CHAPTER ONE
Some Characteristic Features
of Reformist Thought: A Historical Continuity

All reformist movements in the later Islamic period were based on the move towards Islamic purification as advocated by Ibn Taymiyah (1263-1328 A.D.), who bowed to no authority other than the *Qur'ān, ḥadīth* and the practice of the *salaf.* During his lifetime, he led a campaign against various superstitious rites in order to recover the soul of uncompromising monotheism *(rūḥ al-tawḥīd).* Ibn Taymiyah's intellectual heritage had a great influence on subsequent Islamic movements, as the religious issues he raised in his struggle to purify Islam became archetypes, which all later reformers, to varying degrees, made their vehicle for expressing their religious convictions and thoughts.

Ibn Taymiyah believed that Islamic principles were sufficient for creating the ideal community. To achieve this ideal community, he proposed that a proper understanding of Islam be a prerequisite. This required first of all an understanding of the circumstances and the spirit in which the *Qur'ānic* text was revealed. Such an understanding would be formed by following closely the text and by disregarding any human mediation.[i] As a consequence of his disbelief in human mediation, Ibn Taymiyah condemned *taqlīd* (unquestioning acceptance), particularly on the part of those who are able to exercise *ijtihād.* Every able Muslim must try freely to reach his own decision regarding unsolved problems. Only if he fails in this attempt, might he imitate another *mujtahid.* The practice of *ijtihād,* in the eyes of Ibn Taymiyah, was central to Islamic thought. In his book *Muwāfaqat al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl li-al-Ṣarīḥ al-Maʿqūl,* for example, he illustrates how reason which became the primary tool of *ijtihād* and *sharʿ* agree with each other and present a safe path for human intellect and thought. By opening the gate of *ijtihād,* Ibn Taymiyah, sought

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[1] Muḥammad al-Bāhī, "Factors of the Islamic Movements in the Arab World" (unpublished paper, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, 1956), 13.

recognition of the sense of independence in man, a sense which would make it necessary for him to avoid imitating others, as infallibility falls to no one.

Closely connected to his attacks on *taqlīd* was his condemnation of popular religious practices. In general, according to Ibn Taymīyah, these popular practices were linked to a time and a location. The element of time can be seen, for example, in the veneration of the first Thursday and the following Friday night of the month of *Rajab* called *al-Raghā'ib*, which were marked by *Ṣalāt al-Raghā'ib* (communal supererogatory prayer). In a *fatwā* Ibn Taymīyah stated that since the Prophet never offered this prayer, nor any of his *ṣaḥābah* or the *tābi'ūn*, this prayer was *bid'ah*. He also attacked those practices which were linked to the element of location, such as the veneration of saints at their tombs, which he believed had deleterious influence upon the moral life of Muslims, since it directly promoted *shirk*[2]

Ibn Taymīyah criticized some *ṣūfīs* because of their belief in pantheism and their practice of exempting themselves from religious duties. He attacked such *ṣūfīs* as Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Sab'īn and Ibn Fāriḍ, calling them "the apostatizing *ṣūfī*-philosophers." Meanwhile, he showed respect and praise for the earlier *ṣūfīs*, such as al-Faḍl Ibn 'Ayyāḍ, Ma'rūf al-Karkhī and al-Junayd. These he called the learned *ṣūfīs*, because their *ṣūfism* derived from Ibn Ḥanbal's book *al-Zuhd wa al-Wara'* and were true representatives of the "monasticism" of Islam, not the *ṣūfism* of the philosophers. Moreover, he accepted the existence of *aḥwāl* and the experience of *ma'rifah* as having some kind of validity. He himself was invested with the *ṣūfī khirqah* (cloak) by Ibn Qudāmah, whose own *silsilah* extended back to 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.[3]

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[2] Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle against Popular Religion with an Annotated Translation of His Kitāb Iqtiḍā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Aṣḥāb al-Jaḥīm* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 12-13.

[3] Albert Hourani, "Rashid Rida and the Sufi Order: A Footnote to Laoust," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales*, 29 (1977), 234; G. Makdisi, "The Hanbali School and Sufism," *Humaniora Islamica*, 2 (1974), 61f.

A fierce opposition was mounted against Ibn Taymiyah by the possessors of traditional religious authority, since none of them were safe from his attacks which were extended from *sūfīs*, philosophers and *mutakallimūn* to *shī'īs*. He criticized the philosophers, showing that the philosophical thought of Muslims, which was based on Greek philosophy, did not serve the dogmatic tenets of Islam, but rather harmed them. As a puritan who regarded the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth* as the sole references for any formulation of thought, Ibn Taymiyah rejected all types of philosophical speculation, accusing the philosophers of being *mubtadi'ah* (condemnable innovators) and *malāḥidah* (heretics). He argued that the conclusions to which the philosophers had come were basically Greek in nature and had nothing to do with Islam.[4]

Ibn Taymiyah's criticism of the *mutakallimūn* was no less harsh than that which he had aimed at the philosophers. He held that *kalām* was suffused with Hellenism and contained more falsehood than truth. *Kalām*, which had begun as a device for defending religious principles from the attacks of non-Muslims, developed into a distinctive Islamic discipline which claimed to be *'Ilm Uṣūl al-Dīn* (the science of the principles of religion *par excellence).* Ibn Taymiyah rejected that claim as a flagrant *bid'ah* and maintained that the principles of religious doctrine could be understood only through the right conception of the nature of prophecy and the prophetic mission. Muḥammad had already explained all the aspects of God's teachings needed for the human perception of religion, he maintained.[5]

The careful reader may discern in Ibn Taymiyah's ideas an inclination to go behind the historic formulations of all Muslim groups and to confine itself solely to the *Qur'ān* and *sunnah*. It was from this point of departure that he attacked the enthusiasm shown for any leading jurist and warned against the unquestioning acceptance of any juristic rite. He

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[4]Nurcholish Madjid, "Ibn Taymiyya on Kalam and Falsafa: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1984), 151, 183.
[5]Ibid., 113.

believed that such an acceptance is religiously forbidden and denied to those who can exercise *ijtihad*.[6]

The characteristic features of Ibn Taymiyah's religious reform did not disappear with his death, but were revived and implemented by many of the later reformers. The earliest among them was Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1791 A.D.), who inherited from Ibn Taymiyah the concept of uncompromising monotheisme. Like Ibn Taymiyah, the Wahhābis also displayed a rigid intolerance towards many popular religious practices, which eventually widened the gap between them and other Muslims. A case in point was their excessive disapproval of visits to shrines, a practice which was often motivated by natural piety, quite reasonable in itself. This attitude, which led them to desecrate the places of the dead, especially the most eminent companions and to show disrespect even for the Prophet's sanctuary, planted a feeling of hatred towards them among Muslims.

Although the *Wahhābi* movement was directly inspired by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyah, it departed from him in some important aspects. This is particularly the case with the Wahhābis for they rejected all forms of *sūfism*. Moreover, the Wahhābis violently opposed the intellectual trend in Islam. Even though they agreed with Ibn Taymiyah in rejecting the authority of the schools of law and insisted on *ijtihad*, they did everything in their power to discourage the actual tools of *ijtihad* by rejecting and hampering intellectualism.[7] The Wahhābis had no interest in examining the opinions of the dogmatic and juristic schools and then adopting the best rulings on the basis of their own *ijtihad*. Rather, they accepted uncritically the sum total of the Islamic legacy of the first century and a half.[8] Similarly, their advocacy of *salafi* beliefs was maintained through the simple

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[6] al-Bāhi. Factors of the Islamic Movements," 34.

[7] Fazlur Rahman. "Revival and Reform in Islam," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol 2 (ed) P. M Holt et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). 632 638

[8] Ibid.

acceptance of the *Qur'ān* and *sunnah* as sources of Islamic legislation, regardless of analogy and custom. Moreover, their promotion of the *salafī* practices primarily meant nothing more than the eradication of *bid'ahs* that had been introduced after the death of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal.[9] Consequently, *Wahhābism* could not claim to have reawakened Islam through the introduction of *ijtihād*, in spite of their belief that it would prove to be the vehicle for helping Islam adapt to change.

However, despite all of its shortcomings, *Wahhābism* must be given some credit for introducing the ideas of Ibn Taymīyah which had been disregarded and looked upon as heresies for some four centuries. As such, *Wahhābism* could claim to be the precursor of the progressive ideas which criticized the established historical interpretation of Islam, ideas which became the staple diet of the later reformers. It must also be remembered that the Wahhābis were the ones to stir interest in the canonical collections of *ḥadīth* and to publish the works of Ibn Taymīyah and his pupil, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah.[10]

Wahhābism spread its wings outside of Arabia. In India, for instance, the *Farā'iḍī* of Bengal, the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* of the Punjab and the *Tarīqah Muḥammadīyah*, all called for opposition to *bid'ah* and insisted on the emulation of simple Islam. Like the Wahhābis, the *Farā'iḍī* movement advocated a strict observance of the *farā'iḍ* (duties) enjoined by Islam. It also aimed at enforcing the original teachings of Islam and at purging Muslim society of its various superstitious rites and ceremonies.[11] As for the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth*, the name itself indicates their opposition to *ra'y*, both they and the Wahhābis displayed a marked intolerance towards any method of deriving religious knowledge which was not based squarely on the traditions of the Prophet.[12] The *Tarīqah Muḥammadīyah* was identified

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[9] al-Bāhi, Factors of the Islamic Movements in the Arab World, 23.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Abdus Subhan, "Social and Religious Reform Movements in the 19th Century Among the Muslims: A Bengali Reaction to the Wahhabi Movement," in *Social and Religious Reform Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (ed.) S. P. Sen (Calcutta: Institute of Historical Studies, 1979), 485.

[12] Arthur Jefferey, "Present Day Movements in Islam," *Muslim World*, 33 (1943), 169.

by some Muslims as an Indian version of the puritanical *Wahhābī* movement. Despite the fact that there is some question as to its ideological connection to *Wahhābism*, the *Ṭarīqah Muḥammadīyah* may be found to agree with *Wahhābism* in its basic tenets in as much as it too rejected the principle of blindly following the decisions of the medieval jurists. This movement also stressed the importance of the principle of independent judgment.[13]

The *Wahhābī*, the *Farā'iḍī*, the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* and the *Ṭarīqah Muḥammadīyah* movements were all manifestations of the Islamic reformist tendency that had become a conspicuous phenomenon in the Muslim world during the nineteenth century. From a universal perspective, they may be classified with the other reformist movements of the pre-modern period of Islamic history, such as the *Sanūsī* movement of Libya, the *Fulānī* movement of Nigeria and the *Padrī* movement of Indonesia. They inherited the reformist outlook of Ibn Taymīyah and all of them featured a strong commitment to revive simple and uncompromising monotheism and to purge Muslim society of all the polytheistic accretions that had crept into it over the course of time.[14]

As pre-modern reformers, they were predominantly schooled in the medieval culture of Islam. Their attitude was a by-product of pre-nineteenth century culture in which the challenge and impact of modernism and scientific discoveries, although posing a certain threat, had not seriously confronted Islam. In pursuing reform, they looked to the external form of early Islam as the ideal religious paradigm. In so doing, they called for inward reform and a restoration of the ideal pattern of Islam through a restatement of its teachings. Their argument was that the root of the moral decadence of Muslim society and its backwardness must lie in ignorance of the enduring values of Islam itself. Hence, pre-modern Islamic reform may be described as having had a conservative spirit.

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[13]Ibid.

[14]Muin-ud-din Ahmad Khan, "Farā'iḍī Movement: An Historical Interpretation," *Islamic Studies*, 9 (1970), 123.

Like all great religions, Islam felt the impact of and responded to the manifold forces of modernity. There was hardly a facet of Muslim society which remained untouched by these forces. In his poem "Complaint and Answer," Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877-1938) eloquently expressed the stirrings, anxieties, and wonders of the Muslim soul in the presence of the new challenges that modernity imposed upon it at the turn of the century. In his poem, Iqbāl gives a voice to a complaint about Islam's agonizing condition and God's answer to it.[15] The need for an intellectual reorientation of Muslim society had, indeed, been felt by modern reformers as early as the latter half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Islamic world was in a state of submission to the Western powers. In 1774, the treaty of Kuchuk Kainarja was signed, in which Ottoman Turkey had to accept humiliating terms from Russia and cede many of its territories to the latter. Prior to this, in 1757, the battle of Plassey had taken place and as a result Bengal had passed to British rule. Then in 1758, the whole of the Indian subcontinent came under British suzerainty. This was followed by Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. These events simultaneously created problems as well as challenges for Muslims and made them painfully aware of the need to seek the cause of their military and political weakness. Needless to say the challenge of modernity has become even more apparent and intimidating since then. The birth of modern Islamic reform could, therefore, be said to have been greatly influenced by the West.

In presenting Islam, modern reformers made use of the rational approach, so that its message, they hoped, would be in tune with the modern mind. Rationality became their vehicle for safeguarding religious doctrines. Unlike the reformers of pre-modern Islam, who were modest in their application of rationalism and maintained a balance between

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[15]Hassan Saab, "The Spirit of Reform in Islam," *Islamic Studies*, 2 (1963), 22.

reason and tradition, the modern reformers were prepared to put reason over tradition and to apply rational inquiry to their interpretation of religious principles.[16]

Modern reformers have claimed that Islam is a religion of rationality, a claim intended to prove that Islam is open to new ideas, creativity and progress. It came as a result of the pressing need to convince men of modern culture, who doubted the ability of Islam as a valid guide in modern life. Hence, they wrote works in which rationality was given a prominent place in theological discussions. For them, whatever reason commanded was God's command and whatever reason rejected could not be part of the *Qur'ān*. Using reason, they argued, Muslims could borrow from modernity whatever they needed to improve their lives, as long as the borrowing was in harmony with the reinterpreted *Qur'ānic* text. For them, there was nothing wrong with any new phenomenon so long as it was for the benefit of Muslims.

One of Muḥammad·'Abduh's favorite themes in his theological writings was the essential harmony between reason and revelation. 'Abduh (1849-1905 A.D.) declared that when properly expressed and understood, there could be no conflict between the two. Conflict only arose from the fact that men often misunderstood and supposed that the two were contradictory. The adoration of reason led 'Abduh to discuss the role of reason in human affairs and to specify its proper limits, using the principles of cause and effect as a way of explanation. He declares in one of his works that: "It is not possible for a Muslim to deny the sequence of cause and effect among natural phenomena, except by renouncing allegiance to his religion, even before he denies the validity of his reason and intelligence." He further states that those who do not employ the normal procedures of causation, which were ordained by God, should be charged with *shirk*.[17] In defense of the principle of

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[16]Muḥammad Daūd Rahbar, "Shāh Walī Allāh and Ijtihād," *Muslim World*, 45 (1955), 346; Muḥammad 'Abduh, "al-Radd 'alā Farah Anṭūn," in *al-Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh*, (eds.) Adūnis and Khālidah Sa'īd (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-al-Malāyīn, 1983), 78.

[17]Mazheruddin Siddiqi, "General Characteristics of Muslim Modernism," *Islamic Studies*, 9 (1970), 38.

rationality in Islam. 'Abduh also seemed prepared to favor reason over revelation, when the two were in conflict.[18]

Rashid Riḍā (1865-1935), a disciple of 'Abduh, was very much in favor of reason, stating that the *Qur'ān* has said that *Ahl al-Kitāb* agreed that reason and religion were opposed to each other and that whatever reason concluded outside the text of the scriptures was invalid."[19] In another passage, he summarizes the role of reason as depicted in the *Qur'ān*, saying:

> The *Qur'ān* taught its followers to ask for arguments and our virtuous ancestors followed the same course. They themselves held to arguments, they asked for arguments [from others] and they forbade people to accept anything without arguments. Then came the later generations who decided things in accordance with *taqlīd*, asked people to abide by *taqlīd* and forbade them to argue until Islam became the very opposite of what it was.[20]

Similarly, Iqbāl discussed the importance of reason in human life and claimed that Islam had given the latter its full due. The birth of Islam, he explained, was the birth of intellect, which alone made man master of his environment. The constant appeal to reason and experience in the *Qur'ān* and the latter's emphasis on nature and history as sources of human knowledge were, according to Iqbāl, all different aspects of the same idea. It was due to the prominent position which Islam ascribes to reason that *ijtihād* (creative interpretation) became an integral part of Islamic doctrine. For him, *ijtihād* signified the principle of movement in Islam and a means by which changes could be affected in the *Sharī'ah*[21]

Modern reformers were resorting to *ijtihād* in order to justify their efforts towards the modern and progressive goals that they had set for themselves. Through *ijtihād* they

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[18]'Abduh, "al-Radd 'alā Farah Antūn," 78.

[19]Siddiqi, "General Characteristics of Muslim Modernism," 42.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Mazheruddin Siddiqi, "Iqbal's Principle of Movement and Its Application to the Present Muslim Society," *Islamic Studies*, 5 (1966), 9.

returned to the *Qur'ān*, to the *sunnah* of the Prophet and his companions and to the practice of the *salaf* in order to find the bases for new legal precepts. They, therefore, rejected obligatory adherence to the opinion of any *madhhab* (Islamic school of law), since they considered the latter to be guilty of maintaining inaccuracies and beliefs that would not stand the test of reason. In addition, *madhhabs* did not belong to pure Islam, since they did not come into existence until the third century of Islam. Worsening the reputation of the *madhhabs* in the eyes of modern reformers was the fact that affiliation to them had been one of the causes of disunity amongst Muslims, since they compelled Muslims to follow different opinions.[22]

Rationality, however, did not prevent modern reformers from remaining loyal to traditional Islam. None of them challenged the absolute truth contained in the message of the *Qur'ān* and only a few, like Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (1817-1889 A.D.), held that a sizable number of traditions contained in the six sound works of *ḥadīth* were false.[23] It would be untrue, however, to claim that Sayyid Aḥmad Khān ever went so far as to reject the science of *ḥadīth*. He certainly acted on *ḥadīths*, whenever it was feasible to do so, provided that he was satisfied with their authenticity.

Since modern reformers regarded the *Qur'ān* as the chief vehicle for modernizing society, they approached it with modern concepts and tools, believing that the time had come for it to be explained in the light of rationality. The *Qur'ān* was to be purified of irrational elements and all the fantastic stories contained within it known as the *Isrā'īliyāt* (Jewish legends).[24] Unlike medieval commentaries, reformist *Qur'ānic* commentaries were characterized by evocations of its moral message rather than by attention to the

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[22]Rudolph Peters, "*Ijtihād* and *Taqlīd* in the 18th and 19th Century Islam," *Die Welt Des Islams.* 20 (1980), 132.

[23]Hafeez Malik, "The Religious Liberalism of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan," *Muslim World.* 54 (1964), 165.

[24]Assad Nimer Busool, "Shaikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Relations with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh," *Muslim World,* 66 (1976), 278.

grammatical, lexicographical or rhetorical beauty of the *Qur'ān*. Their commentaries also brought didactic considerations to the fore.[25]

They rejected the idea of miracles, which were often attributed to some *Qur'ānic* verses by earlier commentators. In this respect, 'Abduh denied that miracles had any place in Islam, since Islam was a religion in which belief in the *sunnat Allāh* (natural law) was demanded by faith. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān also denied miracles, declaring that the incidents which were regarded as miracles were, indeed, causal happenings which took place according to natural phenomena.[26] He cautioned Muslims that senseless statements attributed to the Prophet and all the fantastic stories about his life would only expose Islam to contempt and ridicule.[27] He rejected the concept of miracles not because it was in contradiction with reason, but because of its lack of a textual basis. He felt that the *Qur'ān* did not lend support to such happenings, which contravened nature or ran counter to the principles on which the universe had been created. According to him, the bulk of medieval *tafsīrs* involved *khawāriq al-'ādah* (supernatural phenomena), which he considered irrelevant in explaining the holy message of God. In his *tafsīr*, therefore, he tried to explain the miraculous elements of the *Qur'ān* in terms of natural causation, an explanation which led his opponents to accuse him of being a naturalist.[28]

Riḍā approached the controversy of miracles from a sociological perspective. He argued that with the coming of Islam, the days of miracles were over, as man had by that time reached the stage of intellectual maturity.[29] The reformers' disbelief in miracles, thus, implied a protest against the doctrine of *jabr* (compulsion), which had reduced man to a nonentity and denied his causal efficacy. Hence, their belief in the world as a system of

[25]Mahmudul Haq, *Muhammad 'Abduh: A Study of a Modern Thinker of Egypt* (Aligarh: Islamic Studies, Aligarh University, 1970), 111.

[26]Siddiqi, "General Characteristics of Muslim Modernism," 43.

[27]Malik, "The Religious Liberalism of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan," 167.

[28]Muhammad Daūd Rahbar, "Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's Principles of Exegesis: Translated from his *Taḥrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*," *Muslim World*, 46 (1956), 105.

[29]Siddiqi, "General Characteristics of Muslim Modernism," 42.

causes and effects led them either to a denial of miracles or to an explanation of them in more or less rational terms.

The characteristic feature of reformist Islam, in all its variety, was the call for the rejection of *taqlīd*. Like Ibn Taymiyah, modern reformers tried to liberate reason from all the fetters of *taqlīd* that had enslaved it. It was then, they believed, that reason would be restored its proper dignity, subject only to God and in conformity with the latter's sacred law. The protest against *taqlīd* was ultimately intended to deny the authority of a few and their control over the beliefs of others. For reformers, any person who controls the belief of another is committing a grave sin which is tantamount to infidelity.[30]

Taqlīd, 'Abduh states, is a malaise and society must be cured of this social malediction first, since no step towards progress can be taken without this first being done. 'Abduh's attack on *taqlīd* should not be understood merely in terms of its doctrinal content, but also in terms of its ethical message. Taking the ethical appeal of Islam as his point of departure, he advocates his concept of social responsibility, by quoting the *Qur'ānic* verse: "Verily God will not change the state of a people until they change their own state."[31] In fact, the whole corpus of 'Abduh's criticism was directed against social conservatism in the guise of *taqlīd*. Conviction, according to him, must be based on an intelligent acceptance of faith, since the acquisition of faith without investigation is as bad as faithlessness.[32]

Simplicity of faith was also frequently discussed by reformers. Simplicity for them meant delivering Islam from the medieval morass in which it had become entangled. This was seen in what Sayyid Aḥmad Khān had said about his whole attempt at reform. His reform was directed at restoring the simplicity of faith, since he thought many fields of

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[30]Muḥammad 'Abduh, *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma* (Cairo: al-Maṭābi' al-Sha'bī, n.d.), 175.

[31]The *Qur'ān*, 13: 11; P. J. Vatikiotis, "Muhammad 'Abduh and the Quest for a Muslim Humanism," *Islamic Culture*, 31 (1957), 115.

[32]Haq, *Muḥammad 'Abduh*, 88.

belief and conduct had been wrongly brought under the purview of religion. Islam, which was entangled with additional materials, should be simplified and confined only to the *Qur'ān*. and a few authentic *hadīth*, provided that these last could stand the test of reason.[33]

In so far as the simplification of faith and the exclusion from religion of all its later accretions were concerned. Iqbāl was very much in line with the thought of the other Muslim reformers. In this respect, Iqbāl called the simplification of faith "a return to pure Islam." He even concluded that the essence of Islam was summed up in the two words *lā llāh* (there is no God [but God]) as illustrated in two lines of a poem he composed: "The Qalandar has nothing with him except two words *lā llāh*, but the jurist in the city is rich in Arabic lexicography."[34] 'Abduh, on the other hand, viewed simplicity as a means of avoiding *al-ghulāt fī al-dīn* (excess of religious zeal), which was forbidden by Islam. Excessive religious zeal was condemned, he pointed out, because excessiveness would be counter-productive for Muslims. Similarly, an over-concern with religion would result only in the negligence of material progress and worldly affairs, he concluded. The principle of simplicity helped to foster the reduction of a rigid affiliation to any particular *madhhab*. The reformers' approval of the application of *talfīq* (moving from one *madhhab* to another), for instance, was a way of simplifying the practice of religious duties and led to the abandonment of the opinion of one *madhhab* for that of another, which was found to be more simple, accommodating and expedient.[35] In other words, according to the principle of *talfīq*, rulings do not have to stem from the same *madhhab* all the time. A follower of Abū Ḥanīfah, for example, should not be restricted to the *Ḥanafī* interpretation of the *Sharī'ah*, nor should the follower of al-Shāfi'ī be bound to the interpretations of the latter.

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[33]Siddiqi, "General Characteristics of Muslim Modernism," 36-37.
[34]Ibid., 37.
[35]Fazlur Rahman, "Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives," *IJMES*. 21 (1970), 325.

The reformers claimed that the concept of simplicity, which was intended to make life easier and less exacting on people, was in agreement with the aims of the *Sharī'ah*. The *Qur'ān* says: "God desireth for you ease. He desireth not hardship for you."[36] Moreover, the traditions of the Prophet further emphasize this point: "Make things easier, not more difficult, bring good things to the people and don't drive them away." "Assume unto yourself such work as you are able to perform." "Refrain from doing that which I have prohibited, and carry out that which I have ordered you to do within the limits of your capability." Therefore, it was argued that one of the implications of these texts was that the believer does not have to feel guilty if he fails to live strictly in accordance with the traditional Islamic precepts. Moreover, a "modern" Muslim, a prototype that reformers wished to create, could remain a faithful adherent of Islam, even if he did not fulfill the strict rulings of the *Sharī'ah*.[37]

Like Ibn Taymīyah, modern reformers often attacked *ṣūfism*. They did so quite cautiously, since they believed that some *ṣūfī* teachings could lead to the positive attitude required for the needs of a life which demanded strong spiritual abilities. 'Abduh, for example, admired *ṣūfism* when it functioned as a means of introducing the emotional part of a person to the love of God and humanity. This, according to him, built up one's tolerance and motivated the mind to understand matters that would, otherwise, have remained impenetrable. Describing the deep feelings left by a *ṣūfī* experience he had during his early life, 'Abduh admits that: "All the grace I now enjoy in my religion I have because of *ṣūfism*."[38] His overall attitude towards *ṣūfism*, however, was one of condemnation and rejection of the *ṣūfī* concepts of *ḥulūl, maqāmāt, aḥwāl* and others.

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[36]The *Qur'ān*, 2: 185.

[37]Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Mu'assasat 'Izz al-Dīn li-al-Ṭibā'ah, 1987), 10; Elie Salem, "Arab Reformers and the Reinterpretation of Islam," *Muslim World*, 55 (1965), 314.

[38]Nabeel A. Khoury and Abdo J. Baaklini, "Muḥammad 'Abduh: An Ideology of Development," *Muslim World*, 69 (1979), 47-48.

His disciple, Rashīd Riḍā, on the other hand, mainly criticized certain practices of one particular *ṭarīqah*, the *Mawlawīyah*, which he feared could distract the believer and might even replace the forms of worship prescribed by the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth*. He also illustrated the dangers of *ṣūfism*, an illustration that became a characteristic of his work whether in the long section of the *Tafsīr al-Manār* or in his articles scattered throughout his periodical, *al-Manār*. The dangers of ascribing *karāmah* to *ṣūfī*-saints were also illustrated in the course of his attack on *ṣūfism*.[39]

In general, the modern reformers' attacks on *ṣūfism* came as a consequence of their confidence in the ability of man to realize his ends through struggle and effort. This was in contradiction to *ṣūfism* which insisted upon individual self-purification as the highest end of life. By so doing, *ṣūfism* taught passivity, produced a certain apathy towards worldly affairs and neglected society at the expense of the individual. There was also an added factor in their criticism against *ṣūfism*; i.e., that *ṣūfism* upheld *jabr*, while the reformers incited Muslims to a concerted effort for the reformation of their society and for the defense of their religion.

Reform movements engulfed every corner of the Muslim world. Reformers' awareness of the importance of disseminating their ideas and the need to influence the public made them all the more committed to the establishment of newspapers and magazines. The influence of reformist journals was so immense that it was claimed that "the newspaper, *al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā*, was capable of causing a revolution ev· · before the next issue was out." Indeed, no one doubted that *al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā* would have created a great revolution in the Muslim world, had it survived long enough.[40] If it were not for *al-Manār*, most of 'Abduh's thought would have been lost and his reforms would have remained unknown. It is due to *al-Manār's* influence that 'Abduh managed to

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[39]Hourani, "Rashid Rida and the Sufi Orders," 236.
[40]Busool, "Shaykh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā," 273.

establish a party and to have followers outside Egypt. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān also undertook the reformation of the Muslim community through the publication of a journal, *Taḥdhīb al-Akhlāq*, which was meant to be a forum for discussion of prevailing customs and social habits on the basis of rational principles. The role of his journal cannot be underestimated, since it was through *Taḥdhīb al-Akhlāq* that he was able to voice his utter disappointment and to suggest changes to the current religious practices.[41]

Modern reformers were keenly aware of the need for radical reform in Muslim society. They stood for the simplification of faith and a return to the pristine purity of Islam. To this end, they presented a world-view in which man, far from being a prisoner of blind fate, was an efficacious agent in controlling his destiny. In so doing, they also described the world as a system of causes and effects in which he, by taking appropriate means, could bring about desired results and changes. Modern reformers were interested in the reconstruction of Muslim society, since they were preoccupied with social issues more than the individuals who composed it. This emphasis on society led them to oppose traditions which taught passivity, as reflected in their reaction against the practices of *ṣūfism* and *taqlīd*. Hence, it was emphasized that Islam was a rational religion and one which exhorted its followers to ponder, to think and to act rationally. Although a difference in their various methods and approaches is discernible, yet the results of their thought were not very different.

The reform movements of the pre-modern and modern Islamic periods reflected trends and currents, rather than doctrines or schools of thought systematically elaborated. There were certainly a number of differences between the two, yet, they could be said to represent concerns and problems very similar to one another. The two trends were equally disgusted with the present and strove to change and ameliorate it. The appeal of those reformers, both pre-modern and modern, lay in the fact that they were in tune with their

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[4] ¹Siddiqi, "General Characteristics of Muslim Modernism," 36.

time. They were also united in calling Muslims to return to the *Qur'ān* and to abandon partisanship in favor of religious rites that were sometimes preferred to the *Qur'ān* itself. In addition, principles of their reformist belief included a call for religious purification with the aim of establishing a society as idealized by the *Qur'ān* and *sunnah*. Lastly, the presence of uniformity and similarity between the religious issues they discussed indicates that reformers followed a single stream of thought, notwithstanding differences attributable to time and circumstances.