912 meeting of the Jama`at al-Da`wa wa'l-Irshad).

[32] *al-Manar* 15 (1912): 928–9.

[33] Arslan, *al-Sayyid Rashid Rida*, 155–6; Mahmoud Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashid Rida's Ideas on the Caliphate," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (1997): 268.

[34] Arslan, *al-Sayyid Rashid Rida*. On Arslan, see William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).