

# MODERNIST ISLAM, 1840–1940

A SOURCEBOOK

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FINDING REASONS FOR THE CONSTITUTION IN THE KORAN

(FROM "MULLA NASIR-UD-DIN THE PERSIAN "PUNCH")

Source: Eustache de Lorey and Douglas Sladen, *The Moon of the Fourteenth Night: Being the Private Life of an Unmarried Diplomat in Persia during the Revolution* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1910), p. 98.

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Introduction:  
The Modernist Islamic Movement

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Edouard Valmont was a French diplomat serving in Tehran, Iran, when a constitutionalist movement erupted and came to power in 1906. This movement, combining religious and secular forces, argued that Islam was compatible with democratic principles. Valmont was bemused. In a ghostwritten memoir, he held that Iranians, even apparently enlightened ones, suffer “the lack of real comprehension of the spirit of the Constitution.”<sup>1</sup>

As evidence of the difficulty modern institutions faced in an Islamic country, Valmont’s memoir included a cartoon, reproduced at left, showing a clerical figure pointing with one hand to the Qur’an and holding up his other hand to block curious onlookers from peeking. The caption read: “Finding reasons for the constitution in the Koran (from ‘Mulla Nasir-ud-din[.]’ the Persian ‘Punch’).” The message seems clear: Muslims may claim that Islam supports constitutionalism, but such claims don’t bear close scrutiny.

It is, rather, Valmont’s use of this cartoon that doesn’t bear scrutiny. The original—published with a slightly different drawing in *Mulla Nasruddin*, the famed satirical journal of Baku, Azerbaijan—had an entirely different caption. It read, in Azeri Turkish: “I cure the ill by writing down verses [from the

Qur’an].”<sup>2</sup> The cartoon said nothing about constitutionalism, but rather mocked an old-fashioned religious practice. Valmont saw an image lampooning an Islamic scholar and inverted its meaning, from antitraditionalism to antimodernism.

Valmont’s suspicion of modernist Islam was common among Christians, even among scholars who studied Islam. Duncan Black Macdonald (United States, 1863–1943), for example, wrote in 1903 that Islam does not allow constitutionalism because the caliph “cannot set up beside himself a constitutional assembly and give it rights against himself. He is the successor of Muhammad and must rule, within [divine] limitations, as an absolute monarch.”<sup>3</sup> Yet within a few years of that statement, some of the leading scholars of the Islamic world were arguing exactly the contrary. Muhammad ‘Abduh (Egypt, 1849–1905; see chapter 3)—the highest-ranking religious official in Egypt—wrote privately in 1904 that he supported a parliamentary democracy.<sup>4</sup> In 1908, Mehmed Cemaleddin Efendi (Turkey, 1848–1917)—the chief religious authority of the Ottoman Empire, appointed

2. *Mulla Nasruddin*, September 22, 1906, pp. 4–5. Translation from Azeri by Mahmoud Sadri.

3. Duncan B. Macdonald, *The Development of Moslem Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1903), p. 58.

4. Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 147–148.

1. Eustache de Lorey and Douglas Sladen, *The Moon of the Fourteenth Night: Being the Private Life of an Unmarried Diplomat in Persia during the Revolution* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1910), p. 156. “Valmont” was a pseudonym.

directly by the caliph—said that he too supported constitutionalism.<sup>5</sup> Also in 1908, two senior scholars of Shi'i Islam telegraphed their support at a crucial moment in Iran's Constitutional Revolution: "We would like to know if it would be possible to execute Islamic provisions without a constitutional regime!"<sup>6</sup>

Macdonald's blanket statement about the incompatibility of Islam and constitutionalism also ignored, or dismissed, the half-century's crescendo of proposals for Islamic constitutionalism. These proposals formed part of a movement that generated tremendous intellectual ferment throughout the Islamic world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This movement sought to reconcile Islamic faith and modern values such as constitutionalism, as well as cultural revival, nationalism, freedom of religious interpretation, scientific investigation, modern-style education, women's rights, and a bundle of other themes discussed later in this introduction (see also the Contents by Theme). The authors and activists engaged in this movement saw the tension between Islamic faith and modern values as a historical accident, not an inherent feature of Islam. The modern period both required and permitted this accident to be repaired: the threat of European domination made repair necessary, and the modern values associated with European domination made repair possible. The modernist Islamic movement pioneered the formation or reformation of educational institutions; agitation for political liberalization or decolonization; and the establishment of a periodical press throughout the Islamic world.

One defining characteristic of this movement was the self-conscious adoption of "modern" values—that is, values that authors explicitly associated with the modern world, especially rationality, science, constitutionalism, and certain forms of human equality. Thus this movement was not simply "modern" (a feature of modernity) but also "modernist" (a proponent of modernity). Activists described themselves and their goals by the Arabic terms *jadid* (new) and *mu'asir* (contemporary), the Turkish terms *yeni*

(new) and *genç* (young), and similar words in other languages. (By contrast, *muda*, Malay for young, was initially a pejorative term applied by opponents to the modernist Islamic movement.)<sup>7</sup> A second characteristic involved the usage of a self-consciously Islamic discourse. Activists were not simply Muslims but also wished to preserve and improve Islamic faith in the modern world. This combination of characteristics emerged in the first part of the nineteenth century, as several Islamic states adopted European military and technical organization, and various Muslim travelers to Europe brought back influential tales of progress and enlightenment. We have picked the date 1840 as a rough marker of the emergence of this form of discourse.

Modernism distinguished the modernist Islamic movement from previous Islamic reform movements, which did not identify their values as modern, and from contemporaneous competitors such as traditionalists who rejected modern values. Finally, it distinguished the movement from two of its successors, which supplanted modernist Islam in the middle of the twentieth century: on one hand secularists who downplayed the importance of Islam in the modern world, privileging nationalism, socialism, or other ideologies; on the other hand religious revivalists who espoused modern values (such as social equality, codified law, and mass education) but downplayed their modernity, privileging authenticity and divine mandates. Following one classic study, we have dated the moment of decline at roughly 1940,<sup>8</sup> though modernist Islam continued to spread in several regions after this date. Late in the twentieth century, the combination of modernist and Islamic discourses was revived in a subset of modernist Islam that I have labeled "liberal Islam," which sought to resuscitate the reputation and accomplishments of earlier modernists.<sup>9</sup>

The boundaries of the modernist Islamic movement could be imprecise, but its core was clear: a set

5. Cemaleddin Efendi, *Siyasi Hatıralar, 1908–1913 (Political Memoirs, 1908–1913)* (Istanbul, Turkey: Tercüman, 1978), pp. 43–47; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 489–490.

6. Abdul-Hadi Haiiri, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1977), p. 242.

7. William R. Roff, *The Origins of Malay Nationalism*, 2d ed. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 67.

8. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), chapter 13.

9. Charles Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Several authors are omitted from the present book because their work was included in this earlier anthology.

of key figures who served as lodestones for Muslim intellectuals of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Three figures in particular were famed throughout the Islamic world: Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (Iran, 1838–1897; chapter 11), his student and collaborator ‘Abduh, and ‘Abduh’s student and collaborator Muhammad Rashid Rida (Syria-Egypt, 1865–1935; chapter 6), plus regional pioneers Sayyid Ahmad Khan (North India, 1817–1898; chapter 40), Namik Kemal (Turkey, 1840–1888; chapter 17), and Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (Crimea, 1851–1914; chapter 29). Supporters cited and debated the statements of these figures, especially the periodicals they edited: Afghani and ‘Abduh’s *al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa* (*The Strongest Link*), published in Paris, 1884; Rida’s *al-Manar* (*The Beacon*), published in Cairo, 1898–1935; Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (*Refinement of Morals*), published in Aligarh, 1870–1896; Namik Kemal’s *Hürriyet* (*Liberty*) and *İbret* (*Warning*), published in Paris and Istanbul, 1868–1873; and Gasprinskii’s *Tercüman/Perevodchik* (*The Interpreter*), published in Bakhchisaray, Crimea, 1883–1914. Even authors who disagreed with the modernist Islamic project located themselves in relation to these central figures.

The present anthology includes influential writings by these authors. Yet the modernist Islamic movement was not limited to central figures, and this anthology seeks also to highlight the contributions of authors from around the Islamic world who were influential in their regional contexts, from South Africa to East Europe to Southeast Asia,<sup>10</sup> but not so well known to other Muslims or scholars of Islam. The anthology also samples the modernists’ varied forms of discourse: journalistic essays, scholarly treatises, and didactic fiction of various sorts, including dialogues, stories, plays, and poems. In addition, the anthology presents a cross section of themes and positions. The modernist Islamic movement was never monolithic, and variation, even deep disagreement, existed on virtually all subjects. Modern values included both state-building and limits on state power; elitism and egalitarianism; discipline and liberty; Europhilism and anti-imperialism. The modern-

ists’ Islamic faith encompassed both mysticism and abhorrence of mysticism; strategic use of traditional scholarship and rejection of traditional scholarship; return to a pristine early Islam and updating of early practices in keeping with historical change.

Considerations of influence and diversity guided the selection of authors and works in this anthology. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues who served as section editors and project advisers, applying their expertise to the selection of succinct, important, relevant, and characteristic contributions from the authors they have chosen. Inevitably, the anthology omits certain important figures for lack of space, and some decisions may be controversial. The Islamic faith of a couple of authors (to be discussed in a moment) may be in question—indeed, opponents charged that ‘Abduh and other leading modernists were “irreligious” and even “satanic.”<sup>11</sup> The modernism of some authors may be criticized—indeed, modernists criticized one another for going too far, or not far enough, in one direction or another. This is to be expected of any intellectual movement. Readers should note that the editors do not wish to construct a “canon” of modernist Islam but rather to make available in a single volume a representative sampling of major voices in the movement.

What can we learn from these voices? The following sections explore four issues that emerge from the writings of the modernist Islamic movement, each organized around the freedom of speech. I propose that this was the central intellectual issue of the movement: the right to say novel things in an Islamic discourse. In order to defend modern values, modernists had to defend the right to defend modern values. This they did by referring to the particular challenges and opportunities posed by the onslaught of modernity; by arguing that their own, often nontraditional educations qualified them to speak on Islamic issues; by pioneering new forms of discourse; and, finally, by laying out their modernist vision of Islam. These

11. Amal Ghazali, “Sufism, *Ijtihad*, and Modernity: Yusuf al-Nabhani in the Age of ‘Abd al-Hamid II,” paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association, Chicago, Ill., 1998, pp. 19–20; Yahya Abdouline, “Histoire et interprétations contemporaines du second réformisme musulman (ou djadidisme)” (Contemporary History and Interpretations of the Second Muslim Reformism, or Jadidism), *Cahiers du monde russe* (*Annals of the Russian World*), volume 37, numbers 1–2, 1996, p. 71.

10. The regional classifications are inevitably somewhat arbitrary, as political control and circuits of training reached across geographic boundaries. Much of North Africa, for example, was part of the Ottoman Empire, but it is grouped here with the rest of Africa to provide cross-regional balance.

problematics remain vivid today for Muslims who wish to espouse modern values in an Islamic discourse.

### Why Speak Now?

Modernism is hardly the first movement in Islamic history to claim a dire need for reform and revival of the faith. Such calls could be heard already in the eighth and ninth centuries,<sup>12</sup> and revivalist movements recurred up through the eighteenth century, a period whose revivalist activity "created an underlying theme for the modern Islamic experience."<sup>13</sup> Some modernists called upon this and other precedents of reform, in part, it appears, to demonstrate their continuity with Islamic tradition. Rida (chapter 6), among others, cited the *hadith* (saying of the Prophet): "God sends to this nation at the beginning of every century someone who renews its religion."

Yet the modernists faced a challenge that earlier reformers had not, namely the onslaught of modernity. Modernity was not a disembodied set of ideals; it was associated, rather, with the imperialist expansion of Christian Europe, which threatened Islam in at least five registers.

Militarily, modern means of warfare allowed Europe to conquer vast regions of the Islamic world. This trend had begun in the seventeenth century but gained such momentum by the nineteenth century that modernist Muslims worried about the prospect of complete subjugation. "Like a convict, the Muslim world remains everywhere under someone else's control," wrote Musa Jarullah Bigi (Tatarstan, 1875–1949; chapter 35). Even the Ottoman Empire, the most powerful Islamic state, had lost territory and submitted to treaties allowing foreign intervention in the empire's domestic affairs. Namik Kemal (chapter 17), for example, argued that "the [Ottoman] nation is faced with the threat of extinction," and the Ottoman "state will undoubtedly sink" if current

trends continued. He used this dire prediction to justify his call for democratic reform: "every intelligent person realizes that as long as this tyrannical administration prevails in the state, foreign interventions cannot be stopped."

Economically, modernity appeared to generate wealth and commodities that the Islamic world lacked and desired. Muslim visitors to Europe in the early and mid-nineteenth century marveled at the gas street lamps and other indicators of prosperity.<sup>14</sup> Modernist Muslims attributed this prosperity both to European increases in productivity and to exploitation of other regions, including Islamic homelands. A combination of resentment and respect is expressed, for example, by Mahmud Tarzi (Afghanistan, 1865–1933; chapter 14): "European states, by contrast, not only exploit their own mines, but also those of the entire world. In addition to natural resources, they are also capable of industrial production. This is simply because they have the knowledge and we do not."

Cognitively, modern science challenged other worldviews with its dramatic claims of success. Modernist Muslims accepted these claims. Some emphasized the medieval Islamic roots of modern science, while others emphasized the seemingly miraculous advances made in recent years. All, however, recognized science as a challenge to Islamic understandings of the world. Ahmad Khan (chapter 40), for example, identified this threat even as he embraced modern scientific disciplines: "I am certain that as these sciences spread—and their spreading is inevitable and I myself after all, too, help and contribute towards spreading them—there will arise in the hearts of people an uneasiness and carelessness and even a positive disaffection towards Islam as it has been shaped in our time." According to Ahmad Khan, this threat required Muslims to wipe the "black stains" of traditionalism from "the original luminous face of Islam."

Politically, modern institutions of government seemed, according to their proponents, to maintain social peace and build national unity in ways that contemporary Islamic states could not. According to Khayr al-Din (Tunisia, 1822–1890; chapter 2), European "progress in the governance of mankind, which

12. Fazlur Rahman, "Revival and Reform in Islam," in P. M. Holt et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1970), volume 2, p. 633; John Obert Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History," in John L. Esposito, ed., *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 36.

13. John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, 2d ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1994), p. 30.

14. Nazik Saba Yared, *Arab Travellers and Western Civilization*, trans. Sumayya Damluji Shahbandar (London: Saqi Books, 1996).

has led to the utmost point of prosperity for their countries," relied primarily on respect for personal and political rights, which he identified as "the basis of the great development of knowledge and civilization in the European kingdoms." Rida wrote in 1907, "The greatest benefit that the peoples of the Orient have derived from the Europeans was to learn how real government ought to be, as well as the assimilation of this knowledge." Muslims could not have developed this independently, he continued. "Had you not reflected upon the state of these people [Europeans], you, or others like you, would not have considered this to be part of Islam."<sup>15</sup> Ayatullah Muhammad Tabataba'i (Iran, 1843–1921) noted in a speech to the newly founded Iranian parliament: "I've never seen the constitutional countries myself. But I've heard, and those who have seen the constitutional countries have told me, that the constitution is the cause of the security and flourishing of the country."<sup>16</sup>

Culturally, modernity introduced novel patterns of behavior that threatened to displace existing practices. Shaykh al-Amin bin 'Ali al-Mazrui (Kenya, 1890–1947; chapter 7) worried that "every day we see ourselves mimicking whites, and not only in ways that are good and which do not contradict our religion." Muslims adopted alcohol and European garb, but not "their good customs, like their pastimes, their ways of [conducting] meetings, their love of country, their solidarity, and other things like these." Muslim women cut their hair in European styles but ought rather to value "the knowledge European women have in fixing up their houses and making them comfortable and neat, and rearing their children in a healthy way, and with good customs and manners, and the ability they have in [doing] handy work and crafts and cooking."

In sum, the challenges of modernity appeared to threaten the very existence of Islam. In the context of social Darwinist competition, many Muslims worried that Islam would not be able to compete. Khwaja Altaf Husseïn Hali (North India, 1837–1914; chapter 38) worried that the "dilapidated hall of the true religion, whose pillars have been tottering for

ages, . . . will remain in the world only a few days more." 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (Syria, 1854–1902; chapter 19) feared that "danger has come close—may God forbid it—to the heart." A poem published in Iran and Afghanistan suggested that "The black smoke rising from the roof of the fatherland / Is caused by us. / The flames that devour us from left and right / Are caused by us."<sup>17</sup>

Yet these challenges also provided an opportunity, according to modernist Muslims. By realizing modern ideals, in this view, Islamic societies could not only survive but thrive, as well as recover the original ideals of their faith. "All new things are hardly blameworthy. On the contrary, most innovations are praiseworthy," wrote Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (Egypt, 1801–1873; chapter 1).<sup>18</sup> According to Şemseddin Sami Frashëri (Albania-Turkey, 1850–1904; chapter 18), "It is a regrettable circumstance that, because today civilization seems to belong exclusively to the Christian nations, ignorant masses of our own nation take it to be a symbol or requisite of Christianity, and thus deem distancing themselves from it and guarding themselves against it to be a religious duty. We can affirm that it is not the religion of Islam which prevents Muslim nations from becoming civilized."

Even colonial dependence had positive implications, some modernists argued. Muhammad Iqbal (North India, 1877–1938; chapter 41), later an apostle of Pakistani independence, argued that the British Empire was "a civilizing factor" in the Islamic world: "England, in fact, is doing one of our own great duties, which unfavorable circumstances did not permit us to perform. It is not the number of Muhammadans which it protects, but the spirit of the British Empire that makes it the greatest Muhammadan Empire in the world." Thomas Ismaël Urbain (France, 1812–1884), a convert to Islam who infuriated French colonizers of North Africa with his criticism of their brutality, nonetheless defended the potential of colonization to develop "an administrative organization favorable to the development of

17. Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880–1946* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 167.

18. Gilbert Delanoue, *Moralistes et politiques musulmans dans l'Égypte du XIXe siècle (1798–1882) (Muslim Moralists and Politicians in Egypt of the 19th Century, 1798–1882)* (Cairo, Egypt: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1982), volume 2, p. 450.

15. Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, rev. ed. (London: Pinter, 1997), p. 46.

16. Fereyduñ Adamiyat, *Fikr-i dimukrasi-i ijtimai'i dar nahzat-i mashrutiyat-i Iran (Social Democratic Thought in the Iranian Constitutionalist Movement)* (Tehran, Iran: Intisharat-i Payam, 1975), p. 4.

agriculture and commerce . . . an organization of religion and of justice, a large system of public education, and finally various philanthropic institutions."<sup>19</sup> Sayid Syekh al-Hadi (Malaya, 1867–1934), one of the founders of the Singapore reformist journal *al-Imam* (chapter 46), went so far as to praise British colonizers as God's "righteous servants."<sup>20</sup>

Not all modernists fawned so enthusiastically over European civilization. Some distinguished between aspects worthy of adoption and those to be rejected. Rida, for example, concluded that "all that we need to acquire from Europe is its scientific achievements, technical skill and advanced industries. The acquisition of these aspects does not require all this amount of Westernization."<sup>21</sup> Others, such as Ali Suavi (Turkey, 1839–1878; chapter 16), noted the hypocrisy of European ideals in the age of imperialism: "Just look how those Frenchmen talk pretentiously about freedom and equality, all the while seeking world domination like Caesar." Abu'l-Kalam Azad (Bengal-India, 1888–1958; chapter 44) was biting critical of the "inequity" of British colonialism, which "cannot possibly countenance any nationalistic awakening or agitation for progress, reform, or justice . . . as such agitation would spell the inevitable downfall of its dominant power." Hadji Agus Salim (Sumatra-Java, 1884–1954; chapter 49) questioned whether the Dutch colonial government was "exercising its power in accordance with the spirit of the times, that is, taking on the responsibility for preparing these people to develop their own independent talents, so that Indonesians can have their own independent country?" 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Tha'alibi (Tunisia, 1879–1944) compared the freedom of the French press with French colonial decrees limiting the Tunisian press and "prohibiting the entry into Tunisia of newspapers and writings published in France and elsewhere."<sup>22</sup> Yet these critics embraced the ideals

of modernity, even as they berated Europeans for failing to live up to these ideals.

Some modernists seemed, frankly, conflicted about European civilization. Iqbal (chapter 41), quoted above praising colonialism's "civilizing" mission in 1909, warned Muslims against modernity a few years later:

But do not seek the glow of Love from the  
knowledge of to-day,  
Do not seek the nature of Truth from this  
infidel's cup!  
Long have I been running to and fro,  
Learning the secrets of the New Knowledge:  
Its gardeners have put me to the trial  
And have made me intimate with their roses.  
Roses! Tulips, rather, that warn one not to  
smell them—  
Like paper roses, a mirage of perfume.  
Since this garden ceased to enthrall me  
I have nested on the Paradisal tree.  
Modern knowledge is the greatest blind—  
Idol-worshipping, idol-selling, idol-making!<sup>23</sup>

Later in life, Iqbal offered similarly antagonistic opinions. On one hand, for example, he praised Turkey for its drastic Westernizing reforms: "The truth is that among the Muslim nations of today, Turkey alone has shaken off its dogmatic slumber, and attained self-consciousness. She alone has claimed her right of intellectual freedom; she alone has passed from the ideal to the real—a transition which entails keen intellectual and moral struggle."<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, he castigated Turkey for Westernizing:

The Turk, torn from the self,  
Enraptured by the West, drinks from her hand  
A poison sweet; and since the antidote  
He has renounced, what can I say except  
God save him.<sup>25</sup>

19. Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871–1919)* (*Muslim Algerians and France, 1871–1919*) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), volume 1, p. 404.

20. Ibrahim bin Abu Bakar, *Islamic Modernism in Malaya: The Life and Thought of Sayid Syekh al-Hadi, 1867–1934* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: University of Malaya Press, 1994), pp. 159–160.

21. Emad Eldin Shahin, *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashid Rida and the West* (Herndon, Va.: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993), p. 49.

22. Abdelaziz Thaalbi, *La Tunisie martyre (Tunisia the*

*Martyr)* (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1985), p. 29. First published in 1920.

23. *The Secrets of the Self (Asrar-i khudi)*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore, Pakistan: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1950), pp. 76–77. First published in 1915.

24. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 162; also in Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam*, p. 262.

25. *Pilgrimage of Eternity (Javidnamah)*, trans. Shaikh Mahmud Ahmad (Lahore, Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1961), p. 167. First published in 1932.



Iqbal's Persian and Urdu poetry denouncing modernity may be at odds with his English-language prose embracing modernity. But this tension represents the challenge of the modernist Islamic movement as a whole. Modernity involved both threat and opportunity, external imposition and internal renovation. Modernists argued that the crisis demanded drastic reform in the Islamic world.

### Who Can Speak?

Logically prior to the substance of their arguments, the modernists had to defend their right to make such arguments. They did so by challenging two forms of scholarly authority that stood in their way: the authority of the past and the authority of the credential.

The authority of the past crystallized in the practice of *taqlid*, a term that literally meant to follow established scholars but which modernists ritually denigrated as blind, irrational imitation of tradition.<sup>26</sup> All of the lodestone figures in the modernist movement weighed in on this theme,<sup>27</sup> as did others: "It is better to follow a beast than an imitator," wrote 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (Algeria-Syria, circa 1807–1883; chapter 15). "*Taqlid* and Islam are mutually contradictory," wrote Abdullah Bubi (Tatarstan, 1871–1922; chapter 32). "*Taqlid* of religious leaders who pretend to present true religion is no different from obedience to political tyrants. Either one is a form of idolatry," wrote Muhammad Husayn Na'ini (Iran, 1860–1936; chapter 13).

Rather than follow precedent, the modernists argued that active reinterpretation of Islamic sources was permitted and even necessary under certain circumstances. Some cited revelation and precedent from the early Islamic era in support of this position. Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi (Syria, 1866–1914; chapter 23)—among many others—quoted a *hadith* in which Muhammad sent a companion, Mu'adh ibn Jabal (died 627), to serve as governor of Yemen: "The Prophet said to him, 'How would you act as judge?' He said, 'I would judge by God's book.' The

Prophet then said, 'And if you do not find a ruling in God's book?' He said, 'By the *sunna* [precedent] of God's Messenger.' The Prophet then said, 'And if you do not find it there?' He said, 'I would perform *ijtihad* [rational interpretation] and spare no effort,' and he struck his chest. Muhammad said, 'Praise God to give success to the messenger of the Messenger of God, as he has pleased the Messenger of God.'"

The concept of *ijtihad*, derived from a root meaning "effort" or "struggle," had for centuries been limited to a fairly technical meaning, referring to the intellectual effort of trained Islamic scholars to arrive at legal rulings on matters not covered in the sacred sources.<sup>28</sup> The modernists latched on to the term and broadened its scope to include three distinct usages.<sup>29</sup> First was the right to reach across the several legal schools (*madhhabs*) in which scholars traditionally limited themselves, and draw arguments from any and all of them—Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi (Iraq, 1857–1924; chapter 20) called it "outlandish" to "state that one is obliged to follow the *madhhab* of a particular scholar, and even more outlandish is the opinion of those who state that one is obliged to adopt one of the four *madhhabs*." Second was the right to bypass the *madhhabs* and reach back directly to the sacred sources, namely the Qur'an and the precedent of the Prophet and his Companions—to "put the Qur'an in its rightful place," in the words of Muhammad Akram Khan (Bengal-Pakistan, 1868–1968; chapter 45). Third was the effort to reconcile the sacred sources with human reason, to contend that "Islam is a religion that is compatible with reason; that is, it has no principles that contradict reason," as stated by Muhammad Abdul Khader Maulavi (Malabar, 1873–1932; chapter 42).

This widened door of *ijtihad* should not have been shut in the early centuries of Islam, modernists contended. Syekh Ahmad Surkati (Sudan-Java, 1872–1943; chapter 48) wrote that *taqlid* was not only contrary to reason and revelation, but also "contrary to the instructions of the *imams* [founders of the four main Sunni schools of law] whom those practicing

28. J. Schacht, "Idjtihad," in Bernard Lewis et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2d ed. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac, 1971), volume 3, pp. 1026–1027.

29. Muneer Goolam Fareed, *Legal Reform in the Muslim World: The Anatomy of a Scholarly Dispute in the 19th and the Early 20th Centuries on the Usage of Ijtihad as a Legal Tool* (San Francisco, Calif.: Austin & Winfield, 1996), p. 9.

26. N. Calder, "Taklid," in P. J. Bearman et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Islam*. 2d ed. (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), volume 10, pp. 137–138.

27. Kurzman, *Liberal Islam*, p. 8.

*taqlid* claim to be imitating.” Rizaeddin bin Fakhreddin (Tatarstan, 1858–1936; chapter 33) made a parallel argument about Muslims’ veneration of saintly figures, who “would not have approved of such lies and the extravagant praise and miracles attributed to them.” Indeed, some modernists suggested that the door of *ijtihad* had never been shut completely, as scholars—even scholars espousing *taqlid*—were forced by changed circumstance to devise novel approaches.<sup>30</sup> Musa Kazım (Turkey, 1858–1920; chapter 22) wrote that “all of the ‘*ulama*’ [religious scholars] in every era wrote books in accordance with the needs of the day. . . . We have the same need. We must also reform the theological books in accordance with the needs of our era.” In a more critical tone, Ahmad Hassan (Singapore-Indonesia, 1888–1958; chapter 50) accused supporters of *taqlid* of adopting the practice only when it suited them: “When these traditionalist religious scholars agree with the actions and words of the Prophet, they go directly to the *hadith* as the source of this agreement. But if they disagree, then they go to their earlier scholars”—that is, they engage in *taqlid*—“on the basis that they themselves are not ‘original’ scholars and may not use *hadith* directly.”

Modernists saw *taqlid* not as a religious requirement but as an instrument of institutional authority designed to suppress challenging views.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the modernists’ polemical denunciation of traditional Islamic thought may have been aimed more at the authority of conservative scholars than at their actual writings, most of which did not conform to the modernists’ caricature. Modernists in Damascus, for example, were repeatedly accused by conservatives and interrogated by Ottoman authorities on charges of espousing *ijtihad*,<sup>32</sup> and modernists in Central Asia had to tiptoe around the issue

to avoid trouble.<sup>33</sup> The theme of authority arises time and again in the modernists’ works, especially the analogy between religious authority and political authority. Na’ini, quoted above, likened *taqlid* to political tyranny, and both to idolatry. “Islam delivered man from the slavery of priests. It recognized no intermediary between the Creator and the created,” wrote Mirza Riza Quli Shari’at-Sangalaji (Iran, 1890–1944).<sup>34</sup> Bubi (chapter 32) called conservative thought “useful only to oppressive rulers and sultans.” The Algerian reformist newspaper *al-Muntaqid (The Critic)*, edited by ‘Abd al-Hamid Ibn Badis (Algeria, 1889–1940; chapter 9), directed its opening editorial against the combined tyranny of political and religious authorities who sought “to rule [the community’s] political, economic, intellectual, and religious affairs.”<sup>35</sup>

Modernists proposed that contemporary scholars are just as qualified as their predecessors to engage in *ijtihad*. “Do not later men study, compose, and see things like earlier men?” Qasimi asked, quoting a tenth century scholar (chapter 23): “If people were limited to the books of the ancients, then a great deal of knowledge would be lost, penetrating minds would go astray, articulate tongues would be blunted, and we would hear nothing but repetition.” Even the Prophet’s understanding of Islam, according to Khwaja Ahmad Din Amritsari (North India, 1861–1936) of the Ahl-i-Qur’an movement, was not necessarily superior to that of other Muslims.<sup>36</sup> Or perhaps, if one believes in progress, later scholars are more qualified than earlier ones, a theme broached by Bubi (chapter 32): “Since God’s creation is progressing day by day, therefore the latest religion, Islam, is the most perfect religion of all the religions. Similarly, it is quite possible and in accordance with

30. Recent scholarship has confirmed this view—see Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 117–124.

31. Recent scholarship suggests that the original purpose of *taqlid* was enforcement of conformity, or in more flattering terms, the building of legal uniformity and predictability—see Mohammad Fadel, “The Social Logic of *Taqlid* and the Rise of the *Mukhtasar*,” *Islamic Law and Society*, volume 3, number 2, 1996, pp. 193–233.

32. David Dean Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 51–52, 55–59, 62–63, 114.

33. Ingeborg Baldauf, “Jadidism in Central Asia within Reformism and Modernism in the Muslim World,” *Die Welt der Islams (The World of Islam)*, volume 41, number 1, 2001, p. 77.

34. Yann Richard, “Shari’at Sangalaji: A Reformist Theologian of the Rida Shah Period,” in Said Amir Arjomand, ed., *Authority and Political Culture in Shi’ism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 172.

35. Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940 (Muslim Reformism in Algeria from 1925 to 1940)* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1967), pp. 445–446.

36. Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 68.

God's *sunna* that in our time there might be scholars of the same degree as, or better than, the scholars of the past."

Even if they overcame the hurdle of *taqlid*, modernists faced a second hurdle: many of them lacked the seminary credentials historically required of religious scholars. Educational pioneer Nabawiyah Musa (Egypt, 1886–1951), a teenager prevented by her family from attending school, taught herself to read, memorized the Qur'an, and sought to interpret its verses. A male relative studying at the al-Azhar mosque in Cairo objected to this act as "heretical," and said that even he would not proceed without a mentor.<sup>37</sup> Modernists combated their handicap by arguing that credentialed scholars ought not to monopolize religious interpretation. Several modernists argued, along with al-Jaza'iri (chapter 15), that "the intelligent person must consider the statement rather than the person who is stating it." For Azad, the Qur'anic verse, "Do they not consider the Qur'an?" (Sura 4, Verse 82), legitimated widespread interpretation, since the verse did not limit "they" to a small group.<sup>38</sup> Further, some modernists suggested that all Muslims had a duty to engage in *ijtihad*. Khayr al-Din (chapter 2) and Na'ini (chapter 13)—Sunni and Shi'i, respectively—both cite the precedent of the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (634–644), who invited all Muslims to judge the propriety of his actions. In Khayr al-Din's telling, 'Umar told the Muslims, "O people, let him among you who sees any deviation in me set it right." A man stood up and said, "By God, if we saw in you deviation we would rectify it with our swords." 'Umar replied, "Praise God who created in this *umma* him who would rectify with his sword my deviations." In these precedents, the independent religious judgment of noncredentialed Muslims was deemed praiseworthy.

Some modernists went further and argued that traditional educations had become so sterile and scholastic that they actively *disqualified* their graduates from meaningful intellectual work, leaving the field open to the modern-educated. Afghani (chap-

ter 11) likened traditional scholarship to "a very narrow wick, on top of which is a very small flame that neither lights its surroundings nor gives light to others." Bigi (chapter 35) blamed seminaries for the "widespread stoppage of brains that caused the mind of the Muslim world to remain lifeless and motionless, and therefore to decline." The Singapore newspaper *al-Imam* (chapter 46) excoriated traditional teachers who assigned rote exercises "in order to take up time, lazily believing that [education is like watching] plants grow." The Azerbaijan newspaper *Kaspii* (*The Caspian*) wrote that traditional schools "do not deserve to be called schools."<sup>39</sup>

Education in secular subjects, by contrast, would prepare students properly for the practice and study of Islam. Abdurrauf Fitrat (Bukhara, 1886–1938; chapter 34) made the analogy with trains and steamships, invented by "infidels" but resulting in increased pilgrimages by Muslims: "The question of studying is just the same. Under the old system, women are deprived of learning and most of the men live in illiteracy, and in every generation one or two great scholars appear. Under the new system, because it is easier, both women and men will become learned." The Young Ansar-Ud-Deen Society, founded in Nigeria in 1923, established a series of Western-style schools, arguing, in the words of one of its founders, that "by this means alone . . . can Islam be better studied and understood."<sup>40</sup>

This critique emerged from within the seminaries themselves, pioneered by traditionally trained reformists—not necessarily full-fledged modernists—who admired aspects of modern education. They sought to reform the seminaries by incorporating modern discipline—for example, examinations, grades, and prizes at the Deoband seminary in India<sup>41</sup>—and modern disciplines. "A major reason for the decline in the 'ulama's influence in the country," wrote a founder of the Nadwat al-'Ulama' seminary in India, "is the popular perception that they have

37. Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 40.

38. J. M. S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation (1880–1960)* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1961), p. 16; also Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 127, 198–199.

39. Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 30.

40. Stefan Reichmuth, "Education and the Growth of Religious Associations Among Yoruba Muslims: The Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, volume 26, number 4, 1996, p. 373.

41. Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 104–105.

withdrawn into their cells and know nothing about the state of the world, so that in worldly matters their guidance is entirely unworthy of attention."<sup>42</sup>

Even when they failed in their attempts at institutional reform, leading internal critics served as role models for cadres of modernists. In Bukhara, Shihabuddin Marjani (Tatarstan, 1818–1889) inspired a generation of seminary-trained modernists who considered him comparable to Protestant Reformation leader Martin Luther.<sup>43</sup> At al-Azhar in Cairo, 'Abduh achieved little reform<sup>44</sup>—though as the chief religious official of Egypt he helped to incorporate al-Azhar graduates into a state-run judicial hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, 'Abduh's plans for al-Azhar fired the imagination of dozens of young religious scholars who came to study with him, even for brief periods. One such student, Džemaluddin Čaušević (Bosnia, 1870–1938; chapter 26), returned to the Balkans as a convinced modernist and called 'Abduh "Respected Teacher" for the rest of his career; another returned to China dedicated to "improved methods" of education.<sup>46</sup> A Tatar seminary in Crimea, attempting comparable reforms, sent a leading student to study at al-Azhar.<sup>47</sup> 'Abduh even inspired Shi'i modernists who never studied in Cairo, such as *Shaykh* Asadullah Mamaqani (Iran, early twentieth century) and Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar (Iraq, born 1904), who proposed that Shi'i seminaries be reformed on the model of 'Abduh's plans for al-Azhar;<sup>48</sup> and Muhsin Sharara (Lebanon-

Iraq, 1901–1946), who called in 1928 for the coming of a "a Shi'ite Muhammad 'Abduh."<sup>49</sup>

Some seminarians despaired of reforming the seminaries. Munawwar Qari (Turkistan-Uzbekistan, 1878–1931; chapter 30)—trained at the traditional schools of Bukhara—condemned such institutions for limiting themselves to commentaries on commentaries. "Our present schools take four or five years to teach only reading and writing, and our colleges take 15 to 20 years to study introductions [to canonical texts] and the four readings. To hope for them to impart a knowledge of the sciences of the present age is as futile as to expect one to reach out to a bird flying in the sky while standing in a well." Qari founded the first *usul-i jadid* (new principles) school in Tashkent, combining religious and secular coursework. Similar schools emerged throughout the Islamic world, producing graduates who often considered themselves legitimate competitors with seminarians for religious knowledge.

One strain of Islamic modernism went so far in its devaluation of traditional scholarship that its proponents viewed religious training merely as a cover for modern values, without any particular merit in its own right. Mirza Malkum Khan (Iran, 1833–1908; chapter 12), for example, considered his French secondary education as qualifying him to guide the Iranian nation toward "civilization." He told a British audience of his strategic approach to Islamic education: "ideas which were by no means accepted when coming from your agents in Europe, were accepted with great delight when it was proved that they were latent in Islam."<sup>50</sup> Abdullah Cevdet (Turkey, 1869–1932; chapter 21) made similar comments,<sup>51</sup> as did Europeans seeking to inculcate modern values in an

42. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Religious Education and the Rhetoric of Reform: The Madrasa in British India and Pakistan," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, volume 41, number 2, 1999, p. 306.

43. Ahmet Kanlıdere, *Reform within Islam: The Tajdid and Jadid Movements among the Kazan Tatars (1809–1917)* (Istanbul, Turkey: Eren Yayıncılık, 1997), p. 59.

44. A. Chris Eccel, *Egypt, Islam, and Social Change: al-Azhar in Conflict and Accommodation* (Berlin, West Germany: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1984), pp. 176–189.

45. Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *The New Mamluks: Egyptian Society and Modern Feudalism* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 70–71.

46. Marshall Broomhall, *Islam in China* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1910), pp. 266–268.

47. Hakan Kırımlı, *National Movements and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars (1905–1916)* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 51.

48. Said Amir Arjomand, "Ideological Revolution in Shi'ism," in Arjomand, ed., *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany: State University of New York Press,

1988), p. 183; Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 262–268.

49. Sabrina Mervin, "The Clerics of Jabal 'Amil and the Reform of Religious Teaching in Najaf Since the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende, eds., *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 2000), p. 82.

50. Hamid Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 13–17.

51. M. Şükrü Haniöğlü, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi (Doctor Abdullah Cevdet: A Political Thinker and His Era)* (Istanbul, Turkey: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981), pp. 325–341.

Islamic language.<sup>52</sup> This strain shaded into outright secularists, such as Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzada (Azerbaijan, 1812–1878), who saw no need for the pretense of Islamic education and doubted that Islam could ever be construed as compatible with modern values.<sup>53</sup>

The modernists' critique of seminary training did not imply complete democratization of the right to engage in Islamic reasoning. Despite the precedents that some modernists cited, urging all Muslims to make independent religious judgments, the modernists generally replaced one form of credentialing with another—just as modernists did outside the Islamic world as well. Suavi (chapter 16) rejected a definition of freedom that permits “saying whatever comes to one's mind,” giving the example of a French newspaper that denied the existence of God. 'Abduh (chapter 3) offered a warning from the early centuries of Islamic history, when “every opinion-monger took his stand upon the liberty of thought the Qur'an enjoined,” leading to dangerous schisms. Ahmad Khan (chapter 40)—while favoring freedom of speech on the pragmatic grounds that open debate advanced the search for truth<sup>54</sup>—was dismissive of “the opinion or independent judgment of every Tom, Dick, and Harry,” and sought to justify his position “not by any traditional argument, nor by any proofs of the *mujtahids* based on independent judgment, but by nature.” Surkati (chapter 48) limited *ijtihad* only to “those who have the capacity and opportunity to understand the proofs of God and His laws.”

Other modernists limited *ijtihad* to those who agreed with them. Tahtawi (chapter 1) supported religious freedom “on condition that it adheres to the principles of religion”—meaning the principles that he emphasized. Rida (chapter 6) supported “freedom of religion, opinion, speech, writing, dress, and work,” but not for the “horde of heretics” who engage in “chatter, sophistry, audacity in mixing right with wrong, and insolence in criticizing their opponents or critics.” Ibn Badis condemned opposing positions as *bid'a* (impermissible innovation),<sup>55</sup> a charge that was often leveled against the modernists themselves. Several authors, though not all, contributed to the polemic between the Sunni and Shi'i sects, considering the other to be disqualified from *ijtihad* by their imperfect faith. And competition within the movement led to other polemics—for example, Rida's resentment at Gasprinskii's leadership of pan-Islamic conference planning in Cairo,<sup>56</sup> or the Calcutta-based challenge to Ahmad Khan's North Indian leadership of the modernist Islamic movement in South Asia.<sup>57</sup>

In sum, the modernists sought to breach the monopoly of traditional religious scholars over Islamic interpretation, and to limit the relativistic damage of this breach, through a single maneuver. They expressed confidence in their own qualifications—seminary training, modern education, or personal virtuosity—as compared both with their scholarly opponents and the “masses.” Even when these qualifications were asserted in humble terms, they opened a space for the right to speak, as in Ahmad Khan's statement (chapter 40): “I am an ignorant person, neither a *maulavi* [religious scholar], nor a *mufti* [religious official], nor a *qadi* [judge], nor a preacher. . . . I do not say that whatever I investigated is true. But once I had no other choice but to do whatever

52. Gustave Demorgny, *Essai de reformes et d'enseignement administratifs en Perse (Essay on Administrative Reforms and Training in Persia)* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1915), p. 7; Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860–1960* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 189. Other Europeans considered modernist Islam a threat to colonial control and sided instead with conservative Muslims—for example, see Guy Imart, *Islamic and Slavic Fundamentalisms: Foes or Allies? The Turkestanian Reagent* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1987).

53. Mehrdad Kia, “Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh and the Call for the Modernization of the Islamic World,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, volume 31, number 3, 1995, pp. 422–448.

54. Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof, eds., *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), pp. 109–121.

55. Ali Merad, *Le réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940 (Muslim Reformism in Algeria from 1925 to 1940)* (Paris, France: Mouton, 1967), pp. 231–234.

56. Thomas Kuttner, “Russian *Jadidism* and the Islamic World: Ismail Gasprinskii in Cairo, 1908,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique (Annals of the Russian and Soviet World)*, volume 16, 1975, pp. 383–424; Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 41–45.

57. Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 88–90.

could be done by me, then I had certainly to do exactly what I did and what I am still doing. God knows my pure intention.”

### How to Speak

The novel approaches of modernist Islam frequently found expression in novel forms of discourse. The modernists specified at least three ways in which the literary forms of the past were inadequate.

First, modernists held that long-standing literary themes were insufficiently attuned to the concerns of contemporary Muslims. They sought to replace flowery language, irrelevant fantasy, and crude humor with noble and useful themes. Modernist Islamic poets, for example, adapted traditional poetic forms throughout the Islamic world.<sup>58</sup> One of the most influential exemplars of this adaptation, Hali's "The Flow and Ebb of Islam" (chapter 38), adopted the traditional Urdu structure of the *musaddas*, with its particular rhyme scheme and verse length, but filled the structure with nontraditional content. In an unusually extensive and reflexive introduction to the poem, Hali explained:

When I beheld the new pattern of the age, my heart became sick of the old poetry, and I began to feel ashamed of stringing together empty fabrications. . . . It is true that much has been written, and continues to be written about this. But no one has yet written poetry, which makes a natural appeal to all, and has been bequeathed to the Muslims as a legacy from the Arabs, for the purpose of awakening the community.<sup>59</sup>

The traditional literary form of debate (*munazara*) was also adopted and infused with modernist content,<sup>60</sup> as in Kawakibi's fictional pan-Islamic assem-

bly (chapter 19) and the startling inversion effected by Fitrat (chapter 34), in which debate between a European and a Bukharan Muslim is staged with the author embodied in the European character. Modernists commandeered the travelogue format, maintaining the positive comparison of Islam with religions of other lands, but also stressing the wonders of modernity—generally focused on Europe, as in books by Tahtawi and Mirza Saleh Shirazi (Iran, circa 1790–1845), but also Iran and India, as described by Siraj al-Din Hakim (Bukhara, 1877–1914), and Japan, as reported by 'Ali Ahmad al-Jarjawi (Egypt, mid-nineteenth–early twentieth century).<sup>61</sup> Theology (*kalam*), long suspect within clerical circles for its rationalist heritage, was revived by Muhammad Shibli Nu'mani (North India, 1857–1914) and İsmail Hakkı İzmirli (Turkey, 1869–1946), among others.<sup>62</sup> Traditional hagiographic literature was transformed into modern biography, as in Fakhreddin's study of the 14th century reformer Ibn Taymiyya, a popular figure among the modernists,<sup>63</sup> in which—according to the author—"every piece of information and fact is examined meticulously, and partisanship is avoided as much as possible" (chapter 33).

A second movement among modernists involved the development of novel forms of religious writing.

61. Nadia Abu Zahra, "Al-Tahtawi as Translator of the Culture of Parisian Society," in Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, ed., *Transfer of Modern Science & Technology to the Muslim World* (Istanbul, Turkey: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture, 1992), pp. 419–424; Monica Ringer, "The Quest for the Secret of Strength in Iranian Nineteenth-Century Travel Literature," in Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee, eds., *Iran and the Surrounding World* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), pp. 141–161; Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 35–76; Mirza Siradj ad-Din Hakim, *Souvenirs de voyage pour les gens de Boukhara (Travel Memoirs for the People of Bukhara)*, trans. Stéphane Dudoignon (Paris: Actes Sud, 1999); Michael F. Laffan, "Making Meiji Muslims: The Travelogue of 'Ali Ahmad al-Jarjawi," *East Asian History*, number 22, 2001, pp. 145–170.

62. Mehr Afroz Murad, *Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu'mani* (Lahore, Pakistan: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1976), pp. 4–50; Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *La pensée de l'Islam (The Thought of Islam)* (Istanbul, Turkey: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1953), pp. 126–127.

63. Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-Din Ahmad b. Taymiyya (Essay on the Social and Political Doctrines of Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya)* (Cairo, Egypt: l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939), pp. 541–575.

58. Various articles on "Shi'r," in C. E. Bosworth et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1997), volume 9, pp. 462–470.

59. Khwaja Altaf Hussein Hali, *Hali's Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, trans. Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 93.

60. E. Wagner, "Munazara," in C. E. Bosworth et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2d ed. (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1993), volume 7, pp. 565–568; Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "Portrait of the Intellectual as a Young Man: Rashid Rida's *Muhawarat al-muslih wa-al-muqallid* (1906)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, volume 12, number 1, 2001, pp. 93–104.

The effort to rejuvenate Islam involved an intensive project of outreach and uplift, for which new discursive strategies were deemed necessary. 'Ali Mubarak (Egypt, 1824–1893) made this reasoning explicit in the introduction to one of the first Arab novels:

I have realized that the readers are inclined to reading epic tales, narrative fiction, and entertaining works, rather than works on pure scientific or practical concerns. The latter works breed boredom and lead the readers to shun them. . . . This persuaded me to write this useful book in a form of attractive narrative to entice the reader to absorb its useful information and instructions, which have been collected from many Arabic and foreign books in arts and sciences.<sup>64</sup>

In an early Urdu novel, *The Repentance of Nasuh*, by Nazir Ahmad (North India, 1836–1912), the title character burns a roomful of old books and identifies the antidote for such “poison” as “books of faith and morality.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Mahmud Khoja Behbudiy (Samarqand, 1874–1919; chapter 36), author of the first modern play in Central Asia, described theater as “a place for preaching and exhortation.”<sup>66</sup> The first plays in the Arab world were adaptations of French works produced in Lebanon in 1847; the first modern Urdu play was performed in 1853; the first modern Turkish play was produced in 1859; and other Islamic regions appear to have followed suit at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.<sup>67</sup>

The third, and perhaps the greatest discursive innovation of the modernist Islamic movement was the periodical press, which it established in virtually every community of the Islamic world. Selections in this anthology include pioneers from Mombasa (chapter 7) to Durban (chapter 8), and from Malabar (chapter 42) to Singapore (chapter 46). The relatively low cost and wide distribution of newspapers, magazines, and journals opened a stream of words that reached a relatively large readership (and listener-

ship, as items were read aloud). The modernist Islamic movement held great hopes for its impact. A 1907 cartoon in *Mulla Nasruddin*, for example, showed a modernist waving a newspaper, causing traditionally garbed religious scholars to run fleeing from the power of the paper.<sup>68</sup> 'Abduh, as a young man, paid homage to the power of the newspaper in a poem, comparing it favorably to the legacy of the Egyptian pyramids: the newspaper is “the nourishment of the spirits,” “the tongue of heavenly secrets,” and “guidance for those who seek.” It “alerts the unattentive” and “has taken it upon itself to spread the sciences among the common people.”<sup>69</sup> Later, he admitted a certain skepticism about this power—“These days there are people who believe that the illnesses of nations may be cured with the publication of journals”<sup>70</sup>—but participated in producing the two most influential modernist papers.

An Indian opponent of the modernists mocked their confidence in the medium: “Faced with a gun, bring out a newspaper.”<sup>71</sup> Yet conservatives in Malaya feared the power of periodicals of “the new style” enough to try to ban “papers debating the Muhammadan religion” in 1929.<sup>72</sup> Religious conservatives also made use of the same media, founding periodicals such as *Isha'at al-Sunna (News of Tradition)* in Lahore (founded 1878), *Din ve Ma'ishat (Religion and Life)* in Kazan (1906–1917), and *al-Haqa'iq (Truths)* in Damascus (1910–1913).<sup>73</sup> In the 1920s, historian

68. Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 192.

69. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dar Al-ifta* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), p. 69.

70. Michael F. Laffan, “The Umma Below the Winds: Mecca, Cairo, Reformist Islam, and a Conceptualization of Indonesia,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sydney, Australia, p. 170.

71. Ralph Russell, *The Pursuit of Urdu Literature* (London: Zed Books, 1992), p. 159.

72. William Roff, “Kaum Muda—Kaum Tua: Innovation and Reaction amongst the Malays, 1900–1941,” in K. G. Tregonning, ed., *Papers on Malayan History* (Singapore: Department of History, University of Malaya in Singapore, 1962), p. 178.

73. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*, p. 68; Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), p. 60; James C. Gelvin, “‘Pious’ Religious Scholars, ‘Overly-Europeanized’ Falsifiers, and the Debate about the ‘Woman Question’ in Early Twentieth-Century Damascus” (paper under review).

64. Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse* (London: Saqi Books, 1993), pp. 130–131.

65. Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 186.

66. Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 131.

67. Various articles on “Masrah,” in C. E. Bosworth et al., eds., *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2d edition (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1991), volume 6, pp. 746–773.

'Abd al-Wasi al-Wasi'i (Yemen, died 1959), a supporter of the isolationist Yemeni imamate, credited newspapers as "the great force, the instructive school, the scales for [weighing] the activity of the community and the indicator of its condition, the vigilant overseer of the government."<sup>74</sup> Religious conservatives also published printed books rather than relying exclusively on hand-copied manuscripts.<sup>75</sup>

The press brought news of parallel and competing movements around the world. Like other periodicals of the era, they often reprinted, translated, or summarized articles they found interesting from other periodicals, increasing the density of linkages across regions and language groups. In addition, they trumpeted models of successful modernization. Japanese military victories over Russia in 1904, for example, were carried "live" in the newspapers of the world, offering inspiration. The Malay newspaper *al-Imam* (chapter 46) commented on "the ascent of the Japanese race . . . who defeated the six-foot-tall giants," and referred to writings on Japan by the Egyptian nationalist Mustafa Kamil (Egypt, 1874–1908). The Iranian newspaper *Habl al-matin* (*The Firm Rope*), published in Calcutta, wrote at length on the implications of Japan's success.<sup>76</sup> "We need an independent renewal like that of Japan," Rida wrote years later in Egypt (chapter 6).

The immediacy of the periodical press, especially daily newspapers, expressed in its very form the modernists' view of progress. Each issue presented the latest word, superseding previous statements. A properly informed person had to keep up with breaking news and ongoing debates. The newspaper format exerted pressure toward brevity, glibness, and a minimum of scholarly citations. As a result, newspaper writers were vulnerable to accusations of shallowness. Yet in the competition for religious authority, writers without seminary training may have

74. Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 118.

75. Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies*, volume 27, number 1, 1993, pp. 229–251; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Commentaries, Print, and Patronage: Hadith and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, volume 62, number 1, 1999, pp. 60–81.

76. *Habl al-matin* (*The Firm Rope*), August 17, 1906, pp. 12–16.

preferred to write texts without detailed citations and extended quotations, which seminary-trained writers were more adept at producing.

A similar case could be made for lectures, which eager students or the lecturers themselves sometimes published. Afghani's Calcutta lecture on teaching and learning (chapter 11), for example, was published despite Afghani's complaint that his host "caused this talk to be delivered only in an abbreviated form." Similarly, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Maghribi (Lebanon, 1867–1956; chapter 27) published a lecture in Beirut despite complaining that his host "gave me time only for a phone call. So forgive me if I hasten or if I gloss over certain aspects." These inelegant, ritualized apologies may mask the lack of full scholarly apparatus expected of written work on religious subjects.

In sum, the modernist movement adapted traditional literary forms to modernist purposes and pioneered new forms, especially a periodical press that emphasized the contemporaneity of knowledge and deemphasized scholarly citation.

### What to Speak

The substance of the modernist Islamic appeal may be summarized in any number of ways. I choose to emphasize five general topic areas, each of which is deep enough to capture a significant portion of the modernist writings included in this anthology, and wide enough to involve significant differences of opinion within the modernist movement. Religious interpretation has already been covered in this introduction, and we turn now to the other four.

### Cultural Revival

The sense that cultural decline had gripped the Islamic world was not limited to modernist authors. Conservatives also pointed to the massive changes they were witnessing, as for example Akbar Allahabadi (North India, 1846–1921):

The minstrel and the music—both have changed.  
Our sleep has changed, the tale we told has changed.  
The nightingale now sings a different song.  
The color in the cheeks of spring has changed.  
Another kind of rain falls from the sky.



The grain that grows upon our land has  
changed.

A revolution has brought this about.

In all the realms of nature all has changed.<sup>77</sup>

The distinctiveness of the modernists lay in seeing modernity as a promising avenue for cultural revival.

Modernists described this revival with a handful of recurrent metaphors. One set involved light, as in the European Enlightenment. "Originally, religion shines, but later it appears to become dull," wrote Achmad Dachlan (Java, 1868–1923; chapter 47). "Truly, it is not religion that becomes dull, but the person who follows the religion." Such imagery was incorporated into the words for "intellectual": *munawwar al-fikr* (enlightened of thought), derived from *nur* (light), used in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian; and *ziyali* (person associated with *ziya*, or light), used in Uzbek. A second set of images involved awakening. "Throughout the world a spirit of awakening has encompassed the Muslims," Ahmed Aghayev (Azerbaijan, 1865–1939; chapter 31) wrote in an optimistic moment. Less optimistically, Fitrat (chapter 34) worried that Muslims "will sleep forever in the land of dishonor, lowliness, and anonymity." "Awake ye Arabs and recover," began a poem posted around Beirut and Damascus in 1880,<sup>78</sup> a motif adopted in the poetry of Central Asian nationalism: "Waken, Kazakh!" in 1911;<sup>79</sup> "Awaken, homeland [Turkestan]" in 1918;<sup>80</sup> and "Awaken! Hey! Uyghur, it is time to awaken" in the early 1930s.<sup>81</sup> A third set involved motion, such as the "principle of movement" that Iqbal sought to recover in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.<sup>82</sup> A fourth set of

images involved rebirth and renewal, often with reference to the Protestant Reformation in Christianity. "Truly, we are in a dire need for renewal and renews," wrote Rida (chapter 6). This effort must combine "religious renewal and earthly renewal, the same way Europe has done with religious reformation and modernization." Iqbal (chapter 41), in a moment of respect for the West, drew on parallel imagery:

Germany has witnessed the upheaval of the  
Reformation, which has erased all marks of  
earlier times.

The sanctity of the temple priest has been  
nullified, and the delicate ship of thought has  
embarked on its course.

The French have also seen a revolution, which  
has overturned the world of the Westerners.  
The descendants of the Greeks, aged by their  
worship of antiquity, have become youthful  
again with the pleasures of renewal.

The soul of the Muslim has a similar ferment  
today, [but] this is a divine secret which the  
tongue is unable to express.

Let us see what springs from the bottom of this  
ocean; let us see what colors the sky now  
turns.<sup>83</sup>

The modernists disagreed vehemently among themselves as to the extent to which cultural revival must erase existing cultural forms. Those who favored almost complete erasure crossed the line from Islamic modernism to secular modernism, as in the case of Hasan Taqizada (Iran, 1878–1969), who favored "absolute submission to Europe, and the assimilation of the culture, customs, practices, organization, sciences, arts, life, and the whole attitude of Europe, without any exception save language."<sup>84</sup> Islamic modernists, by contrast, justified the erasure of aspects of recent culture as a recovery of older or more authentic culture. In the words of Khayr al-Din (chapter 2), "There is no reason to reject or ignore something which is correct and demonstrable simply because it comes from others, especially if we had

77. Ralph Russell, *Hidden in the Lute: An Anthology of Two Centuries of Urdu Literature* (Manchester, England: Carcanet, 1995), p. 201.

78. A. L. Tibawi, *Arabic and Islamic Themes* (London: Luzac & Company, 1974), pp. 119, 308.

79. Gulnar Kendirbay, "The National Liberation Movement of the Kazakh Intelligentsia at the Beginning of the 20th Century," *Central Asian Survey*, volume 16, number 4, 1997, p. 496.

80. Hamza Hakimzada Niyazi, *Tola asarlar toplami* (*Complete Collection of Works*) (Tashkent, Uzbekistan: Fan, 1988–1989), volume 2, p. 145. Translation from Uzbek by Adeeb Khalid.

81. Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism Along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 148.

82. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, pp. 139–170; also in Kurzman, ed. *Liberal Islam*, pp. 255–269.

83. Muhammad Iqbal, "Masjid-i Qurtuba" (Córdoba Mosque), in *Kulliyat* (*Complete Works*) (Aligarh, India: Educational Book House, 1995), pp. 391–392. First published in 1933. Translation from Urdu by Muhammad Qasim Zaman.

84. Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 54.

formerly possessed it and it had been taken from us. On the contrary, there is an obligation to restore it and put it to use." In more provocative language, Halide Edib Adivar (Turkey, 1882–1964; chapter 28) wrote that "all-round Westernization" reinforced rights that "Islam had already proclaimed . . . a thousand years ago," and expressed the "vital racial instinct" of "the Turkish soul."

Adivar's reference to race introduces the issue of purportedly biological social hierarchies, which modernists valued along with other "scientific" doctrines of the era. Certainly many Muslims engaged in racial discrimination prior to the modern era, just as Europeans and others did.<sup>85</sup> Arabs such as Kawakibi (chapter 19) objected to Ottoman Turkish "use of the term 'Arab' for slaves and black animals." Non-Arab Muslims such as Marmaduke Pickthall (England, 1875–1936) detected and detested the tendency among Arab scholars to "think that the Arabs are still 'the patrons', and the non-Arabs their 'freedmen' . . ."<sup>86</sup> One modernist theme was the erasure of these racialized distinctions, for example the campaign in Southeast Asia to allow female descendants of the Prophet Muhammad to marry Muslim men who did not share this descent.<sup>87</sup> Salim likened this to "the struggle between aristocracy and democracy," and concluded, "It is this spirit of democracy which constitutes one of the main reasons for the spread of Islam in the world. Those who extinguish this spirit belong to those who hamper the development and spread of Islam."<sup>88</sup>

Yet modernists—Muslim, Christian, and otherwise—replaced older forms of racism with a new version based on scientific research into the alleged hierarchy and evolution of human capabilities. It may be unfair to single out a particular author, but Maghribi (chapter 27) is typical of many modernists in mentioning groups at a particular "stage in their social evolution, . . . in Africa or China for example,

constrained by their social situation or the disposition of their temperament to adopt polygamy." A similarly scientized view is evident in Maghribi's discussion of women, whose "weak self-confidence, gullibility, and lack of discipline" are said to justify the lesser value of their courtroom testimony. Similar views have been documented in Egypt and elsewhere.<sup>89</sup>

Modernists also adopted a second form of social hierarchy, that of capitalism. Some modernists favored social-democratic reform—notably Salim (chapter 49), in this anthology, and Muhammad Hifzurrahman Sihvarvi (North India, 1901–1962)<sup>90</sup>—and an Islamic Communist movement emerged to the left of the social democrats in Indonesia in the late 1910s, with figures such as Hadji Mohammad Misbach (Java, circa 1876–1940) criticizing Salim and other Islamic modernists: "To be sure, they perform the precepts of the religion of Islam, but they pick and choose those precepts that suit their desire. Those that do not suit them they throw away. Put bluntly, they oppose or defy the commands of God . . . and rather fear and love the will of Satan—that Satan whose evil influence is apparent in this present age in [the system of] Capitalism."<sup>91</sup> Support of capitalism was indeed the dominant economic theme in the modernist Islamic movement. Khayr al-Din (chapter 2) praised societies in which "the circulation of capital is expanded, profits increase accordingly, and wealth is put into the hands of the most proficient who can cause it to increase." Salah al-Din Khuda Bakhsh (North India, 1877–1931) espoused the right of Muslims "to attend to their religious obligation without sacrificing their worldly prosperity. . . ."<sup>92</sup> Modernists made a moral distinction between rich people who invested in modern economic and cultural enterprises and those who did not, denouncing the latter for their "submersion . . . in luxury and

85. Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

86. Peter Clark, *Marmaduke Pickthall: British Muslim* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), p. 64.

87. Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, *The Hadrami Awakening: Community and Identity in the Netherlands East Indies, 1900–1942* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1999), pp. 91–107.

88. Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 69.

89. Eve Troutt Powell, *Different Shades of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan, 1865–1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), chapter 4.

90. Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857–1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 201–204.

91. Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 285.

92. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (London: Victor Gallancz, 1946), p. 32.

carnal appetites, and their avoidance of any kind of glory other than ostentation and wealth," in the words of Kawakibi (chapter 19). It is probably not coincidental, and the matter deserves systematic study, that the modernist movement was bankrolled in part by industrialists and traders promoting international economic linkages, such as Husayn Baybacha, a leading merchant who supported Islamic constitutionalism in eastern Turkistan in the early twentieth century,<sup>93</sup> or H. Z. A. Tagiev and other industrialists who supported cultural reform in Azerbaijan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>94</sup>

Some Islamic modernists worried about wholesale adoption of Western culture. Bahithat al-Badiya (Egypt, 1886–1918; chapter 5), while promoting education in modern subjects, suggested that "If we pursue everything Western we shall destroy our own civilization, and a nation that has lost its civilization grows weak and vanishes." Rida (chapter 6) assailed the faction of Egyptians that, "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." Salim (chapter 49) criticized "taqlid" of Western manners, and Aghayev mocked the "Westernized Oriental" as "Western only on the surface." Aghayev warned, "Simply to transplant Western civilization to the Orient will only result in doubling the misery of the Oriental. One becomes neither Eastern nor Western, but something in-between, with all the weaknesses of the one without the qualities of the other."<sup>95</sup>

Modernists aimed these critiques at one another, just as religious conservatives aimed them at modernists as a whole. All modernists, presumably, con-

sidered themselves in happy equilibrium, rejecting existing customs where necessary while maintaining the most important Islamic values. Yet what to reject and what to maintain was frequently a subject of debate. One broad field of disagreement was the topic of popular religious practices associated with Sufism. Some modernists had Sufi backgrounds—the most influential modernist in Damascus, al-Jaza'iri (chapter 15), was a Sufi sage and justified his rationalism on thoroughly Sufi grounds.<sup>96</sup> Some modernists wished to maintain certain Sufi practices and beliefs, including Frashëri, who urged Albanian Sufi organizations to develop into a political party;<sup>97</sup> and 'Ubaydullah Sindhi (Sindh, India, 1872–1944), who defended Sufi mysticism as both "the basis of Islam" and "an international or purely human conception of a universal religion."<sup>98</sup> More commonly, modernists held Sufi practices to be abhorrent, especially the veneration of saints.<sup>99</sup> The profit to be had from such practices lured sham clerics eager to "gain fame and earn more worldly profit," according to Fakhreddin (chapter 33). "As a result, the Muslims were overwhelmed in economic and political affairs, and so were destined to be crushed under the feet of others." At the same time, reformist Sufi leaders condemned certain of their colleagues on similar grounds, accusing them of "spending their lives in the pursuit of the things of this world and lavish lifestyles,"<sup>100</sup> and trying to ban the commercialization of religious practices.<sup>101</sup> In relation to Sufism, as to other Islamic practices and beliefs, the scope

96. Itzhak Weismann, *Taste of Modernity: Sufism, Salafiyya, and Arabism in Late Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), part 2.

97. H. T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans* (London: Hurst & Company, 1993), p. 188.

98. Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World* (Islamabad, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute, 1982), p. 19.

99. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke, eds., *Islamic Mysticism Contested* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999); Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, England: Curzon, 1999).

100. Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 222.

101. [Frederick] de Jong, *Turuq and Turuq-Linked Institutions in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1978), p. 170.

93. C. P. Skrine and Pamela Nightingale, *Macartney at Kashgar: New Light on British, Chinese, and Russian Activities in Sinkiang, 1890–1918* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 157.

94. Audrey Altstadt, "The Azerbaijani Bourgeoisie and the Cultural-Enlightenment Movement in Baku," in Ronald Grigor Suny, ed., *Transcaucasia, Nationalism, and Social Change*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 199–209.

95. Edward J. Lazzerini, "Beyond Renewal: The Jadid Response to the Pressure for Change in the Modern Age," in Jo-Ann Gross, ed., *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 164.

and meaning of cultural revival was contested both within and outside the modernist Islamic movement.

#### *Political Reform*

A second major goal of the modernists was the implementation of constitutionalism. Here too, Islamic dictates on human equality were marshaled in support. "[A]lthough God, most exalted, preferred some to others in endowments, He made them equal in accountability, with no distinction between the honorable and the base, the leader and the subordinate," wrote Tahtawi (chapter 1). "Equality means nothing but sharing the same laws, and being equal before them." Similarly, according to Abdullah Abdurahman (South Africa, 1870–1940; chapter 8): "If God made no distinction between man and man, we had no right to do so. And until we are regarded as equal in this country, there is no such thing as a democratic institution." Mustafa Fazıl Pasha (Turkey, 1829–1875) wrote in 1866, in one of the earliest manifestos of Islamic constitutionalism, that Islam dictates human fate in the afterlife, but does not limit "the rights of the people," and therefore cannot justify tyranny: "there are no Christian politics or Moslem politics," he argued, "for there is only one justice, and politics is justice incarnate."<sup>102</sup> Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azam 'Imad al-'Ulama' Khalkhali (Iran, mid-nineteenth–early twentieth century), writing soon after the promulgation of the first Iranian constitution, stressed that "God has not made any distinction among his obedient servants. Prophets and messengers, serfs and kings, the old and the young, men and women, servants and masters, religious authorities and the masses, descendants of the Prophet and non-Arab Muslims, the rich and the poor, are all equal and partners in their obligations, according to the laws of justice, fairness, and equality."<sup>103</sup>

Modernists referred to a variety of sacred sources to establish the legitimacy of constitutionalism. Namik Kemal (chapter 17) quoted the Qur'anic in-

junction, "And seek their counsel in the matter" (Sura 3, Verse 159), concluding that "the salvation of the state today is dependent upon the adoption of the method of consultation." Chiragh 'Ali (North India, 1844–1895; chapter 39) argued that "the Qur'an does not interfere in political questions, nor does it lay down specific rules of conduct in the Civil Law," concluding that "the Qur'an or the teachings of Muhammad are neither barriers to spiritual development or free-thinking on the part of Muhammadans, nor an obstacle to innovation in any sphere of life, whether political, social, intellectual, or moral." Na'ini (chapter 13) quoted the Qur'anic verse, "He [God] cannot be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned" (Sura 21, Verse 23), concluding that "Absolute power belongs only to God, yet [reactionaries] declared it un-Islamic to struggle against the absolute power of earthly tyrants." 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq (Egypt, 1888–1966) quoted Qur'anic verses referring to the Prophet as a "warner" or a "reminder," not a "warden" or a "guardian," concluding that kingship was not required by sacred precedent.<sup>104</sup> Ibn Badis (chapter 9) quoting a speech of the first caliph, concluded that "It is the people that have the right to delegate authority to the leaders and depose them. No one can rule without the consent of the people."

These and other Islamic arguments accompanied constitutionalist movements around the Islamic world. Egypt promulgated a constitutionalist document in 1860, and a fuller constitution in 1882; Tunisia briefly in 1861 and then, after the colonial interlude, in 1959; the Ottoman Empire briefly in 1876, then again in 1908; Iran briefly in 1906, then again in 1909; and so on.<sup>105</sup>

Yet the modernists of this period did not necessarily intend constitutionalism to mean democracy, as it came to be understood over the course of the twentieth century: universal adult suffrage, reduction of monarchs to symbolic offices, and constitutional protection of a growing list of rights. Suavi (chapter 16) argued that "democracy is the highest form of egalitarian government and the most in accord with the holy law," but was "not possible when people lack morals, or unity, or in large countries" such as the Ottoman Empire, which needed a sultanate to

102. Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 281.

103. Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azam 'Imad al-'Ulama' Khalkhali, "A Treatise on the Meaning of Constitutional Government," trans. Hamid Dabashi, in Said Amir Arjomand, ed., *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 337.

104. Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam*, pp. 32–34.

105. *Dustur: A Survey of the Constitutions of the Arab and Muslim States* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1966).

remain "in conformity with its geographical location, circumstances, and population." The best to be hoped for, he concluded, was to hold the sultan's ministers accountable to an elected parliament.

In addition, constitutionalists faced a tension between limiting state power to protect liberty and building sufficient state power to effect societal changes. Their solution to this dilemma lay in the idea that ruling by consent would increase the state's effectiveness, as in Khayr al-Din's formulation (chapter 2): "It is God's custom in His world that justice, good management, and an administrative system duly complied with be the causes of an increase in wealth, peoples, and property, but that the contrary should cause a diminution in all of these things." Some modernists adopted the recently developed European view that the role of the state lay in cultivating consent through training, as in a 1903 Egyptian educational text: "There is no way to educate and strengthen something, except by training and drilling it in the performance of its function, until it can accomplish it with smoothness, speed, and precision."<sup>106</sup>

Other modernists reversed the order and considered state power the prerequisite for all other reforms. The "first conditions of any progress and reform," wrote an Iranian educator, were "security and order"<sup>107</sup>—a view expressed in the Young Turk slogan of "Union and Progress."<sup>108</sup> Indeed, one strain of modernist Islam sacrificed political reform altogether for the sake of other reforms. In Afghanistan, for example, the monarch suppressed an Islamic constitutionalist movement in 1909, executing the movement's religious leader, Maulawi Muhammad Sarwar Wasif (Afghanistan, died 1909).<sup>109</sup> Thereafter, Afghan modernists such as Tarzi (chapter 14) abandoned hopes for constitutionalism and channeled their energies into lobbying the king to an-

nounce social and economic reforms. Tarzi praised the king in lavish phrases as "his great and enlightened majesty, the beacon of the nation and the religion," whose "ever-increasing innate talent and capability has caused continuous growth and advancement," making Afghanistan "the beam of the scale of justice and equality in Asia." Elsewhere, he wrote, a nation or fatherland "without Government, and Government without a King, would resemble inorganic substance or a car without an engine."<sup>110</sup>

#### *Science and Education*

Modern science held such power, in the world-view of modernist Islam, that it could only be described in terms generally reserved for divine entities, as in this statement by Afghani (chapter 11):

How difficult it is to speak about science. There is no end or limit to science. The benefits of science are immeasurable; and these finite thoughts cannot encompass what is infinite. Besides, thousands of eloquent speakers and sages have already expressed their thoughts to explain science and its nobility. Despite this, nature does not permit me not to explain its virtues. Thus I say: If someone looks deeply into the question, he will see that science rules the world. There was, is, and will be no ruler in the world but science.

The power of science, Afghani continued, accounted for the reverses suffered by the Islamic world: "The English have reached Afghanistan; the French have seized Tunisia. In reality this usurpation, aggression, and conquest have not come from the French or the English. Rather it is science that everywhere manifests its greatness and power. Ignorance had no alternative to prostrating itself humbly before science and acknowledging its submission."

This oppositional pair, "science" versus "ignorance"—denigrating all forms of knowledge aside from modern science—paralleled the traditional opposition between the age of Islam and the pre-Islamic age of ignorance (*jahiliyya*). Indeed, numerous modernist Islamic authors made the parallel explicit, recounting the scientific advances of the early Islamic era and their influence on later European scientific developments. A cartoon in *Mulla Nasruddin*, for

106. Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 89.

107. Darius M. Rejali, *Torture and Modernity: Self, Society, and State in Modern Iran* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), p. 48.

108. Şerif Arif Mardin, *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri, 1895–1908 (Political Thought of the Young Turks, 1895–1908)* (Ankara, Turkey: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1964).

109. Senzil Nawid, "State, Clergy, and British Imperial Policy in Afghanistan during the 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, volume 29, number 4, 1997, p. 598.

110. Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 1995), p. 119.

example, showed a speaker castigating an audience: "Sirs! There are hundreds of [Qur'anic] verses and *hadiths* about science being obligatory upon all. The Europeans have taken our ancient science and reached civilization, but we have remained backward."<sup>111</sup> Ameer 'Ali (Bengal, 1849–1928; chapter 43) credited the Prophet Muhammad as well for his "devotion to knowledge and science . . . distinguishing him from all other Teachers, and bringing him into the closest affinity with the modern world of thought." The intellectual centers of the early Islamic centuries, Ameer 'Ali continued, developed "a true and strongly marked scientific spirit, which dominated over all its achievements. The deductive method, hitherto proudly regarded as the invention and sole monopoly of modern Europe, was perfectly understood by the Muslims."

Pride in the past greatness of Islamic science was coupled with dismay at later stagnation. Some attributed the shift to external forces, such as Ameer 'Ali's emphasis on destruction wrought by the Mongol conquest. Others attributed the shift to internal developments, as in Afghani's accusation that a religious elite "tried to stifle the sciences" and "was marvelously served in its designs by despotism." Frashëri (chapter 18) took this accusation a step further, suggesting that centuries of scientific stagnation undermined any pride in past accomplishments:

The Europeans borrowed many things from us, that is to say from our ancestors or more precisely our coreligionists who lived eight or ten centuries ago; however, none of the things in their hands today is something that was borrowed from our ancestors. Europe borrowed a seed of civilization from the Islamic world, she planted that seed. It is natural that a seed should decompose in the earth in order to bear fruit. That seed decomposed; the cycle has been repeated many times, with the result that its very genus has changed. The knowledge that Europe derived from the scholars of Islam was very considerable by [the standards of] the time, but by present-day standards it is nothing.

Along similar lines, Azad ridiculed the attempt "to invoke the Qur'an to lend its support to the achievements of modern research in the different spheres of scientific thought, as if the Qur'an was delivered over

111. Mulla Nasruddin, May 17, 1909, p. 12. Translation from Azeri by Hasan Javadi.

1,300 years ago just to endorse in advance, in the form of riddles, what for centuries, [European scientists] could find out for themselves without the aid of any revealed scripture."<sup>112</sup>

A countertheme in modernist Islam held that early Islamic science was a foreign import, not an expression of the original Islamic spirit. Yet this importation was a favorable sign of Islam's openness, in the view of Khayr al-Din (chapter 2): "If it was permissible for the virtuous ancestors to take such things as logic from outside their own religious community, and to translate it from Greek when they saw it as being among the beneficial instruments . . . then what objection can there be today to our adopting certain skills that we see we greatly need in order to resist intrigues and attract benefits?"

For others, importation was problematic. While expressing deep respect for science, many leading modernists also worried that excessive respect for science might result in Muslims' rejection of Islamic faith. Afghani accused Ahmad Khan of "naturism," and was in turn accused of atheism by conservative scholars.<sup>113</sup> The danger of atheism helped to motivate education reform, which was intended to compete with European-run schools by teaching modern science along with the belief that science was consistent with Islam. 'Abduh, would-be reformer of al-Azhar in Cairo, criticized Western-style schools for trying to turn Muslims into Europeans, which he likened to making chickens lay goose eggs.<sup>114</sup> Gasprinskii (chapter 29), pioneer of *jadid* schools in the Russian Empire, excoriated Russian-educated Muslims who knew European languages and sciences but were "unable to read and write in their own national language!" Ahmad Khan (chapter 40), founder of the Aligarh school in India, sought to pro-

112. Abu'l-Kalam Azad, *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an (Interpretation of the Qur'an)*, trans. Syed Abdul Latif (Bombay, India: Asia Publishing House, 1962), volume 1, p. xl. First published in 1930.

113. Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, "The Refutation of the Materialists," trans. Nikki R. Keddie and Hamid Algar, in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 130–171; Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani": A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 65–80.

114. John W. Livingston, "Muhammad 'Abduh on Science," *Muslim World*, volume 85, numbers 3–4, 1995, p. 224.

vide an Islamic response to English education, which left "the inner spirit dead."<sup>115</sup>

#### Women's Rights

"Except for the Pathan, the women have no enemy. He is clever but is ardent in suppressing women," a Pathan woman named Nagiria wrote in the journal *Pushtun* in 1919. "O Pathan, when you demand your freedom [from the British], why do you deny it to women?"<sup>116</sup> Similarly, women—and men—in many Islamic regions began to demand gender reforms of various sorts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, using an Islamic discourse. "Pay attention to every corner of the world, we are at the eve of a revolution," Fatma Nesibe Hanım (Turkey, mid-nineteenth–early twentieth century) told a women's conference in Istanbul in 1911.<sup>117</sup>

Among the most common themes in this segment of the modernist Islamic movement was the promotion of girls' schooling. Modernists justified girls' schools on various grounds. One focused on the rights of women. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein (Bengal, 1880–1932), a pioneer in women's education in South Asia, emphasized this theme in her presidential address to the Bengal Women's Education Conference in 1926: "The opponents of female education say that women will become wanton and unruly. Fie! They call themselves Muslims and yet go against the basic tenets of Islam, which accords women an equal right to education."<sup>118</sup> As Mazrui (chapter 7), among many others, emphasized, "The Prophet himself says that women and men both should be educated."<sup>119</sup>

The rights of women extended to a variety of behaviors, including military service, that women of the early years of Islam engaged in, wrote Fakhreddin

(chapter 33). According to Maghribi (chapter 27), "Many of the ways [the Prophet] used to treat his wives we see today as inappropriate and unsuitable," such as camel-racing with his wife and watching entertainment together in a mosque. Aside from education, though, modernists disagreed as to which rights women should enjoy. In 1917, Muslim women's organizations in Russia urged limits on polygamy, so that it would not infringe on the rights of first wives; the (male) All-Russia Muslim Congress, meeting the same year, took a more radical position, calling for a complete ban.<sup>120</sup> In 1918, a women's association in India called for an end to polygamy, emphasizing the Qur'anic guarantee of women's right to equal treatment by their husbands; other (male) modernists were scandalized, even one who had himself called for such a ban.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, modernists debated women's right to divorce and their right to participate in politics. The Azerbaijan People's Republic granted women's suffrage in 1918,<sup>122</sup> yet the republicans in Turkey refused, a refusal that Adivar (chapter 28) called "perhaps a blessing," since women have thus "been protected from the danger of being identified with party politics, and their activities outside the political world could not be stopped for political reasons."

As these examples indicate, gender did not necessarily predict a modernist's position on any particular aspect of women's rights. Even *hijab*—modest "Islamic" dress—which Western observers took as a potent symbol of Muslim women's oppression, divided modernist Muslims along ideological rather than gender lines. In Iran, pioneering educator and editor Maryam Amid Muzayyan al-Saltana (Iran, died 1919), a woman, defended *hijab*, but published the work of other Iranian women who objected to it.<sup>123</sup> Qasim Amin (Egypt, 1863–1908; chapter 4), a man, and Nazira Zein-ed-Din (Lebanon, born circa

115. David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 129.

116. Eknath Easwaran, *Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, A Man to Match His Mountains*, 2d ed. (Tornales, Calif.: Nilgiri Press, 1999), p. 105.

117. Aynur Demirdirek, "In Pursuit of the Ottoman Women's Movement," in Zehra F. Arat, ed., *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 78.

118. Sonia Nishat Amin, *The World of Muslim Women in Colonial Bengal, 1876–1939* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 158.

119. Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890–1975* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 105.

120. Marianne R. Kamp, "Unveiling Uzbek Women: Liberation, Representation and Discourse, 1906–1929," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1998, p. 110.

121. Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 145–146, 289–290.

122. Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan*, p. 129.

123. Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Crafting an Educated Housewife," in Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 101.

1905),<sup>124</sup> a woman, inveighed against *hijab*, preferring the middle-class garb of Western Europeans of the era; while Rida (chapter 6) and Kazim,<sup>125</sup> men, and Bahithat al-Badiya (chapter 5), a woman, defended it. Bahithat, by contrast, considered it appropriate for women to perform certain forms of work outside of the home, while the founder of the Society for the Progress of Women, Fatima Rashid (Egypt, died 1953), associated such work with a disturbing “third sex.”<sup>126</sup>

A second strand justified girls’ schools on the grounds of benefit to society. Qasim Amin (chapter 4) adopted the language of women’s rights but also linked women’s education to the aspirations of male modernists: “There is a way of raising yourselves up to the highest level of civilization—the kind of civilization you aspire to, and then some. It consists of liberating your women from the bondage of ignorance and *hijab* [here, isolation].” Tahar Haddad (Tunisia, 1899–1935) attacked those “condemning women to eternal ignorance, despite all the grave dangers for our present society and future generations that illiteracy presents. . . . It is critical that women have access to certain careers of social importance, such as medical treatment of infants and women’s diseases, teaching in orphanages and kindergartens, and all the functions involved with health, education, and culture, without these activities preventing the accomplishment of her duties as mother of the family.”<sup>127</sup> Training women for these roles—notice the gendered limits of Haddad’s list, plus the recurrent association of women with family—would allow society to make use of human resources that were currently being wasted. Zaynab Fawwaz (Lebanon-Egypt, 1860–1914) objected to any limits on women’s usefulness: “man and woman are equal in mental capacity and are two members of one social body, both of which are equally indispensable. . . .

God in His creation has set laws whose transformation cannot be decreed [by humans]. But this transformation would not occur through employing women in men’s occupations or men in women’s occupations.”<sup>128</sup>

A variant of this argument, adopted so commonly that it may well constitute a third strand, held that schools would make women better mothers. Bahithat al-Badiya (chapter 5) made this case, responding to the view—common in global scientific discourse of the era—that education desexed women: “No matter how much a mother has been educated, or in whatever profession she works, this would not cause her to forget her children nor to lose her maternal instinct. On the contrary, the more enlightened she becomes, the more aware she is of her responsibilities. Haven’t you seen ignorant women and peasant women ignore their crying child for hours? Were these women also occupied in preparing legal cases or in reading and writing?” The founder of the first girls’ schools in the Sudan, Babikr Bedri (Sudan, 1860–1954), justified modern education on the grounds that it “would enable a girl to run her home in such a way as to attract educated young men of her own race, from among her relatives or fellow citizens. This would help to prevent our educated men from marrying foreigners, a thing which would bring to nought our efforts in educating them.”<sup>129</sup> Even quite conservative religious scholars, such as *Maulana Ashraf ‘Ali Thanavi* (North India, 1864–1943), could support women’s education on the grounds that ignorance, “the ruin of the religion of the women of Hindustan, . . . went beyond the women to their children and in many respects even had its effects on their husbands.”<sup>130</sup> This line of reasoning allowed some modernists to call for limits on girls’ education; women needed only to learn child-rearing, home economics, and moral virtue. In Ahmad Khan’s words: “The learning that will be beneficial today to women is the same that benefited

124. Nazira Zein-ed-Din, “Unveiling and Veiling,” in Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam*, pp. 101–106. First published in 1928.

125. Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 42.

126. Beth Baron, *The Women’s Awakening in Egypt* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 147.

127. Tahar Haddad, *Notre femme, la législation islamique, et la société (Our Woman, Islamic Legislation, and Society)* (Tunis, Tunisia: Maison Tunisienne de l’Édition, 1978), pp. 222–224. First published in 1930.

128. Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, eds., *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 223.

129. Babikr Bedri, *The Memoirs of Babikr Bedri*, trans. Yusuf Bedri and Peter Hogg (London: Ithaca Press, 1980), volume 2, p. 132.

130. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi’s Bihishi Zewar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 47–48.



them in the past, namely, religion and practical morality."<sup>131</sup>

Queen Surayya Tarzi (Afghanistan, 1897–1968), daughter of Mahmud Tarzi (chapter 14), combined all three sorts of arguments—benefit to family, benefit to society, and women's rights—in consecutive sentences in her announcement of the opening of the country's first girls' schools in 1921: "Women are in charge of bringing up the future generation, the most important responsibility in life. If we deprive women of education, we have, in effect, incapacitated half of our body and have destroyed our subsistence with our own hands. It was not in vain that *Hazrat Muhammad* (may peace be upon him) made the acquisition of knowledge obligatory for both men and women."<sup>132</sup>

The emphasis on women's role as mothers was mirrored in the modernist Islamic discourse on masculinity. The crisis and decline of the Islamic world was associated in male authors' writings with effeminate men—that is, men who did not embody the masculine roles associated with success in the modern world. Malkum Khan (chapter 12) goaded male readers by noting that certain women "have perceived the meaning and virtues of Humanity far better than the men, that is, better than our non-men." Fitrat (chapter 34) accused traditional religious scholars of pederasty—"indecent acts with a beardless youth"—identifying premodern maleness with homosexuality, as did a cartoon in *Mulla Nasruddin* showing traditionally garbed men groping and kissing dancing boys,<sup>133</sup> and a Turkish modernist accusing traditional religious scholars of "adultery, homosexuality, drinking": "How can we restore the vitality of this great religion with these *Shaykh al-Islams* [religious officials], with these snuff-addicted preachers, with this army of vagabond *softas* [seminary students] whose ideas of faith do not go beyond voluptuous desires to own beautiful girls and boys in Paradise?"<sup>134</sup> Iqbal (chapter 41) turned the image of emasculation onto modern-educated Muslim men, bemoaning "the brainy graduate of high culture"—

presumptively male—"whose low, timid voice betokens the dearth of soul in his body, who takes pride in his submissiveness, eats sparingly, complains of sleepless nights, and produces unhealthy children for his community, if he does produce any at all." Male modernists projected their conception of an idealized heterosexual family onto the nation as a whole, representing the nation as a female in need of male salvation and protection.<sup>135</sup> The male modernist, Bahithat protested, tends to be "as despotic about liberating us [women] as he has been about our enslavement. We are weary of his despotism."<sup>136</sup>

#### The Legacy of Modernist Islam

Many observers of the modernist Islamic movement, even many sympathetic observers, have said all along that it won't amount to much. One British supporter rescinded his optimism after being attacked in western Egypt in 1897, an experience that "has convinced me that there is *no* hope anywhere to be found in Islam. I had made myself a romance about these reformers, but I see that it has no substantial basis."<sup>137</sup> In 1916, a Christian missionary concluded from his study of Islamic modernism that "we need not expect much to result in the way of uplift to Islam from rationalizing and intellectual defence and pruning."<sup>138</sup>

Not all observers have been so critical. For example, the Orientalist Ignác Goldziher (Hungary, 1850–1921), noting the "efforts, in a large number of theological tractates, to find support in Qur'an and *hadith* for the requirements of modern political life, as also for the requirements of progress in civil life

135. Lisa Pollard, "Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of the 1919 Egyptian Revolution," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1997; Afsaneh Najmabadi, "The Erotic *Vatan* (Homeland) as Beloved and Mother: To Love, to Possess, and to Protect," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, volume 39, number 3, 1997, pp. 442–467; Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, pp. 113–134.

136. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 182.

137. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), p. 276.

138. Samuel Graham Wilson, *Modern Movements among Moslems* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916), p. 171.

131. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1982), p. 77.

132. Senzil Nawid, *Religious Response to Social Change in Afghanistan, 1919–29* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 1999), p. 221.

133. *Mulla Nasruddin*, May 19, 1906, p. 1.

134. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 2d ed. (London: Hurst & Company, 1998), p. 378.

(the question of women, etc.),” concluded with cautious optimism, “These cultural tendencies, intimately related to religious life, that are making themselves felt in various parts of the Muslim world, carry the seeds of a new phase in the evolution of Islam.”<sup>139</sup>

Many Muslims of the early twentieth century seem to have agreed with Goldziher’s assessment. Thousands read modernist Islamic newspapers; hundreds of thousands of families sent children to reformed Islamic schools; millions of Muslims celebrated the constitutional revolutions in Iran (1906) and the Ottoman Empire (1908); millions more participated in the anticolonial movements led by Islamic modernists in North Africa and South and Southeast Asia. At the same time, millions opposed the modernist Islamic movement; but sympathy for the movement appears to have diffused beyond the elite intellectual circles that spawned it.

In midcentury, such sympathies largely dissipated, even among the educated. By the 1930s, the movement was in serious decline, its energies sapped by secular nationalism, socialism, and fascism, which emphasized the modernist aspects of modernist Islam; and by religious revivalist movements emphasizing the Islamic aspects. Among secularists, the Soviet Union witnessed the most spectacular denunciations of previous identities—Azerbaijani Islamic modernists signed an open letter admitting that “we were deceived and mistaken” in their earlier views, for example<sup>140</sup>—but similar transitions occurred even without the threat of Soviet purges. This split did not occur evenly throughout the Islamic world: modernist Islam was still arriving during this period in some regions, such as West Africa or China, where Ya’qub Wang Jingzhai (China, 1879–1949; chapter 52) and others only began to study in the Middle East in large numbers in the 1920s and 1930s; the Sudan, where Muhammad Ahmad Mahjub (Sudan, 1908–1976; chapter 10) and other college graduates developed a modernist-Islamic nationalism; and the Hadhramaut—where a “boomerang effect” brought modern-

ism via Southeast Asia.<sup>141</sup> In regions where Muslim scholars played an active role in nationalist movements—Algeria and Indonesia, for example—modernist Islam seems to have had greater staying power.

A recent critic has suggested that this bifurcation reflected a “disintegrative tendency” inherent in the juxtaposition of “modernist” and “Islamic.”<sup>142</sup> Another approach might view the split-up of modernist Islam in terms of the weakening of liberalism throughout the world—not just among Muslims—during the Interwar period, with authenticity on the right and the “New Man” on the left crowding out the toleration of multiple identities, old and new. This approach might find support in the resurgence of interest in modernist Islamic figures among Muslim intellectuals of the late twentieth century, contributing to global intellectual trends shifting away from fascism and communism. Rachid Ghannouchi (Tunisia, born 1941) has dedicated his recent work on civil rights to Afghani, ‘Abduh, and other modernists.<sup>143</sup> Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia, born 1947) has republished excerpts from Ameer ‘Ali and Azad.<sup>144</sup> The centennial of the death of Afghani recently led a high-level official in the Islamic Republic of Iran to praise modernism as “necessary for the survival of Islam at the theoretical, practical, political, and social levels.”<sup>145</sup>

The modernist Islamic movement’s primary legacy, the aspect that appears to attract contemporary Muslim thinkers, is its defining feature: the attempt to reconcile modern values and Islamic faith. Admitting

141. Peter G. Riddell, “Religious Links between Hadhramaut and the Malay-Indonesian World, c. 1850 to c. 1950,” in Ulrike Freitag and William G. Clarence-Smith, eds., *Hadhrami Traders, Scholars, and Statesmen in the Indian Ocean, 1750s–1960s* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), pp. 224–229.

142. Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, “Religious Modernism in the Arab World, India, and Iran,” *The Muslim World*, volume 83, number 1, 1993, pp. 43–45.

143. Rachid al-Ghannouchi, *al-Hurriyyat al-‘amma fi al-dawla al-islamiyya* (*Public Liberties in the Islamic State*) (Beirut, Lebanon: Markaz Dirasat al-Wihda al-‘Arabiyya, 1993).

144. Chandra Muzaffar, ed., *The Universalism of Islam* (Penang, Malaysia: Aliran, 1979).

145. Mohammad Javad Hojjati Kermani, “Modernism, Islamic Movement, and the Islamic Revolution,” *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, volume 9, number 1, 1997, p. 93.

139. Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 236, 263. First published in 1910.

140. Audrey Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1992), p. 131.

that one has both modern values and Islamic faith is the first step in this reconciliation. Some of the admissions generated in the first century of modernist Islam may strike later readers as embarrassingly foolish and craven, such as references to European civilization as the world's sole civilization. But rejecting such formulations does not necessarily amputate the underlying values. Mass education, rapid international communication, and globalized commodities markets have generated huge populations in the Islamic world who are imbued with modern values such as cultural revival (defined in a particular manner), democracy (on Western lines), science and education (as practiced globally), and particular rights for women (as articulated by international organizations). Even Islamic revivalists share many of these concerns—though they might be scandalized by association with their modernist roots.<sup>146</sup>

Accepting modern values as modern is only the first step in reconciliation. The second step is to theorize the compatibility of such values with Islamic faith. This search for consistency may itself be a characteristically modern concern, as previous eras were less insistent on the discursive construction of

a coherent individual self. Even some modernists have rejected such an attempt, such as Taha Husayn (Egypt, 1889–1973), who suggested that every human is composed of two separate parts, rational and emotional: “Both of these personalities are connected with our constitution and make-up, and we cannot escape from either of them. What, then, is to hinder the first personality from being scholarly, inquisitive, critical, and the second believing, assured, aspiring to the highest ideals?”<sup>147</sup> More commonly, the modernist Islamic movement has taken up the task through a process of double translation: modern values into Islamic terms, and Islamic values into modern terms. Translations are famously imperfect, and modernist Islam involves particularly difficult pairings: the Islamic concept of justice with the modern concept of law and judicial systems; the modern concepts of citizenship and rights with the Islamic concept of equality; the Islamic concept of consultation with the modern concept of constitutional democracy; and so on. Critics may argue that these concepts lose something in translation, but the modernist Islamic movement argued that they gain something through juxtaposition.

146. David D. Commins, “Modernism,” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), volume 3, pp. 118–123.

147. Nissim Rejwan, *Arabs Face the Modern World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 50.