Muḥammad ʿAbduh and His Interlocutors: Conceptualizing Religion in a Globalizing World

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Muḥammad ʿAbduh and His Interlocutors

Conceptualizing Religion in a Globalizing World

By

Ammeke Kateman

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Cover illustration: "Portrait of sheykh Mohammed Abdu taken of him on the Terrace of the House of Commons during his visit to The Author [i.e. Wilfrid Blunt] in England as an Exile, 22nd July, 1884. Photograph by Russell, reproduction by Emery Walker," in Wilfrid Blunt, *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt: Being a Personal Narrative of Events* (London: Fischer Unwin, 1907), frontispiece. The story behind the photograph is recounted in: Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Gordon at Khartoum: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, in Continuation of "*A Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*." (London: Stephen Swift, 1911), 272. See also note 8 of the introduction.

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Contents

Acknowledgments

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's texts bear the traces of a variety of contemporaries with whom he was in contact; his texts were shaped through the discussions and interactions he had with many others. Largely because of this feature, his texts have kept me fascinated throughout my research – and they still do. Here, I gladly acknowledge those who made an imprint upon my own text and in conversation with whom this text was made and remade – even though my mapping of my intellectual and personal context will be inevitably incomplete.

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

For the translation and transliteration of Arabic words in this study, I follow the general translation and transliteration guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (*IJMES*), with the exception of a few adjustments and additions:[1]

– If an (originally) Arabic term is commonly used in the English language, such as Quran, I omit *hamza*s and '*ayn*s as well as diacritical marks. In order to avoid confusion, however, I limit these cases to an absolute minimum and provide translations for all other Arabic words, including titles of journals and newspapers, names of institutions, etc.

– All other Arabic terms and phrases are fully transliterated according to the IJMES guidelines (including *hamza*s, '*ayn*s, and diacritical marks, yet case endings are omitted) and italicized. These include titles of sources and names of historical figures and institutions in the main text.

– Arabic place names in the main text and Arabic names of authors who published their works in a language other than Arabic are not transliterated. In the latter case, I follow these authors' preferred transliteration.

– For the sake of consistency, I transliterate Arabic words according to my transliteration system when quoting secondary literature in the main text or referring to their titles. The original transliteration of these words can be found in the corresponding reference. Also, I transliterate Persian and Ottoman names of historical figures and movements according to the Arabic transliteration system. I add the most common Persian or Ottoman transliteration of these names between brackets (e.g. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II (Abdülhamid II)).

– I use anglicized plurals in order to avoid confusion for the reader who is not accustomed to the broken plural in the Arabic language. The only exception is *'ulamā'* (Islamic scholars) because I suspect that most readers are more familiar with the plural of this word than with the singular (i.e. *'ālim*).

– For adjectives derived from Arabic words, I use –i (e.g. Salafi, Mu'tazili).

– In the references and bibliography, I fully transliterate names, titles, places, and publishers' names. However, I translate names of months that have an equivalent in English. In addition, whenever provided in the original source, I add the dates according to the Islamic calendar (indicated by –h after the year, e.g. 1437h).

1 Website of the editorial office of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*: "IJMES Translation & Transliteration Guide," 2013, accessed October 6, 2015, <http://ijmes.chass.ncsu.edu/IJMES_Translation_and_Transliteration_Guide.htm>.

Introduction

Wie leest / leeft dubbel
JAN EIJKELBOOM[1]

• • •

(…) I answer with some confidence in the fashion of Galileo,
"E pur si muove." The fact is, Islam does move.
WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT, *The Future of Islam*[2]

• • •

In the 1880s, the Egyptian Islamic reformist thinker Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) lived in exile in Beirut, where he taught a variety of subjects at the local Sulṭāniyya School. His lectures on Islamic theology there stood at the basis of his famous treatise *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (*The Theology of Unity*) a decade later. ʿAbduh was also the president of the Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb, or the Society for Harmony and Conciliation, while in Beirut. This correspondence network aimed to further harmony between the three revealed religions and strove to disseminate knowledge about Islam amongst Europeans. Its members were Muslim and Christian teachers, judges, diplomats, colonial officials and clerics from Iran, England, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire. The local, Beirut-based, newspaper *Thamarāt al-Funūn* (Yields of the liberal arts) published Arabic translations of articles written by two of the English members, on the usefulness of Islam in India as well as in Africa.[3]

These observations about ʿAbduh's life in Beirut give an indication of the exceptional pluralism of the intellectual world in which he thought about reli-

1 The Dutch poet Jan Eijkelboom (1926–2008) wrote this line of poetry as a motto for the local bookstore De Bengel in Dordrecht, the town in the Netherlands in which I was raised. An English translation might be: (S)he who reads / lives double.

2 The English poet and writer Wilfrid Blunt (1840–1922) was one of Muḥammad ʿAbduh's good friends. The full quote runs as follows: "I know, according to all rule written and spoken by the orthodox, that Islam cannot move, and yet in spite of it I answer with some confidence in the fashion of Galileo, 'E pur si muove.' The fact is, Islam does move." Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1882), 135.

3 For an elaborate and annotated discussion of this correspondence network, see the section "Interreligious dialogue" of chapter 3 of this study.

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gion and reinterpreted Islam.[4] He interacted with Egyptian, British, French, and Ottoman contemporaries; people of various religious persuasions and backgrounds; conservatives, secularists and fellow Islamic reformists; religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), journalists, (colonial) state officials; and many more – sometimes in cooperation or agreement, at other times in negotiation or fierce contestation.[5] In his book *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere,* Dietrich Jung expresses the plurality of Muḥammad ʿAbduh's intellectual universe through comparing it to the dazzling colors and shapes seen through a kaleidoscope.[6]

Furthermore, ʿAbduh's connections with the English, Persian, and Ottoman members of the Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb suggest that his intellectual world took on a global dimension in distinct ways. Crossing familiar geographical, linguistic, religious and cultural boundaries, ʿAbduh's interactions were part of a process of globalization that began in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the world became increasingly interconnected and people, goods and ideas circulated increasingly globally. In his writings, ʿAbduh

4 Cf. Mansoor Moaddel, "Discursive Pluralism and Islamic Modernism in Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, no. 1 (2002): 1–30; Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 17, 27–30.

5 Marwa Elshakry already noted the close intellectual connection between ʿAbduh and his European and Ottoman Christian contemporaries: Marwa Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic, 1860–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Similarly, Umar Ryad analyzed the Christian interlocutors of ʿAbduh's follower Rashīd Riḍā: Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity: A Critical Reading of the Works of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and His Associates (1898–1935)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). This type of proximity led others to consider both groups of intellectuals as part of the nineteenth-century Arabic *Nahḍa*-movement and its debates about reform and revival. Stephen Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, "The First Modern Arab Cultural Renaissance, or Nahda. From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Mid-Twentieth Century," in *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 17–39. Abdulrazzak Patel's book seems to fit in this approach to the *Nahḍa*, but unfortunately, it only came under my attention in the final stages of this book: Abdulrazzak Patel, *Arab Nahdah: The Making of the Intellectual and Humanist Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). Indira Falk Gesink describes the fierce debates between ʿAbduh and his conservative counterparts: Indira Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism: Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam* (London: Tauris Academic Publishers, 2010).

6 Dietrich Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2011), 230. Cf. Johann Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam in the Period of the First Modern Globalization: Muhammad ʿAbduh and his Theology of Unity," in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940*, eds. Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 302.

adopted and reconfigured globally circulating ideas and concepts, as did his interlocutors in their works. Within these processes of intellectual and conceptual globalization, Europe held a dominant – yet never completely overpowering – position, mirroring its political and economic weight in the world. Through his use of globally shared concepts, ʿAbduh also contributed to this process of intellectual and conceptual globalization, significantly impacting how scholars and Islamic thinkers in his time and in the twentieth century discussed and conceptualized Islam.[7]

At the same time, ʿAbduh's intellectual world cannot be reduced to its global dimension.[8] As said, a local journal from Beirut translated and printed the articles of the English members of the Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb, while it was simultaneously embedded in local educational politics. Similarly local, ʿAbduh formulated his ideas in the newspapers of Cairo, a school in Beirut, the classrooms and halls of the Azhar institute of higher Islamic education (*madrasa*) in Cairo. His ideas responded to domestic politics, engaged with Islamic tradition, reflected his friendships and animosities – in addition to the ways they participated in global developments. Again, the metaphor of the kaleidoscope may be useful: each time a kaleidoscope rotates, there is a new configuration of the same set of beads; similarly, ʿAbduh reconfigured his ideas in relation to a number of contexts, both global and local. Moreover, his ideas bear the traces of the interplay between these contexts, which are ultimately inextricable from each other. His ideas, as well as those of his interlocutors around the world, exemplify that global ideas were always locally configured.

Additionally, the discussions and comparisons of ʿAbduh's Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb about religion, and Islam and Christianity in particular, could be considered examples of the ways global ideas about 'religion' (or *dīn* in Arabic) were locally configured.[9] The network's diverse members indicate that the

7 For an elaborate discussion of these processes of intellectual and conceptual globalization, see the section "Global intellectual convergence" in the next chapter of this book.

8 Also consider the way this book's cover photograph of Muḥammad ʿAbduh illustrates the intricate connections between the global and the local. Taken in 1884 at the House of Commons in London, this photo is an example of the global dimension of ʿAbduh's milieu and ideas. At the same time, it demonstrates the way differences and localities were played out in the global field, as the British poet Wilfrid Scawen Blunt recounts how he had asked his friend ʿAbduh to dress in this blue tunic and white turban for this occasion and that ʿAbduh "created quite a sensation in the lobby." Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *Gordon at Khartoum: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, in Continuation of "A Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt."* (London: Stephen Swift, 1911), 272.

9 I put 'religion' between single quotations to emphasize that I discuss it as a concept (used by ʿAbduh and his contemporaries) and not as an empirical phenomenon in this study. However, I do not use single quotation marks everytime I write 'religion' in the following

semantic field of thinking about 'religion' was, in a way, global. The publication of Arabic translations of articles written by the network's English members in the Beirut-based newspaper *Thamarāt al-Funūn* make clear that, despite this globality, conceptualizations of religion (or *dīn* in Arabic) were always also local. In Beirut of the late 1880s, Muḥammad ʿAbduh reinterpreted Islam, as a 'religion', in dialogue with his interlocutors from afar as well as with those at the local school at which he taught Islamic theology.

This study seeks to understand ʿAbduh's conceptualization of Islam as a religion within historical processes of intellectual and conceptual globalization, focusing on transfers, entanglements, encounters, and translations, in a way that seeks to do justice to the particularity of his ideas, the multiplicity of the dimensions of his intellectual context and the diversity of his interlocutors. In short, this study seeks to write a 'global history' of ʿAbduh's ideas and the concepts he uses.[10] In doing so, it intends to steer away from a perspective of 'Westernization,' or 'Western impact,' against which ʿAbduh's ideas have been measured time and again, as will be discussed more elaborately below.

To this aim, it presents a new approach that acknowledges the global aspect of ʿAbduh's intellectual world *without* reducing him to a case of (failed) 'Westernization.' The first chapter elaborates on this approach. It argues that the study of ʿAbduh's ideas benefits from firmly locating them within their particular and highly diverse historical milieus, of which the global was one relevant scale; it situates his ideas in specific conversations that he had with different interlocutors; and, it relates his ideas to the many contexts that his conversations simultaneously responded to. Second, in studying ʿAbduh in interaction with his contemporaries from afar and nearby, it proposes to focus on the questions he shared with his interlocutors, to which they gave different answers.

Specifically, this study tracks the questions ʿAbduh shared with his contemporaries around the world in thinking and writing about 'religion' (or *dīn* in Arabic) – a focus that is further explained in the second chapter of this study.

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in order to keep the text easily legible and not too cluttered. At regular times, and whenever I want to emphasize 'religion' being studied as a 'concept,' I repeat the single quotation marks.

10 For reflections on writing a 'global history' of ideas and concepts, see: Margrit Pernau, "Whither Conceptual History? From National to Entangled Histories," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 7, no. 1 (June 1, 2012): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.3167/choc.2012.070101>; Hagen Schulz-Forberg, ed., "Introduction: Global Conceptual History: Promises and Pitfalls of a New Research Agenda," in *A Global Conceptual History of Asia, 1860–1940* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 1–24; Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Global Conceptual History: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

Through this focus, this study aims to grasp the convergence between the various ways that 'religion' was conceptualized and used. At the same time, it demonstrates how ʿAbduh formulated his ideas on Islam in reply to these shared questions in his own particular way. It seeks an answer to the question: How did ʿAbduh reinterpret Islam in relation to a global convergence of the conceptualization of 'religion' in his context? In other words: How did ʿAbduh interpret Islam *as a religion* in a time of conceptual globalization?

While chapters 4 and 7 chart the discussions around religions amongst ʿAbduh's interlocutors (and especially the role of comparisons between religions therein), chapters 5 and 8 map the ways ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam produced and reflected particular conceptions of 'religion'. Readers who are more interested in the processes and mechanisms involved in the globalization of the concept of 'religion' than in the specificities of ʿAbduh's interlocutors might want to concentrate on chapters 5 and 8, of which the results are also separately addressed in the conclusion.

To be clear, by focusing synchronically on the questions ʿAbduh shared with his interlocutors within a global context, to which they gave differing answers, this study does not primarily position ʿAbduh diachronically within the Islamic tradition of which he was part – even though this certainly is a valid perspective in its own right, as we will see below.[11] This does not imply that the semantics of the Islamic tradition in which ʿAbduh's reinterpretations were rooted are ignored. It indicates that ʿAbduh's position within this tradition is not as systematically unravelled as is his position within the global conversations of which he was equally part and to which his particular contribution was colored by the intellectual traditions, such as the Islamic scholarly traditions, he drew upon. In addition, this study's synchronic focus means it does not primarily situate ʿAbduh within long-term processes of conceptual transformation between the Arabo-Islamic world and Europe.

11 The most promising and most recent endeavor in this respect is by Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

PART 1

Questions and Concepts

CHAPTER 1

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's World

Muḥammad ʿAbduh was born in a small village in Egypt in 1849 and died in Alexandria in 1905, on his way to Europe for medical treatment.[1] He received a complete Islamic education, culminating in his qualification as an *ʿālim*, or religious scholar, at the Azhar in Cairo in 1877. During these years of education, he encountered a revivalist and reformist form of Sufism through his uncle Darwīsh, who was initiated into the Madaniyya order, a branch of the Shādhiliyya order. In 1872, ʿAbduh was introduced to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838/9–1897) and his study circle. There, ʿAbduh learned about strands of Islamic philosophy that were not common at the Azhar and about contemporary European thought. The two scholarly tracts that ʿAbduh wrote in this period bore the imprint of these intellectual encounters and reflect the origins of his distinct trajectory, in comparison with most of his fellow Azhar graduates.

Through al-Afghānī, ʿAbduh was also introduced to socio-political activism. Al-Afghānī and the circle of journalists and Freemasons around him opposed the despotism of the khedival family, the viceroys of Egypt under the Ottoman Empire, and foreign interference. Instead, they called for constitutionalism and consultation in political matters and worked to instil a sense of

1 For archival documents on ʿAbduh's death and funeral, see: The death of the Grand Mufti *shaykh* Muḥammad ʿAbduh, date on July 10–15 1905 (archival unit Majlis al-Nuẓẓār wa-l-Wuzarāʾ (0075-) and archival code 011166). For the following overview of ʿAbduh's life and works, I relied on a selection of biographies and introductions to ʿAbduh. For a quick but exceptionally rich overview, even in spite of the lack of an extensive reference system, see: Mark Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, Makers of the Muslim World (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010). For other useful biographies and overviews: Bernard Michel and Moustapha Abdel Razik, "Introduction," in *Rissalat al Tawhid: exposé de la religion musulmane* (Paris: Geuthner, 1925), ix–lxxxix; Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1931/1350h); Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (London: Oxford University Press / Humphrey Milford, 1933); Osman Amin, *Muhammad Abduh*, trans. Charles Wendell (Washington: American Council of Learned Societies, 1953); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939*, 2nd ed. (1962; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 130–160; Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt: A Critique of Al-Afghani, ʿAbduh and Ridha* (Slough: Open Press, 1976); Ibrāhīm al-Bayūmī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Jawharī, eds., *Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Miʾat ʿĀmm ʿalā Raḥīlihi (1905–2005). Aʿmāl wa-Munāqashāt al-Nadwa al-Fikriyya allatī Naẓẓamathā Maktabat al-Iskandariyya* (Al-Qāhira/Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī/Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 2009).

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community in Egypt. Hopes were high for change when khedive Ismāʿīl was replaced by his son Tawfīq in 1879, but instead, the latter ousted Al-Afghānī for troublemaking. Only a year later, after having worked as a teacher, ʿAbduh became the editor of the state's newspaper. His articles continued to voice political as well as societal concerns. In the meantime, the discontent with the khedive in ʿAbduh's circle converged with attempts of military officers around colonel ʿUrābī to overtake power from the khedive.[2] Despite initial successes, the ʿUrābī-revolt was crushed by the British and the French in 1882. Muḥammad ʿAbduh was sent into exile for his involvement in the rebellion, the khedive Tawfīq was reinstalled, and Egypt was occupied by the British.

Like many of his fellow exiled countrymen, ʿAbduh left for Beirut. A year later, in 1884, he joined al-Afghānī in Paris to found the society and journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* (The strongest bond). The journal was outspokenly anti-colonial and urged all Muslims to unite and stand up against foreign intervention and domination, in accordance with the true and original teachings of Islam. In Cairo, the focus of ʿAbduh and those in his circle had been on the Egyptian community. However, from Paris, *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* addressed the lacking solidarity of the Muslim community as a whole, transcending national or state boundaries within the Muslim *umma*. For this cause, al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh rallied behind the authoritarian Ottoman Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II (Abdülhamid II). In accordance with ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's use of the title of 'caliph' (*khalīfa*) and his appeal to Muslim unity, the Ottoman sultan was the impersonation of the new notion of pan-Islamism for many of ʿAbduh's contemporaries.

After one year in Paris, ʿAbduh returned to Beirut and was allowed back to Egypt in 1888. Moving away from direct political involvement, he focused on educational reform – reiterating themes with which he had engaged in Egypt as a journalist and a teacher. ʿAbduh emphasized a new form of religious education that would set the Muslim youth up for revival and progress vis-à-vis the encroaching West. For this cause, it was necessary to introduce new subjects and methods that were better suited to the needs of students and society. During his life, ʿAbduh taught Islamic classics on history and pedagogical *adab*-works, wrote a theological handbook (*Risālat al-Tawḥīd*), and edited works on Arabic literary style and logic. In 1892, he founded an Islamic charitable society (al-Jamʿiyya al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya), mainly focusing on teaching the Muslim youth, and in 1895 he became a member of the Administrative Council of

2 The precise nature and extent of ʿAbduh's involvement in the ʿUrābī-revolt has been a contested issue in the historiography on ʿAbduh, see: Christopher Radler, *Eine Biographie als politisches Mittel: Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905) und die Rebellion des Aḥmad ʿUrābī in der Rezeption Ṭāhir aṭ-Ṭanāḥīs* (*Muḏakkirāt al-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*) (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2010).

the Azhar (Majlis Idārat al-Azhar); from 1899 onwards, he lectured weekly on his interpretation of the Quran at the Azhar, and in 1900, he set up a society for the re-print of Arabic classics (Jamʿiyya li-Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya).

Upon his return to Egypt in 1888, ʿAbduh was not allowed to teach immediately, despite his desire to do so. While Lord Cromer, British consul-general to Egypt at that time, had pressed for his return, khedive Tawfīq was probably still wary of ʿAbduh's political intentions. Thus, ʿAbduh was first appointed as a judge in the secular native courts, despite his lack of formal secular legal training. Eventually, in 1899, he was made Grand Mufti of Egypt (Muftī al-Diyār al-Miṣriyya). As Grand Mufti, he made plans to reform the *sharīʿa* courts, which were largely limited to family issues at that time. He wanted to make them more effective and suggested administrative as well as methodological adaptations. In his *fatwā*s, or legal *responsa*, the Mufti engaged with many of the societal issues that he considered pivotal to Egypt's contemporary conditions: marriage, finances, and inter-religious relations.

ʿAbduh's Islamic reform (*iṣlāḥ*), being a *reform*, contested many of the established interpretations of Islam of that time. He held these interpretations and their upholders responsible for many of the problems he identified. ʿAbduh condemned and ridiculed religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) who unquestioningly followed authoritative interpretations (*taqlīd*) in the theological and legal realm as well as in the most general sense. He was intent upon disseminating his alternative interpretations and methods among his contemporaries, striving to introduce an Islam that they would accept as true to the spirit and wisdom of the Quran, or as Islam as such (*al-Islām*).

ʿAbduh travelled widely, to discuss, spread and realize his ideas on Islamic reform beyond Egypt. He visited Tunis, Algiers, Istanbul, Geneva, London, Oxford, and Brighton, among other places, where he spoke with and to a great variety of people. He used the press in particular to disseminate his interpretation of Islam as well as to engage with interlocutors from around the world. For example, his lectures on the Quran, as well as several of his *fatwā*s, were published in the journal *al-Manār* (The lighthouse), run by his follower Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā. Furthermore, ʿAbduh entered into vehement public discussions on the pages of Egypt's journals and newspapers, for example with Gabriel Hanotaux, former French minister of Foreign Affairs, and with the Syrian journalist Faraḥ Anṭūn.

The global dissemination of ʿAbduh's ideas has continued through editions, re-editions, translations, and biographies.[3] In 1962, historian Albert Hourani wrote:

3 For an example of such a global path of ʿAbduh's ideas, see: Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, "Taking ʿAbduh to China: Chinese-Egyptian Intellectual Contact in the Early Twentieth Century," in *Global*

> [ʿAbduh's] teaching was in the end rejected by many of those to whom he addressed himself, but remained working beneath the surface, the unacknowledged basis of the religious ideas of the ordinary educated Muslim.[4]

However, historian Itzchak Weismann cautiously warns that ʿAbduh was only one of many Islamic reformers in the nineteenth century, and that scholars have generally overemphasized his role in the Islamic reform movement of that time.[5] While Weismann is right that ʿAbduh was certainly not unique in his calls for Islamic reform, that does not disprove that ʿAbduh's work has been elaborately discussed, embraced, repudiated, and adapted throughout the twentieth century by a wide range of secular and Islamic intellectuals that span the Arabic world and beyond.[6] In this sense, ʿAbduh's ideas form one of the intellectual cornerstones of modern Arabic thought.

1 Global Intellectual Convergence

ʿAbduh's connections, travelling large distances at times, were part and parcel of a larger, global web. The nineteenth century witnessed an increase in intellectual and conceptual interconnections across political and cultural boundaries, within which the relations between Europe and non-Europe in particular were intensified. Dietrich Jung identifies the emergence of a 'global public sphere' since the end of the nineteenth century and that ʿAbduh was one of its participants.[7] Similarly, in his contribution to the 2013 volume *Global Intellectual History*, Christopher L. Hill considers these late-nineteenth-century inter-

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Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print, ed. James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 249–67.

4 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 130.

5 Itzchak Weismann, "The Sociology of 'Islamic Modernism': Muhammad ʿAbduh, the National Public Sphere and the Colonial State," *The Maghreb Review* 32, no. 1 (2007): 104, 108.

6 Mohamed Haddad lists several authors who built forth on aspects of ʿAbduh's thought: Mohamed Haddad, "Essai de critique de la raison théologique: l'exemple de Muhammad ʿAbduh" (Thèse de doctorat, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris 3), 1994), 151–61. Roxanne Euben elaborately discusses the fundamentalist thought of Sayyid Quṭb in relation to the ideas of al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh: Roxanne Leslie Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Roxanne L. Euben, "Premodern, Antimodern or Postmodern? Islamic and Western Critiques of Modernity," *The Review of Politics* 59, no. 3 (1997): 429–460, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500027674>.

7 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 81–93; Jung, "Islamic Reform," 161–163.

connections to form a global intellectual field.[8] Both Hill and Jung relate this increasing global interconnectedness around the world to processes of global homogenization (or universalization) of concepts and ideas.

Examples of this type of global processes of the travelling of concepts and ideas – of which translation constituted a major part – have been studied by many others as part of a 'global' turn in writing conceptual and intellectual history that focused on (long-distance) connections, translations, transfers and entanglements beyond familiar geographical, linguistic and particularly national boundaries (and not on the world as a whole, to prevent any confusion that might arise from the term 'global history').[9] These and other related approaches were not the first to note the intellectual and conceptual interconnectedness the nineteenth century world, moreover. These processes have been studied as aspects of colonialism, modernity, or an early or preparatory phase of twentieth- and twenty-first-century processes of globalization.[10]

The increase in global interconnections was intricately linked to developments in the interrelated fields of technology, communication and global politics – as was also apparent in the above description of ʿAbduh's world. Technologically, steam, print, and telegraphy were innovations that facilitated and accelerated the movement of people, information, and ideas across the

8 Christopher L. Hill, "Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century," in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 134–58.

9 See note 10 of the introduction. For a selection of works that focus on the interconnections between the Arabic world and the rest of the globe (particularly Europe) from the nineteenth century onwards from the perspective of global history and/or in relation to processes of globalization, see: Birgit Schaebler, "Civilizing Others: Global Modernity and the Local Boundaries (French/German/Ottoman, and Arab) of Savagery," in *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity*, ed. Birgit Schaebler and Leif Stenberg (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 3–29; Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Jung, "Islamic Reform"; Jung, *Global Public Sphere*; James L. Gelvin and Nile Green, eds., *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer, eds., *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940*, 50 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

10 For a selection of works that focus on interconnections between the Arabic world and the rest of the globe (particularly the West) from the nineteenth century onwards, yet not from the perspective of 'global history', see: Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875–1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1997); Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 3rd ed. (1991; repr., London: Verso, 1999); Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*.

globe and contributed to a transnational or global intellectual field.[11] When people travelled, their ideas travelled with them, and these were exchanged in encounters between people of varying origins in the many schools, societies, salons, and Masonic lodges of nodal cities such as Paris, Cairo, and Beirut within global networks.[12] Ideas also travelled in print, mediated through translation and popularization. These works of translation and popularization were regularly published in book form, whether private or commissioned by the state.[13] Yet, the newly emerging Arabic press, mostly private journals and newspapers, took on an especially central role in this process; historian Albert Hourani therefore named them "journals of vulgarization."[14] The pages of these journals and newspapers functioned as a "global public forum" for discussing these ideas.[15]

Because of the intensity and scale of ʿAbduh's long-distance interconnections through travel and print, this study considers it apt to refer to one of the dimensions of his intellectual world as 'global.'[16] However, it does not intend to imply that ʿAbduh's intellectual world actually covered the whole globe. Likewise, it does not claim that ʿAbduh formulated his ideas in a "fully global space

11 Gelvin and Green, *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*.

12 For a selection of works that focus on salons, societies, and lodges in the Arabic world in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, see: Antje Ziegler, "Arab Literary Salons at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in *Understanding Near Eastern Literatures: A Spectrum of Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Verena Klemm and Beatrice Gruendler (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000), 241–53; Dagmar Glaß, *Der Muqtaṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit: Aufklärung, Räsonnement und Meinungsstreit in der frühen arabischen Zeitschriftenkommunikation*, 2 vols. (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004); Anne-Laure Dupont, "Usages et acculturation de la franc-maçonnerie dans les milieux intellectuels arabes à la fin du XIXe siècle à travers l'exemple de Jurji Zaydan (1861–1914)," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* [*en ligne*], no. 72 (2006): 331–52; Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*.

13 Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (1963; repr., London: Saqi Books, 2011).

14 Albert Hourani, "The Middleman in a Changing Society: Syrians in Egypt in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 119–20. On nineteenth-century Arabic press and journals, see also: Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Glaß, *Der Muqtaṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 2004; Stephen Sheehi, "Arabic Literary-Scientific Journals: Precedence for Globalization and the Creation of Modernity," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 2 (2005): 439–49; Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, "Fin-de-Siècle Egypt: A Nexus for Mediterranean and Global Radical Networks," in *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, 78–100.

15 Cf. Ilham Khuri-Makdisi on the web of Syrian periodicals as a global public forum in *fin-de-siècle* Egypt: Khuri-Makdisi, "Fin-de-Siècle Egypt," 85.

16 In this sense, this study can be considered as part of a broader development within intellectual history that considers the global to be a substantive scale of an historical process, see: Moyn and Sartori, *Global Intellectual History*.

for concepts," in which a concept such as 'religion' was actually "everywhere."[17] Instead, in tune with approaches within 'global history' focused on concepts and ideas, this study uses 'global' to emphasize that ʿAbduh's connections crossed familiar geographical boundaries, but does not intend to pinpoint the type of boundaries that were crossed and thus reify these in the process, as is often the implication when terms such as cross-cultural or trans-national are used. Furthermore, and more importantly, it uses the terminology of global to stress that ʿAbduh was not unique in this sense. He was part of a broader process, both diachronically and synchronically. The global aspect of the intellectual field in which ʿAbduh formulated his ideas suggests that other intellectuals of that time, scattered around the world and often without any direct link to ʿAbduh, were likely to have shared many of the concepts ʿAbduh used – though they very possibly used these in a different way. Furthermore, ʿAbduh and other intellectuals may be considered to have been a prelude to the global intellectual history of the twentieth and twenty-first century, during which the global dimension became increasingly central to an expanding number of intellectual histories and influential for more and more people.

A final reason why the specific terminology of 'global' is apt in the case of ʿAbduh and many of his late-nineteenth century contemporaries is due to their idea that certain concepts and ideas were universally applicable and their *use* of these concepts accordingly. According to Christopher L. Hill, this perceived universality was itself the effect of the concepts' traveling and their mediation and translation across space.[18] In addition, this idea of universality might have also been the premise of conceptual universalization. It was a "universal interpellation built into the form itself," as Sudipta Kaviraj summarizes it in his concluding reflective chapter to *Global Intellectual History*.[19] Whether an effect or a premise, the nineteenth-century perception of the universal applicability of concepts fitted closely with the contemporarily prevailing idea that the natural and social worlds were universal and could be understood according to the same universal laws. Furthermore, the globally perceived universality of concepts seems to suggest that this idea was in the process of being globalized; since human nature was increasingly considered universal across the globe, it

17 Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, "Approaches to Global Intellectual History," in *Global Intellectual History*, 21, cf. 20–24.

18 Hill, "Conceptual Universalization."

19 Sudipta Kaviraj, "Global Intellectual History. Meanings and Methods," in *Global Intellectual History*, 311–312.

made sense for more and more people around the world to use one set of concepts to describe and interpret it.[20]

It is important to note that this late-nineteenth century global process of intellectual or conceptual interaction and convergence was carried out in a world in which colonialism was an important and violent background to the increase in connections and interactions around the globe. Europe's global hegemony in a politico-military and economic respect was reflected in an asymmetry in the global intellectual realm, with European ideas and concepts carrying the weight and authority of this hegemony. As historian Christopher Bayly typifies this relation, Europe had an important exemplary and controlling function within the late-nineteenth century global intellectual realm. [21] Yet despite this asymmetry, historians have additionally pointed out processes of intellectual convergence that were rooted in similar yet autonomous developments around the globe.[22] Alternatively, Cemil Aydin has recently argued that pan-Islamism – and the corresponding idea of a 'Muslim world' – was an example of a modern idea with global reach that was *not* European in origin, as it was developed by non-European intellectuals and activists.[23] Other historians, moreover, have pointed out that many "European" ideas were actually born in the interaction with its colonies.[24]

This asymmetrical process of historical convergence does not mean, as Dietrich Jung for example warns, that the global homogenization of ideas was ever complete or absolute. Nor does it mean that the global renders the local

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20 Herbert Spencer, with whom 'Abduh was very familiar, is quite exemplary for this train of thought. He tried to map the (universal) laws of nature and evolution, as well as those of the mind, society, and morality. Marwa Elshakry's explores the global paths of Darwinist ideas in the Arab world, also tracking the itineraries of Herbert Spencer's ideas. Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*.

21 Christopher A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 12.

22 Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin: University of Texas, 1979); Reinhard Schulze, "Was ist die islamische Aufklärung?," *Die Welt des Islams* 36, no. 3 (1996): 276–325; Reinhard Schulze, "Islam und Judentum im Angesicht der Protestantisierung der Religionen im 19. Jahrhundert," in *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts*, ed. Lothar Gall and Dietmar Willoweit (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

23 Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Cemil Aydin, "Globalizing the Intellectual History of the Idea of the 'Muslim World,'" in *Global Intellectual History*, ed. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 159–86.

24 Van der Veer on doing "interactional" history: Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

irrelevant, or any other scale, which entails the necessity of an analytical multi-perspectival perspective that takes into account multiple scales and that Hagen Schulz-Forberg summarizes as "spatial scaling."[25] Jung, for example, emphasizes the simultaneity of global discursive homogenization alongside fragmentation in his complex layered analytical model for studying global processes of discursive convergence, suggesting that the global was always intertwined with the local.[26] In stressing the local and the particular within processes of modernization, globalization and universalization, Jung and others echo and reinforce re-conceptualizations in the field of modernity.[27] Shmuel Eisenstadt's idea of "multiple modernities" or Dipesh Chakrabarty's reinterpretation of modernity as a translatable concept or as a process of translation evince a similar interest in the analytical recognition of diversity and locality within global modernity.[28] These studies indicate that the right balance between global similarity and difference is a key riddle in the pursuit of global intellectual history. It is a riddle, moreover, that more recently has been taken up too by historians of ʿAbduh, often as a way of correcting twentieth-century interpretations of ʿAbduh.

2 A Contested Historiography

Many twentieth-century studies of ʿAbduh inflated the historical asymmetry in the global intellectual field between the West and the rest, possibly reflecting

25 Schulz-Forberg, "Introduction: Global Conceptual History: Promises and Pitfalls of a New Research Agenda," 4. Within the field of imperial and global intellectual history, too, several studies draw attention to the spatial stratification of the relevant contexts and the interplay between these layers. Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45 (February 2006): 30–50; Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean*.

26 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 81–93.

27 In his chapter "Observing multiple modernities," Dietrich Jung conceptualizes globalization and modernity as intricately connected when he defines globalization "as the often contradictory and puzzling historical process of the rise of a global modernity." Jung, 42. See also: Schulz-Forberg, "Introduction: Global Conceptual History: Promises and Pitfalls of a New Research Agenda," 20ff.

28 S.N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Cf. Safar Ahmed's on "the story of our mutually entangled modernities" in which there is no singular definition of modernity: Safdar Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam: The Philosophical, Cultural and Political Discourses among Muslim Reformers* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 10–11.

contemporary accusations of ʿAbduh's Westernization. Other studies seem to closely mirror ʿAbduh's own claims of Islamic authenticity and orthodoxy, as well as those of his successors.[29] In this light, the following sections turn to a critical assessment of the historiography of ʿAbduh, even though the present study is deeply and gratefully indebted to many of these works. Building forth on the revisionist critiques by scholars such as Samira Haj and Dyala Hamzah since the end of the twentieth century, it will demonstrate the existence of a still-powerful perspective of intellectual Westernization and the need to overcome this. Instead, following Dyala Hamzah, Dietrich Jung and Johann Büssow, it will highlight the importance of studying ʿAbduh in his pluralistic context, overcoming varying tendencies of essentalism and reductionism that characterized the Westernizing perspective on ʿAbduh as well as those studies that consider him representative of the Salafiyya movement.

2.1 *Caught between Modernity and Tradition*

In one of the earliest references to 'Islamic Modernism' (*der islamische Modernismus*), Ignaz Goldziher notes how this movement – in Egypt, but also in India, Turkey, and the Maghreb – originated in the encounter between Islam and the West. He also emphasizes that the movement was intent on protecting the Islamic religion in this encounter.[30] Furthermore, in a later article, Goldziher distinguishes between the Indian and the Egyptian movements and claims that Egyptian Islamic modernism was more theologically oriented and liberated Islam from alien influence.[31] In his 1933 *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, Charles Adams reiterates this characterization.[32]

If we follow historian Samira Haj, we discover that the 'modernism' of ʿAbduh was increasingly related to and measured against a Western model of modernity in the twentieth century. In her 2009 book *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity*, Haj heavily criticizes some of the classics within the English-language historiography on ʿAbduh, singling out Albert Hourani's 1962 work, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,* in particular. She argues that these works interpreted nineteenth- and twentieth-century

29 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 169–94; cf. Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 203–15.

30 Ignaz Goldziher, "VI.Spätere Gestaltungen," in *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 2nd ed. (1910; repr., Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1963), 290.

31 Ignaz Goldziher, "Islamic Modernism and the Interpretation of the Koran," in *Schools of Koranic Commentators*, trans. Wolfgang H. Behn (1920; repr., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 203.

32 Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 1.

reformers of Islam such as Muḥammad ʿAbduh through a lens of modernity that was modelled upon the historical experience of Western Europe.[33] Such a perspective on ʿAbduh, as described by Haj, probably reflected developments in the field of modernization studies in the 1950s and 1960s, in which modernization was conceptualized as the influence of the West, as Westernization.[34] For the study of ideas, specifically, this meant that modernity was modelled on ideas as they had emerged in Western Europe and the United States of America, and intellectual modernization was understood as the influence of Western ideas and thinkers.[35]

In a similar fashion, historian Dyala Hamzah notes how this perspective led to the portrayal of nineteenth-century Arabic thinking as "enduringly locked within a dialectics of impact and reaction," for which she too considers Albert Hourani's work on Arabic thought particularly formative.[36] Even though this modernization-as-Westernization-perspective found its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s, it continues to resonate, not in the least because some of the most seminal works on ʿAbduh – such as that of Hourani, but also of Hisham Sharabi and Malcolm Kerr – reflect important aspects of this focus.

33 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 1–3, 69–71, 73, 199. Cf. Safdar Ahmed's analysis of the teleological (and Eurocentric) character of the writing on the history of modernity in Islam, see: Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*, chap. Introduction.

34 According to Donald Reid, Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* can be considered a modernization study itself, albeit implicitly, which ultimately deals with how the Western civilization impacts the Arab one. Donald M. Reid, "Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age Twenty Years After," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 04 (1982): 545, 550. Reid also notes how Hourani describes his *Arabic Thought* as a footnote to Gibb's *Modern Trends in Islam*, which John Voll considers to be exemplary for the modernization-as-Westernization-perspective within the study of Islamic modernism: Ibid., 546; John O. Voll, *Oxford Bibliographies*, "Modernism," accessed June 26, 2015, <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/id/obo-9780195390155-0051>. On Islam and modernization studies, see: Muhammad Khalid Masud and Armando Salvatore, "Western Scholars of Islam on the Issue of Modernity," in *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore, and Martin van Bruinessen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 36–53.

35 For examples of studies focusing on (intellectual) Westernization in the Islamic or Arabic world: H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); Abu-Lughod, *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*; Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West*; Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (London: Phoenix, 2002).

36 Dyala Hamzah, "Introduction," in *The Making of the Arab Intellectual: Empire, Public Sphere and the Colonial Coordinates of Selfhood*, ed. Dyala Hamzah (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013), 3. Cf. Andrew Arsan, "Under the Influence? Translations and Transgressions in Late Ottoman Imperial Thought," *Modern Intellectual History* 10, no. 02 (August 2013): 375–97.

Specifically, ʿAbduh came to be interpreted in relation to ideas associated with liberalism, nationalism, Darwinism and Comtean positivism, as they had developed in Europe.[37] Furthermore, it sometimes meant that ʿAbduh was labelled a liberal, a humanist or a nationalist – at times in spite of considerable differences between ʿAbduh's ideas and how these Western ideas are generally understood. For example, Samira Haj stresses the differences between ʿAbduh's 'liberalism' and the way 'liberalism' is often understood in the West with regard to the conception of individual autonomy.[38] In other words, studying ʿAbduh as modern, or a modernist, provided implicit guidance about what a scholar went looking for and, in the phraseology of Quentin Skinner, "to find what [he was] looking for."[39]

This perspective of modernity also set scholars up for what Skinner might call "judging by what [they were] looking for."[40] ʿAbduh and others were inadvertently or consciously judged against the "original" Western ideas that were considered to be the *telos* for the history of modernization. Moreover, they often did not withstand the test.[41] As Dyala Hamzah notes, failure was the corollary of influence and imitation in the historiography of Arabic ideas of reform.[42] Furthermore, as modernization was considered highly desirable by many of

37 For examples of studies of ʿAbduh's ideas in relation to ideas as they emerged in the West, see: Amin, *Muhammad Abduh*; P.J. Vatikiotis, "Muhammad ʿAbduh and the Quest for a Muslim Humanism," *The Islamic Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1958): 145–61; Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Hourani, *Arabic Thought*; Aziz al-Azmeh, "Islamist Revivalism and Western Ideologies," *History Workshop* 32, no. 1 (1991): 44–53; Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, chap. The Discourse of Cultural Authenticity: Islamist Revivalism and Enlightenment Universalism; ibid., chap. Muslim Modernism and the Canonical Text. Even though Andrew Arsan is right in observing that Marwa Elshakry's study of the appeal of Darwin and Spencer on Arab intellectuals such as ʿAbduh is still focused on the reception of originally Western ideas, her approach differs substantially from the type of modernization-studies listed here and will be discussed separately. Arsan, "Under the Influence?," 380; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*.

38 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*.

39 Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 1969): 7. I use Quentin Skinner's methodological principles to develop the approach followed in this study, see chapter 1.

40 Skinner, 12.

41 For example: Vatikiotis, "Muhammad ʿAbduh"; Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 103, 105; Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West*, 24.

42 Hamzah, "Introduction," 3. Dyala Hamzah, ed., *The Making of the Arab Intellectual: Empire, Public Sphere and the Colonial Coordinates of Selfhood* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013), 3. See also: Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh," 31. Cf. Masud and Salvatore, "Western Scholars of Islam," 45–46; Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 95; Abdulkader Tayob, *Religion in Modern*

these scholars – often the reason why they were drawn to 'modernists' such as ʿAbduh in the first place, according to historian Itzchak Weismann – this attribution of inevitable failure was normatively charged.[43]

In this way, ʿAbduh's thought was only assessed for its imitative instead of its creative quality. The creative or strategic agency of ʿAbduh in relation to Western European ideas fell outside of the scholars' view.[44] Similarly, the possibility of autonomous developments towards intellectual modernity within the non-Western world – a matter of convergence instead of influence – was *a priori* excluded.[45]

Furthermore, studying ʿAbduh as modern, or a modernist, meant that scholars were guided by their idea of what modernity was *not*. Throughout the twentieth century, scholars have conceptualized modernity in temporal terms. It has been thought to imply a break with the past, with modernity's conceptual twin 'tradition.' This led to an almost exclusive focus upon the new, at the expense of the old. In his preface to the 1981 re-edition of his seminal *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, historian Albert Hourani openly though regretfully admits to this:

Islamic Discourse (London: Hurst, 2009), 23–24; Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*, 74.

43 Masud and Salvatore, "Western Scholars of Islam," 43; Weismann, "Sociology of 'Islamic Modernism,'" 108.

44 Some Foucault-inspired analytical perspectives on (post-)colonialism may be considered to suffer from a somewhat similar problem – for example as employed by Edward Said and Timothy Mitchell. Here, the colonized subject can only take on the role of 'passive non-agent,' unable to avoid the discourse of the colonizer except, perhaps, by resisting it altogether. No analytical space is reserved for dialogue, dissent, or other forms of working through the colonial discourse on the part of the colonized subject. In short, there is very little analytical room to recognize the agency of those colonized. For this type of critique and an attempt to retrieve some of the agency of Arab intellectuals regarding Orientalism and imperialism, see: Ronen Raz, *The Transparent Mirror: Arab Intellectuals and Orientalism, 1798–1950* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1997); Shaden M. Tageldin, "Secularizing Islam," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, no. 1 (2011): 123–40; Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "the Mystic East"* (London: Routledge, 1999), 86–90.

45 Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism*; Schulze, "Was ist die islamische Aufklärung?" In a similar fashion, several authors have suggested that some of the aspects of ʿAbduh's thought which are deemed particularly modern (for example his rationalism, his belief in evolution, and his individualized position with regard to religion) were developed before the impact of the West. Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh," 66, 71; Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 328; Oliver Scharbrodt, "The Salafiyya and Sufism: Muḥammad ʿAbduh and his Risālat Al-Wāridāt (Treatise on Mystical Inspirations)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70, no. 1 (2007): 103, 114.

> What really troubles me is (…) the thought that perhaps I should have written a book of a different kind. When I wrote it I was mainly concerned to note the breaks with the past: new ways of thought, new words or old ones used in a new way. To some extent I may have distorted the thought of the writers I studied, at least those of the first and second generations: the 'modern' element in their thought may have been smaller than I implied, and it would have been possible to write about them in a way which emphasized continuity rather than a break with the past.[46]

Thus, in order to study 'Abduh's ideas as modern, it would be necessary to conceptualize their break from 'tradition,' and Islam in particular. In view of this dichotomy between Islam and modernity, 'modern Islam' is somewhat of a *contradictio in terminis*, or an oxymoron.[47] And, as Samira Haj summarized this type of thinking, "to modernize Islam is to betray it."[48] Accordingly, many authors concluded that 'Abduh's modernist thought represented an almost full break with classical Islamic thought.[49] Historian Elie Kedourie took this trend to its logical extreme by questioning whether 'Abduh was really a Muslim, whether he was not really agnostic or atheist – echoing observations by Lord Cromer on 'Abduh as a 'concealed infidel.'[50] At the same time, any 'remnants' of Islam-as-tradition were disapproved of by authors such as Malcolm Kerr and Hisham Sharabi and were blamed for the lack of coherence of Islamic modernism and its failure to become successfully modern.[51]

This overview of studies that understand 'Abduh as modern, a modernist or Westernized reveals a historiographical tendency towards an essentialist and

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46 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, viii–ix.

47 Cf. Masud and Salvatore, "Western Scholars of Islam," 50.

48 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 199. Cf. Masud and Salvatore on Hamilton Gibb's *Modern Trends in Islam*: Masud and Salvatore, "Western Scholars of Islam," 48.

49 Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 121; Tilman Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology: From Muhammad to the Present*, trans. Thomas Thornton (Princeton: Wiener, 2000), 271. For Hourani's reflections on his neglect of "the echoes of Islamic thought," see: Reid, "Arabic Thought," 551.

50 Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* (London: Cass, 1966); Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1908), 179–180. For an assessment of Lord Cromer's claim that 'Abduh was secretly agnostic, see: J.J.G. Jansen, "'I Suspect That My Friend Abdu (…) Was in Reality an Agnostic,'" in *Acta Orientalia Neerlandica. Proceedings of the Congress of the Dutch Oriental Society Held in Leiden on the Occasion of Its 50th Anniversary, 8th-9th May 1970* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 71–74. See also Haj and Moaddel's brief discussions of another famous quote by Lord Cromer, i.e. "reformed Islam is Islam no longer": Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism*, 81; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 70.

51 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 13; Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West*.

static understanding of both Islam and modernity. Change or diversity within either is dealt with insufficiently, let alone as a result of any interaction between the two. While the designation of ʿAbduh as a modernist is not inherently flawed, many of these studies tend to reduce ʿAbduh to their narrow definition of a modernist, missing as well as dismissing any creativity on his part with regard to both modernity and Islam.[52] In other words, they have trouble seeing his ideas as reinterpretations of Islam and are not equipped either to interpret his ideas as particular and creative configurations of globalizing ideas and concepts. This study explores options to counter these failing perspectives on ʿAbduh. Before doing so, however, the next section will turn to another common and also at times reductionist and narrow understanding of ʿAbduh within the body of literature that designates him as a Salafi. This overview will highlight some of the other common pitfalls of studying ʿAbduh that should be considered when drawing up a new approach to interpret ʿAbduh's ideas.

2.2 *A Battle over Islamic Orthodoxy*

In line with her diagnosis of the study of ʿAbduh as a 'modernist,' Samira Haj proposes to situate ʿAbduh within the dynamic Islamic discursive tradition of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) instead, juxtaposing his ideas with those of the 18th-century Islamic reformer Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in her 2009 *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*.[53] Her call to position ʿAbduh within the Islamic tradition is beyond doubt valid and deserves to be answered beyond the stimulating findings of her own study, which this study gratefully uses. However, it is evident too that any endeavor to situate ʿAbduh within Islamic currents of thought should be done carefully. In the following, I will discuss various critical assessments of the 'fundamentalist' or 'Salafi' mode within Islam and ʿAbduh's position in it, as expressed by Ahmed Dallal, Mohammed Haddad, Oliver Scharbrodt and Henri Lauzière.[54] These critiques indicate that labelling ʿAbduh a Salafi at

52 For an interesting revision of the 'modernism' of ʿAbduh, see: Euben, "Premodern, Antimodern or Postmodern?," 437.

53 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*.

54 Haddad, "Essai de critique"; Mohamed Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh. Histoire d'une manipulation," *Revue de l'Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes* 60, no. 180 (1997): 197–222; Mohamed Haddad, "'Abduh et ses lecteurs: Pour une histoire critique des 'lectures' de M. 'Abduh," *Arabica* 45, no. 1 (1998): 22–49; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh"; Ahmad Dallal, "Appropriating the Past," *Islamic Law and Society* 7, no. 3 (2000): 325–58; Oliver Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith: A Comparative Study of Muhammad ʿAbduh and ʿAbdul-Baha ʿAbbas* (London: Routledge, 2008); Henri Lauzière, "The Construction of Salafiyya: Reconsidering Salafism from the Perspective of Conceptual History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 3 (2010): 369–90; Henri Lauzière, *The Making*

times result in over-emphasizing ʿAbduh's 'orthodoxy,' prompted by twentieth-century norms, anticipations, perhaps even strategies, at the expense of historical knowledge of the intricacies of ʿAbduh's intellectual life as well as its pluralism.

Indeed, in addition to the studies that downplay and question ʿAbduh's engagement with the Islamic tradition, as have been discussed in the previous section, there has been a simultaneous historiographical trend that emphasizes ʿAbduh's continuity with specific intellectual traditions within Islam. ʿAbduh is considered to be part of an intellectual path within Islam that is united, even if loosely, by the desire to uphold Islam against unlawful innovations (*bidʿa*, plural *bidaʿ*) and the claim to represent a 'correction' (*iṣlāḥ*) to its original message (and in this sense *iṣlāḥ* can be translated as 'restoration'). This claim was authenticated by reverting in particular to the Quran and the first generations of Muslims (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), thus reflecting a rejection of *taqlīd* (to follow an authoritative corpus of interpretations in the field of Islamic law or theology) and a plea for *ijtihād* (to interpret anew Islam's foundational texts).

Scholars such as Samira Haj and Basheer M. Nafi position ʿAbduh within this mode in the Islamic tradition, which John Voll and Rudolph Peters label the fundamentalist tradition.[55] Starting with Ḥanbali thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350), they then trace this mode to eighteenth-century movements such as neo-Sufism and to individual thinkers such as the Indian Shāh Wālī Allāh (1703–1762) and Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792) in the Arabian peninsula. These were considered to be the forerunners of nineteenth-century revivalists, such as Muḥammad ʿAbduh.

In an article from 1993, Islamic scholar Ahmad Dallal raises doubts with regard to such a "theory of united Islamic revivalism." He responds first and foremost to Voll and Peters' exposition of a fundamentalist mode, yet his objections

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of Salafism. Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century, Religion, Culture, and Public Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

55 Rudolph Peters, "Idjtihād and Taqlīd in 18th and 19th Century Islam," *Die Welt des Islams* 20, no. 3/4 (1980): 131–45; John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), chap. 2; Rudolph Peters, "Erneuerungsbewegungen im Islam vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert und die Rolle des Islams in der neueren Geschichte. Antikolonialismus und Nationalismus," in *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, eds. Werner Ende, Udo Steinbach, and Renate Laut, 5th ed. (München: Beck, 2005), 90–127; Basheer M Nafi, *The Rise and Decline of the Arab-Islamic Reform Movement.* (Slough: ICIT, 2000), 15–31; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*.

logically extend to later publications.[56] He demonstrates the great internal differentiation amongst the eighteenth-century revivalists mentioned by Voll and Peters. This lack of synchronic uniformity is then extended to question these revivalists' diachronic continuity with the modern Islamic revivalism of someone like ʿAbduh.

Oliver Scharbrodt provides another, very different reason to exercise caution in situating ʿAbduh in a 'fundamentalist' mode. He argues that it was ʿAbduh himself who consciously linked his ideas to this path in Islam by referring to the *salaf*, rejecting *taqlīd,* and celebrating *ijtihād*, implicitly presenting himself as an heir to the many Sunni renewers (although the term *mujaddid* seems to be used by Riḍā only) who preceded him in restoring genuine Islam. Scharbrodt claims that ʿAbduh did so to legitimize and authenticate his reform of Islam, making it appear more 'orthodox' in spite of its roots in mystical and millenarian traditions in Islam.[57] It is not entirely convincing that this was only a strategy after ʿAbduh's break from al-Afghānī; nevertheless, it is probable that ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī used a reference to the earliest time of Islam and the claim to cleanse contemporary Islam from later accretions to increase the authority of their reinterpretations, by appealing to their 'authenticity.'[58]

In his dissertation, Mohamed Haddad records the great ambiguity of ʿAbduh's use of the term *salaf* in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. He lists five different manners and argues that very few of these references were used in a way that attributed to the *salaf* great religious authority and were as such used to enlarge the authority of ʿAbduh's own interpretations. For example, in his introduction, ʿAbduh announces he will follow the way of the *salaf* (*maslak al-salaf*) in matters of doctrine. Haddad argues that this use of *salaf* does not refer to the first generation of Muslims, even though this is how Abdelrazik translated it, but to the first generation of scholars within the Ashʿari school – in contradistinction to the *khalaf* in the next sentence, which refers to the later generations of Ashʿari scholars, according to Haddad's understanding.[59] Similarly, Albert Hourani argues that ʿAbduh's use of the term *salaf* is quite general and also refers to "the central tradition in Sunni Islam in its period of development: the

56 Ahmad Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750–1850," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 3 (1993): 342.

57 Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 98–108.

58 Already in ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī's journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, they also refer to the need to counter *bidaʿ* for which they refer to the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ*. See for example: Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, ed. Muḥammad Jamāl (Al-Qāhira: Al-Maktaba al-Ahliyya, 1927), 114. See also Aziz al-Azmeh on the European roots of the discourse of "authenticity" (*aṣāla*) in modern Islamic revivalism: Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, chap. The Discourse of Cultural Authenticity.

59 Haddad, "Essai de critique," 183–185, 197–198.

great theologians of the third and fourth Islamic centuries: al-Ashʿarī, al-Bāqillānī, al-Māturīdī."[60]

More recently, in his 2015 book *The Making of Salafism,* Henri Lauzière warns that the frequency and prominence of ʿAbduh's references to the *salaf* stand in no relation to the academic practice of calling him a Salafi or designating him as a representative of the Salafiyya. Unraveling the two-pronged history of the concept 'Salafism', resulting in a 'modernist' and a 'purist' track, Lauzière traces the practice of labelling ʿAbduh part of the Salafiyya back to Louis Massignon's arguments in French and English academia. ʿAbduh himself certainly did not use the Arabic substantive *Salafiyya*, Lauzière contends.[61]

Within this history of naming ʿAbduh a Salafi, Lauzière ascribes central importance to the circle around Rashīd Riḍā that hackneyed the label, for example naming a press and bookstore the Salafiyya Bookstore (al-Maktaba al-Salafiyya). From the 1920s onwards, Riḍā and his circle then increasingly turned to the Saudi leader ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Āl Saʿūd and Wahhābism. This turn from a rationalist Islamic reformism to a neo-Ḥanbali puritanism engendered an ongoing ambiguity with regard to what the term Salafiyya referred to. According to Lauzière, this might explain Massignon's (mis)use of the term for ʿAbduh's reformism and, in yet another twist, its adoption by Moroccan 'modernists' in the 1930s. Parallel to this 'modernist' type of Salafism, there existed a 'purist', Wahhābi-oriented track of Salafism, in which Riḍā's disciples (often based in Saudi Arabia) played an important role and which became dominant while the modernist current demised in the postindependence era.[62]

In contrast to Lauzière's analysis, Haddad argues that Riḍā consciously forged a particular reading of ʿAbduh that matched his own ideological interests and presented ʿAbduh as particularly in line with the Ḥanbali-oriented Salafiyya that Riḍā himself came to represent.[63] This critique was taken up and elaborated upon by scholars such as Mark Sedgwick and, again,

60 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 149. I adapted the names in this quotation to fit the transcription rules used in this study.

61 While Lauzière argues that the concept of Salafism (or Salafiyya) – as a substantive – did not exist before the twentieth century, he acknowledges that Salafi epithets have been present since the twelfth century. He claims that these epithets were mainly identified with the Ḥanbali school theologically, and that they only came to be used in reference to the field of Islamic Law from the 1920s onwards. Lauzière, "Construction of Salafiyya," 372, 374, 380–81; Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism*, for a summary of his argument see 28–42 and 232–238.

62 Lauzière, "Construction of Salafiyya"; Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism*.

63 Haddad, "Essai de critique," chaps. II and III; Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh"; Haddad, "'Abduh et ses lecteurs"; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh."

Oliver Scharbrodt.[64] Haddad explains that, after ʿAbduh's death, a broad committee was established to accurately deal with ʿAbduh's legacy. In the course of time, and through a variety of political and practical reasons, Riḍā – not even an original member of this committee – became charged with collecting, selecting, editing, and publishing ʿAbduh's works.[65] He published his edited collection of ʿAbduh's works in 1925. In addition, Riḍā wrote an extensive biography, which was published in 1931 and has since been widely used in most scholarly works on ʿAbduh.[66] At the time, according to Haddad, Riḍā was no longer in close contact with ʿAbduh's family, and many of ʿAbduh's close friends and original committee members had already died.

Haddad takes such care to problematize Riḍā's proximity to ʿAbduh in order to raise questions about Riḍā's reading of ʿAbduh's works. He suggests that Riḍā wrote ʿAbduh's biography in a way that benefitted Riḍā's own reformist ideas and projects. Riḍā, according to Haddad, deliberately added footnotes, introductions, and epilogues and downplayed certain works while expanding upon others.[67] In doing so, Riḍā presented ʿAbduh as an 'orthodox' thinker – in line with classic theologians and philosophers such as al-Ashʿarī (874–936), as well as al-Ghazālī (1058–1111).[68] Moreover and more importantly, according to

64 Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*; Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*.

65 The first volume of *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh* is Riḍā's biography of ʿAbduh (called *al-Sīra* and published for the first time in 1931); the second volume contains ʿAbduh's collected works (called *al-Munsha'āt* and published for the first time in 1925). For an elaborate discussion of the history of Riḍā's collection and edition of ʿAbduh's works, see: Haddad, "'Abduh et ses lecteurs," 24–30; Haddad, "Essai de critique," 130–137.

66 For example, in a footnote on Riḍā's collection and biography of ʿAbduh, Samira Haj writes: "The collection includes, in addition to ʿAbduh's writing, Riḍā's running commentaries on contemporary events, which I found not only amusing, but extremely useful for shedding light on ʿAbduh's writings and activities, as well as the political intrigues and social and cultural attitude of that period; (…)." Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 239, footnote 18.

67 Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh."

68 Haddad uses two of ʿAbduh's earlier texts to again question ʿAbduh's connection to the Ashʿari and to the Ḥanbali school: *Risālat al-Wāridāt* (Treatise on mystical inspirations) and *Taʿlīqāt ʿalā Sharḥ al-Dāwānī li-l-ʿAqā'id al-ʿAḍudiyya* (Glosses on the commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dāwānī (d. 1502) on the creed of ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (ca. 1300–1355)). In comparison with other texts of ʿAbduh, Haddad draws attention to the fact that Riḍā devotes almost no attention to these works in his biography, and excludes the *Taʿlīqāt* from his collection of ʿAbduh's works. From the second edition onwards, Riḍā also excludes *Risālat al-Wāridāt*. Haddad; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh." These exclusions are largely copied by ʿImāra and again reiterated by Anke von Kügelgen in her EI-lemma on ʿAbduh. Muḥammad ʿImāra, "Taḥqīq hadhihi al-Aʿmāl," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila li-l-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Madīnat al-Naṣr: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006/1427h), 209–225; Anke von Kügelgen, "'Abduh, Muḥammad," *Encyclopedia of Islam. THREE* (Brill Online,

Haddad, Riḍā made it seem that ʿAbduh was particularly intellectually connected to the Salafi-Ḥanbali tradition of Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) and his pupil Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (1292–1350).[69]

In contrast, Haddad maintains that ʿAbduh has never referred to Ibn Taymiyya or Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and makes the sweeping claim that ʿAbduh did not even have access to their texts.[70] I have not been able to corroborate Haddad's broad claims, but it is clear that ʿAbduh's connection to Ibn Taymiyya has not been unequivocally established. Itzchak Weismann, for example, suggests that ʿAbduh might have learned of Ibn Taymiyya's writings through his connections, albeit loose, with the Damascene Salafiyya-movement, while, interestingly, David Commins suggests the opposite.[71] Given the frequency and prominence with which ʿAbduh's and Ibn Taymiyya's ideas are presented as genealogically connected, which I return to later in this section, it is surprising that the details of ʿAbduh's theological and intellectual connection to Ibn Taymiyya remain ambiguous.

Importantly, Haddad claims that Riḍā's presentation of ʿAbduh was not only incorrect, but also that it was deliberate and manipulative. He argues that it was strategic, as Riḍā was very much ideologically invested in the memory of ʿAbduh, along with other successors of ʿAbduh.[72] To profit from ʿAbduh's fame and standing in his own projects of Islamic reform, Riḍā wished to underline his own connection to ʿAbduh and through him to al-Afghānī, as other authors have also noted.[73] Mark Sedgwick describes this succinctly: "Riḍā promoted the memory of Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and the memory of Muḥammad ʿAbduh promoted Riḍā."[74] More importantly, this meant that ʿAbduh's legacy and memory, as preserved and presented in Riḍā's collection and biography, was supposed to serve Riḍā's reformist ideas. In particular, Riḍā's Salafi and specifi-

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2012), accessed August 7, 2012, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/abduh-muhammad-COM_0103>. See, for a similar argument to Haddad: Scharbrodt, "The Salafiyya and Sufism"; Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, chap. Creating Orthodoxy: The View of Posterity.

69 Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh."

70 Haddad, "'Abduh et ses lecteurs," 28; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh," 61–62.

71 David Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 33; Itzchak Weismann, "Between Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism: A Reappraisal of the Origins of the Salafiyya from the Damascene Angle," *Die Welt des Islams* 41, no. 2 (2001): 232–234.

72 Haddad, "Les oeuvres de 'Abduh," 202–203, 206–207, 209–215, 219–220, 222; Haddad, "'Abduh et ses lecteurs," 27–30; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh," 61–62. See: Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, chap. 6. Creating Orthodoxy. The View of Posterity.

73 Weismann, "Sociology of 'Islamic Modernism,'" 105–107; Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 107–108.

74 Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, 122.

cally Salafi-Ḥanbali reading of ʿAbduh served Riḍā's turn towards the Wahhābi movement in Saudi Arabia – although, on an important side note, ʿAbduh had dismissed literalist interpretations during his life.[75] It suited Riḍā's discovery of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and his turn towards, in Haddad's words, a more puritan form of Salafism.[76]

Conversely, following Haddad's line of reasoning, it would probably not have been in Riḍā's interest to portray ʿAbduh as particularly unorthodox in the eyes of his twentieth-century contemporaries. In order to gain the acceptance of his Muslim contemporaries and implement his Islamic reformist ideas, Riḍā probably could not risk alienating an Egyptian Muslim public that was increasingly sensitive to questions of cultural authenticity and orthodoxy vis-à-vis Westernization and colonization. Considerations of a similar nature were probably also made by ʿAbduh and Riḍā during ʿAbduh's lifetime.[77] Accordingly, Haddad and Scharbrodt argue that two early texts of ʿAbduh (i.e. *Risālat al-Wāridāt* (Treatise on mystical inspirations) and *Taʿlīqāt ʿalā Sharḥ al-Dāwānī li-l-ʿAqāʾid al-ʿAḍudiyya* (Glosses on the commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dāwānī)) were downplayed and excluded because they compromised ʿAbduh's 'orthodoxy' in the eyes of the later generations, due to their philosophical and mystical contents.[78] Also, Haddad, Scharbrodt, and Sedgwick claim that Riḍā downplayed ʿAbduh's Masonic memberships and his knowledge of theosophy, his friendly relations with the Bahāʾi (Bahá'í) movement, his (neo-)Sufism, his drawing upon Islamic rationalistic philosophy, his Muʿtazilism, and his profound engagement with European thought.[79] The downplaying of this last as-

75 ʿAbduh dismissed literalism in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, as we will see, but also in his reply to Faraḥ Anṭūn: .

76 Haddad, "Essai de critique," 137.

77 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 169–174; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 203–215. The decision to remove the reference to the createdness of the Quran (a typically Muʿtazili doctrine) from ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in editions from 1908 onwards may have been prompted by the desire to be considerate of these kinds of sensitivities among the Egyptian public. There is some discussion about whether or not ʿAbduh commissioned the omission of this doctrine from *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*'s later editions. Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh," 209–215. For a more elaborate discussion of this episode, see chapter 3 and 5 of this study.

78 See note 68 of this chapter. Haddad, "Essai de critique," 65–70; Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh," 206–209; Scharbrodt, "The Salafiyya and Sufism"; Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 26.

79 Regardless of whether or not Riḍā downplayed these aspects of ʿAbduh's thought, two of these intellectual connections have received quite some scholarly attention: (1) On the historical connections between Sufism and fundamentalism/Salafiyya, see: Itzchak Weismann, "Modernity from Within: Islamic Fundamentalism and Sufism," *Der Islam* 86, no. 1 (2011): 142–70; Weismann, "Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism"; Thomas Eich,

pect seems somewhat exaggerated given the preceding analysis of the rather well-known scholarship on ʿAbduh as an Islamic modernist, however. Perhaps it indicates how much is ideologically at stake in representing ʿAbduh in a 'non-Salafi' way.[80]

Haddad then refers to the example of Joseph Schacht's lemma on ʿAbduh in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, claiming that Riḍā's 'orthodox' and specifically Salafi-Ḥanbali manipulative (mis)interpretation has profoundly influenced academic scholarship on ʿAbduh.[81] For example, Riḍā's 'orthodox' description of ʿAbduh is reflected in Goldziher and Adams' focus on the 'theological' aspects of ʿAbduh's reform movement and how it exemplifies a 'movement of purification.'[82] Also, the Salafi designation of ʿAbduh, as dis-

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Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī: eine Studie zur Instrumentalisierung sufischer Netzwerke und genealogischer Kontroversen im spätosmanischen Reich (Berlin: Schwarz, 2003). (2) On ʿAbduh's (neo-)Muʿtazilism, an observation that was already made during his lifetime and then mainly used to discredit him, see: Robert Caspar, "Un aspect de la pensée musulmane moderne: le renouveau du Muʿtazilism," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominican d'Études Orientales du Caire* 4 (1957): 141–201; Thomas Hildebrandt, "Waren Ǧamāl ad-Dīn al-Afġānī und Muḥammad ʿAbduh Neo-Muʿtaziliten?," *Die Welt des Islams* 42, no. 2 (2003): 207–62.

80 At this point, it might be important to note that Haddad's work has been clearly indebted to the project of philosopher Mohamed Arkoun (1928–2010), under whose supervision Haddad wrote his dissertation on ʿAbduh. Arkoun wanted to open up the Islamic tradition, to reveal the unorthodox, or "unthought," from behind the repressive orthodoxy in the Islamic tradition. On the one hand, Haddad criticizes ʿAbduh insofar as he represents repressive discursive tendencies within modern Islam. On the other hand, Haddad uses ʿAbduh to reveal the largely obscured richness of the Islamic tradition vis-à-vis a narrower concept of orthodoxy in the modern Islamic tradition, implemented here by Riḍā's orthodox and Salafi-Ḥanbali presentation of ʿAbduh. Haddad's connection to Arkoun's project shows that, with the presentation of ʿAbduh, Islamic orthodoxy might have been at stake not only for Riḍā but also for Haddad. Haddad, "Essai de critique"; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh," 62, 72 (n. 21), 73. Cf. Oliver Scharbrodt's explicit agenda of deconstructing the dichotomy between the orthodox and heterodox in nineteenth-century Islam by discussing Muḥammad ʿAbduh and ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās comparatively: Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 28. For a glimpse of Mohamed Arkoun's complex ideas, see: Mohamed Arkoun, "Rethinking Islam Today," in *Liberal Islam*, ed. Charles Kurzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 205–21; Robert D. Lee, *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), chap. 6; Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*, 216–219. In addition, as Frank Griffel remarks, many present-day Salafists are prone to deny ʿAbduh's connection to "their" Salafism. Frank Griffel, "What Do We Mean By 'Salafī'? Connecting Muḥammad ʿAbduh with Egypt's Nūr Party in Islam's Contemporary Intellectual History," *Die Welt Des Islams* 55, no. 2 (2015): 198. It shows how a refusal to label ʿAbduh a Salafi may well be ideologically charged in multiple respects.

81 Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh." See also note 109 on ʿImāra and Von Kügelgen.

82 Goldziher, "Islamic Modernism"; Adams, *Islam and Modernism*. Haddad claims that Adams' account of ʿAbduh closely followed that of Riḍā. Haddad, "Essai de critique," 147.

cussed above, illustrates how ʿAbduh has been presented in close lineage to Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, and the Salafi-Ḥanbali school, although they did not necessarily ignore ʿAbduh's interaction with European thinkers and ideas. This Salafi-Ḥanbali perspective on ʿAbduh has also found its way into more general overviews, both in Arabic and European languages. In a casual but exemplary reference to ʿAbduh in an article on Islamic orthodoxy by Norman Calder, we read: "The relevant juristic hero for Muḥammad ʿAbduh was not Abū Ḥanīfa, Malik, [al-]Shāfiʿī or even [Ibn] Ḥanbal, great figures though they all were; it was Ibn Taymiyya."[83] Similarly, Goldziher's characterization of Egyptian Islamic modernism as a "cultural Wahhābism," which is largely based on its radical rejection of practices that it deems inauthentic, is striking in light of Haddad's critique.[84] However, even though Haddad observes an analogy between this type of interpretation and Riḍā's presentation, he does not demonstrate that such analogous readings of ʿAbduh are to be ascribed (solely) to Riḍā's manipulative influence.

Whether it was a conscious move by Riḍā or, closer to Lauzière's reading, the result of the way Riḍā's own ideological turn reflected on the one whom he was intent to refer to as his "teacher" (*al-ustādh*) and "master" (*al-imām* or *al-shaykh*) (i.e. ʿAbduh), the question remains whether it is productive to study ʿAbduh as a representative of a Salafi current within the Islamic tradition. For example, Frank Griffel concedes Lauzière's point, but he argues that it is still not too farfetched to label ʿAbduh a Salafi; he does fit into a broader 'pattern' of Salafism, which aims at "the return to and the revival of earlier expressions of Islam – or, in fact, assumed earlier expressions of Islam."[85] The absence of the substantive 'Salafiyya' in ʿAbduh's works, Griffel surmises, only indicates the relative late appearance of '-isms' (or '-iyyas') in the Arabic language.[86] Griffel's remarks are reminiscent of earlier analyses of a 'fundamentalist mode' or a pattern of Islamic renewal (*tajdīd*) within the Islamic tradition by Voll, Peters,

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Griffel refers to these studies of Schacht, Goldziher, and Adams approvingly – as proof that ʿAbduh can be meaningfully interpreted as a Salafi – without referring to Haddad's arguments or considering Riḍā's role in these authors' interpretations of ʿAbduh. Griffel, "What Do We Mean By 'Salafi'?," 210–212.

83 Norman Calder, "The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy," in *Defining Islam: A Reader*, ed. Andrew Rippin (2000; repr., London: Equinox, 2007), 236.

84 Goldziher, "Islamic Modernism," 203–204.

85 Griffel, "What Do We Mean By 'Salafi'?," 215; H. Lauzière, "Rejoinder: What We Mean Versus What They Meant by 'Salafi': A Reply to Frank Griffel," *Welt Des Islams* 56, no. 1 (2016): 89–95, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-00561p06>; F. Griffel, "What Is the Task of the Intellectual (Contemporary) Historian? – A Response to Henri Lauziere's 'Reply,'" *Welt Des Islams* 56, no. 2 (2016): 249–55, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-00562P05>.

86 Griffel, "What Do We Mean By 'Salafi'?," 202, 213–217.

Nafi and Haj, as have been discussed in the opening paragraphs of this section. On the other hand, Lauziére seems to find it historically unwarranted at least as well as analytically confusing and unproductive to continue calling ʿAbduh a Salafi, a position which might be likened to that of Ahmed Dallal's misgivings at Peters' and Voll's arguments, as discussed in the beginning of this section.

For this study, the point of this overview is not that ʿAbduh's designation as a Salafi is always wrong. It is one aspect of the important endeavor to interpret ʿAbduh within the continuing Islamic tradition. However – and this is where most of the studies fall short – the label should be applied carefully, by unravelling ʿAbduh's own references to the *salaf* and disentangling them from those of his predecessors (particularly Ibn Taymiyya), contemporaries, and successors (particularly Riḍā) and, moreover, not ignoring other historical connections at the same time.[87] Importantly, a failure to further scrutinize the term will likely result in a very narrow understanding of ʿAbduh as a Salafi – possibly reflecting Riḍā's twentieth-century ideological strategies instead of ʿAbduh's use of the term. It easily leads to the foregrounding of ʿAbduh's relation to a specific Salafi-Ḥanbali path in the history of Islam, as in fact happened in the historiography on ʿAbduh. This type of overemphasis on the Salafi path, in paradoxical contrast to the overemphasis on Westernization in the body of literature on ʿAbduh as an Islamic modernist, fails to consider the great variety within Islam to which ʿAbduh's life and works testify.

On the one hand, then, these insights show the need for a proper study of ʿAbduh within a broader Islamic tradition. Haj' endeavor to study ʿAbduh in relation to the dynamic discursive tradition of Islam is very promising in this respect, connecting ʿAbduh's ideas on ethics to those of Al-Ghazālī for example, although it is a pity that she foregrounds the pattern of (Salafi) renewal, associating ʿAbduh with Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, without much critical examination. This study, however, takes another route and focusses on understanding ʿAbduh in relation to global intellectual developments.

On the other hand, this overview shows the need to stay away from a reductionist reading of ʿAbduh's ideas and, instead, aims at situating him within a pluralistic global conversation, acknowledging that his particular configurations were always also rooted in local semantics and a variety of, orthodox and less orthodox, currents within the Islamic tradition. It stresses the importance of analytically acknowledging and historically documenting the diversity of

87 Cf. Bernard Haykel's efforts to disambiguate what he calls "Enlightened Salafism" from twenty-first-century Salafism in his discussion of Salafism: Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (London: Hurst, 2009), 45–47.

ʿAbduh's interlocutors and the sometimes surprising ideas they held. Even if Masonic, Sufi and Bahāʾi ideas would now often be deemed strange and controversial for a Sunni Salafi reformer, ʿAbduh was indeed in contact with these ideas and their representatives.

In addition, the overview demonstrates the need for a more profound historical knowledge of ʿAbduh's intellectual life. As Haddad and Lauzière point out, it is not clear if this particular Salafi-Ḥanbali genealogical interest is historically warranted. There is reason to suggest that ʿAbduh was not very closely acquainted with the work of Ibn Taymiyya. It is this type of lacunas in our historical knowledge of ʿAbduh's life that indicate the paramount importance of conducting extensive new research into the historical context in which ʿAbduh formulated his ideas.

This study responds to these observations and seeks to expand our knowledge about ʿAbduh's historical and often surprisingly diverse connections and interactions, yet not in first instance to position ʿAbduh within the dynamic Islamic tradition but within the diverse contemporaneous global conversation he was *also* part of.

3 Studying ʿAbduh in Context in a Time of Globalization

In this section, a new approach to studying Muḥammad ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam within a globally interconnected intellectual realm will be set forth. Recently, Dyala Hamzah and Johann Büssow have both proposed to understand ʿAbduh and his Arabic contemporaries within the discussions and concerns of their own times and places. For Büssow, this is a correction to the historiographical dominance of genealogical and taxonomical perspectives that relate ʿAbduh to certain intellectual trends, past and present, in a binary way, regardless of the great variety within and around these trends.[88] In her introduction to the 2013 volume *The Making of the Arab Intellectual*, Hamzah stresses the importance of situating intellectuals in their contemporary contexts as an alternative to studying Arabic intellectual history through the Western impact-paradigm. She proposes refocussing attention on "the contemporary

88 Johann Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam in the Period of the First Modern Globalization: Muhammad ʿAbduh and his Theology of Unity," in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940*, eds. Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 279. In accordance with Professor Büssow's own preferences, I spell his name in the main body of text with an umlaut. However, in notes and bibliography, I follow the quoted publication's spelling of his name – here, Buessow.

and local production of meaning" instead of judging ideas against, often implicit, canons and expectations that were rooted in other places and times.[89] Instead of assessing Arab intellectuals in terms of failure and inconsistency, she intends to explain what these intellectuals actually *do* discursively.

Following Hamzah and Büssow, this study takes ʿAbduh's own time and place as its analytical starting point. In its first and simplest application, this study's turn to the milieu ʿAbduh lived and worked in and to the contemporaries he was in direct contact with, is a means to stay close to the empirical pluralism of ʿAbduh's context, "the kaleidoscopic nature of [ʿAbduh's] intellectual universe," alluded to in the introduction to this book.[90] Studying ʿAbduh in the context of his interlocutors, then, does not mean that ʿAbduh is analyzed as part of a (more or less) homogeneous intellectual movement. Instead, this study considers ʿAbduh in relation to the full range of interactions – conversations, discussions, disagreements and conflicts – he had with his contemporaries.[91]

Second, yet related, Jung's metaphor of the kaleidoscope extends beyond the multi-coloredness of the persons and texts with which ʿAbduh interacted, as said before. The revolving and constantly changing and fresh perspectives that are offered by the twisting of the kaleidoscope also provides a metaphor for the complex layers of ʿAbduh's spatial context and the interaction between these. In tune with other 'global' historical of intellectual or conceptual connections, as seen before, this study describes the various spatial scales at play in his milieu and seeks to study his ideas in relation to a multiplicity of interaction spatial layers.

In the next sections it presents a new analytical model that acknowledges the pluralism of this context while being part of a globally interconnected and converging intellectual world. Furthermore, this model offers insight into the particularity and creativity of ʿAbduh's ideas vis-à-vis his varying interlocutors.

3.1 *Studying ʿAbduh in Context*

But first, what does it mean to study ʿAbduh in context? Dyala Hamzah's contextualizing analyses are rooted in methodologies developed within the field

89 Hamzah, "Introduction," 9. Cf. Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh."

90 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 230.

91 This fits into Indira Falk Gesink's fascinating study of ʿAbduh's conservative counterparts within the debates about reform at the Azhar: Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*. In a different way, it fits into those definitions of the Nahḍa that emphasize the ambiguities and suggest to study it as a set of debates instead of a particular ideologie. Rogier Visser, "Identities in Early Arabic Journalism: The Case of Louis Ṣābūnjī" (PhD Dissertation, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2014), 48–52; Kassab, "Nahda," 19.

of intellectual history, for which the work of Quentin Skinner (b.1940) is particularly representative.[92] In his seminal 1969 article "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," Quentin Skinner launches a vehement critique of Alfred O. Lovejoy's way of studying the history of ideas. Particularly, he criticizes Lovejoy's presupposition of a set of unit-ideas or doctrines that Lovejoy deems to have a historically persistent and relatively autonomous presence, albeit in different combinations and forms.[93] Skinner warns that this method can only result in mythology as opposed to history. Most importantly for the present study, Skinner argues that the Lovejoyan method presupposes a reified doctrine that is subsequently found in all major theorists' works ("to find what you are looking for"), and which often functions as a model and a norm ("to judge by what you are looking for"). Furthermore, Skinner claims that this method leads to a discrepancy between the interpretation and weight that a historian gives to a specific statement and the meaning of that statement within its historical context. In addition, Skinner writes, Lovejoy's method easily results in the presupposition of a relation of influence within the chain of unit-ideas, which results from an apparent similarity only.

To avoid looking for and judging against certain influences and particular doctrines in an individual author, Skinner proposes a contextualizing approach. According to Skinner, a particular text should be studied within the discursive logic of a certain time and place, which is to say within the range of what was (and could be) uttered then and there. He recommends embedding a historical text in the language of a particular time and place, which is to say, considering it in terms of "the whole range of communications which could have been conventionally performed on the given occasion by the utterance of the given text."[94] In order to grasp the discourses, concepts, and, most

92 Hamzah, "La pensée de 'Abduh," 32. In the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* in 2008, focusing on Middle Eastern intellectual history, Israel Gershoni and Amy Singer bemoan how the field of the intellectual history of the Middle East failed to profit from the methodologies and theories that intellectual history had on offer. Israel Gershoni and Amy Singer, "Introduction: Intellectual History in Middle Eastern Studies," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 28, no. 3 (2008): 383–89. The work of Dyala Hamzah can be considered to meet this need.

93 Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding." The following exposition on Skinner's methodological considerations is also based on: Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Regarding Method*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Teresa Bejan, "Interview. Quentin Skinner on Meaning and Method," *The Art of Theory: A Quarterly Journal of Political Philosophy* (blog), accessed February 16, 2015, <http://www.artoftheory.com/quentin-skinner-on-meaning-and-method/>.

94 Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 49.

particularly, arguments that were conventional to a particular context, Skinner recommends a turn to what may be called 'minor' authors: those authors rendered insignificant with the passing of time. In this sense, his methodological principles reflect an interest in broader discursive modes and a turn away from, in Siep Stuurman's words, focusing on "thinkers" towards focusing on "thinking" in intellectual and conceptual history.[95]

For Skinner, the discursive context is more than just a tool for gaining access to the language of a particular time; the text is also studied as an integral part of its textual context: it uses words and concepts in argument with other texts that use these words and concepts. Skinner interprets a text's discursive context as a domain of competition, as a "language game" in which words are deeds, and texts represent moves and countermoves in argument.[96] It is the historian's task to understand the moves that are made by the text being studied: what does it *do*? What kind of *act* does it represent within the discursive game in which it partakes? A text's meaning becomes inherent to its "intention in doing" – a phrase that Skinner borrows from speech act theory, developed by John Searle and John Austin, but which he later discards because it was frequently mistaken for a proposal to understand the intentions of a text's author. Instead, it confers that the meaning of a text is relational, for Skinner, or intertextual. It is found in a text's use "in argument": what is a text's contribution within the arguments of its time and place? As an alternative to a history of ideas or a history of concepts, he proposes a "history of the uses of concepts in arguments" in which concepts are tools.[97] In short, he recommends the

95 Siep Stuurman, "The Canon of the History of Political Thought: Its Critique and a Proposed Alternative," *History and Theory* 39, no. 2 (2000): 161. Skinner shares his interest in broader discursive modes or languages with his fellow members of the Cambridge School, most importantly John Pocock. See: J.G.A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Furthermore, Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) and particularly his *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* reflect a somewhat similar turn: Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 9 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992); Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

96 Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding," 37.

97 Quentin Skinner, "A Reply to My Critics," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics*, ed. James Tully (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 283, quoted in Hamzah, "Introduction," 9. Cf. Richter, *History of Political and Social Concepts*, 133. Connecting these reflections with Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*, the text studied might be considered in argument over the language and its concepts itself. Koselleck considers the key concepts of a given time and place to be necessarily contested, fought and argued over. Reinhart Koselleck, "A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe," in *The Meaning of*

study of a text *in* context, amongst the other texts that it confronted in argument.

3.2 *Shared Questions, Diverging Answers*

The question remains how to study ʿAbduh in an exceptionally pluralist milieu in which he took on his own particular position within a globalizing world and put forward his own specific configuration of contemporary ideas?

Skinner's methodological principles on studying ideas in context do not mean reducing them to their context or judging them by it. His method does not invite the historian to point out a relation of 'influence' between one author and the other; this search for 'influences' often goes hand in hand with the observation that the recipient author failed to reproduce the ideas and concepts of the original author. Instead, studying a text in context in this way implies a focus on the acts of the author of the text and highlights his or her agency. As historian Siep Stuurman explains:

> The concept of influence is premised on the idea that A, the earlier author, 'influences' the later one. It makes A appear as the active agent and B as the passive recipient. In real history, however, it is the other way around: A is gone and B is doing something, namely writing a text using arguments, concepts and vocabularies from a variety of previous texts, putting it in new contexts, trying out fresh combinations, and in the process producing – sometimes – entirely novel ways of thinking about society and the world.[98]

In this way, Skinner's principles acknowledge the particularity of a text and the agency of an author. At the same time, Skinner stresses that a text is intricately tied to the linguistic environment at its disposal, to a range of concepts shared and used by the texts with which the text studied was in argument. For

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Historical Terms and Concepts, eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington: German Historical Institute, 1996), 64 quoted in Melvin Richter, "More than a Two-Way Traffic: Analyzing, Translating and Comparing Political Concepts from Other Cultures," Contributions to the History of Concepts 1, no. 1 (2005): 10.

98 Stuurman, "Canon," 160. Cf. Dyala Hamzah's rejection of a genealogical perspective in intellectual history: Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh." A similar shift is perceptible in the field of translation studies, where the focus shifted from assessing the fidelity of a translation to recognizing its creativity. As historian Marwa Elshakry explains in her work on the global paths of Darwin, a translator's activity came to be seen as a "discursive engagement" instead of an attempt at a faithful rendition of the original text. Marwa S. Elshakry, "Knowledge in Motion: The Cultural Politics of Modern Science Translations in Arabic," *Isis* 99, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 701–30; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 5–6.

Skinner, the text studied is joined with the texts in its context by being in argument with them.[99]

This study presents a model through which this dynamic of particularity and commonality between ʿAbduh and his interlocutors within a global conversation is more explicitly captured. To this purpose, it proposes a twofold model of *shared questions and diverging answers*. It analyzes the interactions between ʿAbduh and his interlocutors in terms of shared questions: questions that ʿAbduh and his contemporaries responded to with different, at times conflicting answers. In this way, it aims to convey the coherence as well as the great internal variety of ʿAbduh's context and how ʿAbduh was positioned within this context, at a time of increasing global convergence.

First, in choosing a terminology of questions, this study is indebted to Michael Feener's remark on modern Muslim thinking:

> [o]ver the past century, for different communities all across the planet, political and economic developments have driven us to a situation in which to various extents 'our' questions increasingly resemble 'their' questions, regardless of how one might delineate these two essentialized groupings. This convergence of conversations in the era of globalization has thus also been a major aspect of the development of modern Muslim thought.[100]

This study, then, is interested in analysing the specific questions that ʿAbduh and his interlocutors shared in a time of increasing globalization. What were the questions their discussions revolved around?

While these questions are expressed in the concepts that ʿAbduh and his interlocutors used and contested, they were not (necessarily) asked explicitly

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99 This type of coherence is somewhat reminiscent of Talal Asad and Daniel Brown's dynamic reconceptualizations of Islamic tradition, united by the contestation and discussion over shared sources and repositories – among which Brown counts "Tradition" (the *Sunna*) itself. Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1–30; Daniel W. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition in Modern Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ovamir Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 656–72. Asad's reconceptualization of Islam as a discursive tradition builds upon the work of Alasdair MacIntyre on philosophical traditions: Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988). Samira Haj discusses Asad's reconceptualization of tradition in her work on ʿAbduh: Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 4–5.

100 R. Michael Feener, "Cross-Cultural Contexts of Modern Muslim Intellectualism," *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 3–4 (2007): 281.

in question-form by ʿAbduh and his contemporaries. Instead, they should be considered as tools for the intellectual historian to organize ʿAbduh's ideas in relation to those of his contemporaries. It is a means to capture the coherence of ʿAbduh's context, to uncover the conceptual relations that underlay those of ʿAbduh's interactions that are analyzed here.

Furthermore, the terminology of 'sharing' may give the impression that all actors had an equal share in determining the global agenda articulated by these questions. Reflecting the global asymmetry discussed earlier, this was not the case. Given the power relations in colonial times, it would perhaps be closer to the truth to state that some questions were imposed on ʿAbduh by his European contemporaries. In answering these questions, however, this study considers these to have been shared by ʿAbduh. More importantly, as we will see, this sharing of externally engendered questions did not keep him from answering these questions in his own way, distinctly from his European counterparts.

This study's quest for shared questions over shared answers in studying ʿAbduh in context echoes (aspects of) other studies' models and observations, using a terminology of shared 'problems' or 'themes.' For example, in his 2014 book *The Problem of Disenchantment*, Egil Asprem proposes to reconceptualize Max Weber's thesis of disenchantment as an intellectual problem rather than a process. Discussing a large number of early-twentieth-century scientists who did not separate science from religion, or the natural from the supernatural, he problematizes Max Weber's thesis of disenchantment and its relation to the rise of scientific worldviews. At the same time, Asprem shows that 'disenchantment' may still provide insight into this history as a 'problem.' He argues that the protagonists of his story faced a cluster of questions with regard to the relation between religion, reason, and nature: "the problem of disenchantment." While they did not separate science from religion, as would be expected from Weber's thesis, they were captured by the same questions as their contemporaries who did.[101] Asprem's study is a promising example of how a focus on problems and questions enables one to point out the coherence of a wide variety of voices, without raising some answers to a norm by which to judge the others.

Dietrich Jung's study suggests that a similar approach might also work across great geographical distances. At the second level of his analytical model of the global public sphere, he argues that the participants of the global public sphere – Orientalists and Islamists alike – share global 'themes' or "a great

101 Egil Asprem, *The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900–1939* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), chap. 2.

number of intertwined problems" in discussing religion.[102] Their specific reconfiguration of these themes is then rooted in local, cultural, or personal semantics and contexts – the third level of his analytical model.

Jung's study, like those of Asprem and others who share a similar approach, is ultimately geared to gain insight into the coherence of a broader discourse – whether this refers to a global public sphere on Islam as a religion, a modern European discourse on science, Muslim reformism or the nineteenth-century Arabic movement of the *Nahḍa*.[103] In contrast, this study situates an individual author or even a text within the historical context of which he/it was part.[104] This study of ʿAbduh in a highly diverse context that was part of a global intellectual field may be seen to provide a particular window upon a global discursive field; however, its object of analysis is not the discourse itself but ʿAbduh's position within it. In other words, besides identifying the questions he shared with his interlocutors around the world, it analyzes the answers ʿAbduh gave to these questions by situating them amongst those of his interlocutors.

In analysing these answers, it becomes evident that the terminology of 'sharing' does not imply an absence of disagreement and conflict. It is about shared questions, but also about *diverging answers*. The coherence of the global intellectual field goes hand in hand with contestation and animosity, reflecting a world in which political power and cultural and religious identities were at stake. Throughout this study, attention is directed towards how ʿAbduh's answers contested the answers of others. At the same time, this study's focus on shared questions and diverging answers reflects a desire to include those answers that differ in more subtle ways than outright contestation and conflict. We will see how ʿAbduh's answers negotiated those of others or latched onto them in order to convey his own. Furthermore, these acts of contestation, debate, and negotiation that ʿAbduh's ideas represent are related to the social, economic, and, obviously, political context.[105]

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102 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 88–89.

103 Safdar Ahmed announces in the introduction to his *Reform and Modernity in Islam* that he will focus on the "problem-space" shared by Muslim reformists. Also, Elizabeth Kassab defines the *Nahḍa* as sharing a set of debates over a number of themes instead of sharing a set of propositions. Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*, 10; Kassab, "Nahda," 19.

104 This context, or aspects of it, may well be considered to be part of several discourses: of a global discursive formation on "religion", or of a discourse of Islamic reformism, of the *Nahḍa,* or Islam as a discursive tradition.

105 Cf. Koselleck on the need to write conceptual history in close relation to what he calls social history. Reinhart Koselleck, "Einleitung," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, eds. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1972), xix; Reinhart Koselleck, "Social History and Conceptual History," in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing*

Lastly, the divergence of answers shows the great variety within a globally converging intellectual world, as well as the great variety within the modern Islamic tradition, in which ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam was only one option within a globally interconnected world.

4 Studying Two Texts in Context on the Concept of 'Religion'

It would be naïve to think that it is possible to fully grasp all of the concepts and discussions that form the vast – indeed, global – background to ʿAbduh's thought, let alone to think this can be accomplished through an exclusive focus on texts. Instead, this study situates a selection of ʿAbduh's texts amongst a selection of those of his interlocutors – reflecting on the underlying choices and what they exclude along the way. Part II of this study addresses ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* within the context in which it was conceived: Beirut in the latter half of the 1880s. The primary focus is on the educational milieu and the interreligious dialogues that ʿAbduh participated in within this context. Part III turns to ʿAbduh's reply to Gabriel Hanotaux, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of France at that time, studying it within the elaborate and heated discussions that took place through the Egyptian press.

Zooming in on these two texts enables this study to chart underexplored paths in the landscape in which ʿAbduh formulated his ideas and to analyze these connections and interactions in greater depth. In this way, it goes beyond analysing ʿAbduh's interactions with other 'great' men in global intellectual history, such as Herbert Spencer or Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī; it also accounts for his engagements with those men whose names do not usually ring a bell, such as Isaac Taylor, Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra, Shahīn Makāriyyūs, or Muḥammad Masʿūd. It traces these conversations not only in books, but also to the back pages of Egyptian newspapers.

Furthermore, studying *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux in context gives two particular perspectives on how ʿAbduh's ideas were part and parcel of a global intellectual field in which concepts were also always locally reconfigured. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was conceived and lectured at a local school in one of Ottoman Beirut's younger neighborhoods, in the proximity of newly established American and European missionary schools and in dialogue with

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History, Spacing Concepts, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 30–31.

centralized policies on education in the Ottoman Empire.[106] A decade and a half later, ʿAbduh's reply to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of France Gabriel Hanotaux was published in the leading newspaper of *fin-de-siècle* Egypt, providing the stage for a worldwide discussion. This polemic reflected colonial politics in a very direct manner, as did its translations into local politics and disputes.

Since their first publication in 1898 and 1900 respectively, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux have been published, edited, and translated numerous times, sometimes with major modifications or tendentious introductions. These texts have both been considered to be central to ʿAbduh's oeuvre, and they have rarely been left out in any substantial discussion of ʿAbduh's ideas. In this study, these two texts are analyzed for the first time in their historical context, rooted firmly in their relevant historical discussions.

In this way, this study offers insight into the meaning of these specific texts of ʿAbduh in relation to these interlocutors with regard to their conceptualizations of 'religion.' It will demonstrate how these two texts can be considered to be part of a global intellectual field in adopting, discussing, negotiating, and contesting the ideas of these interlocutors with regard to 'religion.' There are other texts that would have been interesting, too, to include in this study. Most importantly, one might think of ʿAbduh's often re-published polemical response to Faraḥ Anṭūn's articles on Ibn Rushd titled *Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrānīyya maʿa al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madanīyya*, to which I will shortly come back in the conclusion.[107] Similarly, this study does not expect nor seek to provide a comprehensive grasp of the relational meaning of ʿAbduh's ideas in these two texts. Even analysing the same texts by ʿAbduh in relation to a different selection of inter-

106 On the inside of the cover of the book *History, Space and Social Conflict in Beirut. The Quarter of Zokak el-Blat*, there is a map of the (historical) places in the quarter of Zuqāq al-Blāṭ in Beirut. In accordance with Jens Hanssen's designation of Zuqāq al-Blāṭ as an "education quarter", this map reveals how close ʿAbduh's school (the Sulṭāniyya School, nr. 71 at the map) was to many other (former) schools, missionary or not. H. Gebhardt et al., *History, Space and Social Conflict in Beirut: The Quarter of Zokak el-Blat* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2005). The Syrian Protestant College, led by American missionaries, was located in Rās Bayrūt at the end of the 1880s (where the American University of Beirut is now, at Bliss Street) – still at walking distance from the quarter of Zuqāq al-Blāṭ. However, until 1870, the Syrian Protestant College had been housed in the home of the Ḥamāda family, which was located in Zuqāq al-Blāṭ. Jens Hanssen, "The Birth of an Education Quarter: Zokak El-Blat as a Cradle of Cultural Revival in the Arab World," in *History, Space and Social Conflict in Beirut. The Quarter of Zokak el-Blat* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2005), 150.

107 Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Radd ʿalā Faraḥ Anṭūn. al-Iḍṭihād fī-al-Naṣrānīya wa-l-Islām," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila li-l-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra, 2nd ed., vol. 3, 5 vols. (Madīnat al-Naṣr: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006), 257–376.

locutors would probably provide another layer of meaning, offering insight into an additional set of acts that these texts introduce into their context. As Skinner writes: "Any text of any complexity will always contain a myriad of illocutionary acts, and any individual phrase in such a text (…) may even contain more acts than it contains words."[108] The kaleidoscopic character of ʿAbduh's context suggests that his texts may have a lot more acts in store than can be covered here.

More specifically, this study focuses on ʿAbduh's ideas about Islam *as a religion*. For the two abovementioned texts and contexts, it maps the questions ʿAbduh and his interlocutors asked about 'religion.' It situates the two texts by ʿAbduh within the arguments and conversations in which he and his diverse interlocutors around the world used the concept of 'religion' (using mostly *dīn* in Arabic) and in which they fought over this very concept. In this way, it attempts to capture the coherence of their conceptualizations, while acknowledging the existence of diversity alongside convergence. Thus, for this study, 'the modern concept of religion' is a semantic field in which various conceptualizations converged and clashed in response to shared questions. The next chapter will explore this conceptual field in ʿAbduh's time further.

In sum, the main question that this study seeks to answer is: how did ʿAbduh reinterpret Islam in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and his reply to Hanotaux in relation to a global convergence in the conceptualization of 'religion' in his context? To answer this question, this study asks three interrelated questions: What were the questions ʿAbduh shared with his interlocutors with regard to the category of 'religion' and 'the religions' as its members? How did ʿAbduh conceptualize 'religion,' 'the religions' and Islam *as a religion* in response to these questions? And, how were his answers situated amongst those of his interlocutors and contemporaries?

In combining a contextualizing approach with a focus on the concept of 'religion', this study is an intellectual history with a focus on concepts, which is, according to Skinner himself, one of the options in doing intellectual history. It is therefore not a classic long-term Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte*. Indeed, it departs from this type of conceptual history in its "pointilism", to use Skinner's terminology for his own position vis-à-vis the longue-durée perspective of Koselleck and his like, referring to a synchronical analysis as well as a focus on particular intellectuals.[109]

108 Skinner, "A Reply to My Critics," 285.

109 See Skinner on conceptual history: Quentin Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," in *Global Conceptual History: A Reader*, ed. Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 139.

5 A Note on Sources

This study seeks to unlock the historical contexts of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux mainly through textual sources from this period, in addition to memoires and other sources. As Mohamed Haddad has suggested, caution may be warranted regarding both types of sources.

First, Rashīd Riḍā's biography of over 1000 pages on ʿAbduh contains a wealth of information on the details of ʿAbduh's life, based on his conversations with ʿAbduh, autobiographical passages by ʿAbduh, Riḍā's memoires and those of others, et cetera. As such, it provides many and valuable keys to the specificities of ʿAbduh's discursive context. However, as we have seen, Haddad also suggests that it was profoundly manipulative and implicitly deeply concerned with Riḍā's own ideas and projects. Haddad might or might not exaggerate Riḍā's role, but in this study Riḍā's biography is always handled with an eye to Riḍā's possible strategies or to how his own Salafi-Ḥanbali turn may color my reading of ʿAbduh's biography. One of the most fruitful strategies therein is to embed the information from Riḍā's biography in a range of other primary sources, both published and unpublished.[110] Some of the primary sources uses in order to reconstruct such a process are also memoires, by other contemporaries of ʿAbduh. These are also handled with care, specifically with an eye to the consequences of the authors' implications in constructing their own pasts.[111]

Second, the collection and editing of ʿAbduh's work may not have been devoid of ideological considerations either. Haddad claims that Riḍā and ʿImāra accentuated certain features of the texts over others by omitting or downplaying texts, adding footnotes, and changing or adding (sub)titles. Similarly, other editions or anthologies of ʿAbduh's texts constructed particular images of ʿAbduh through their choice of texts, introductions, and notes – fitted to what

110 For an overview of the official archival documents pertaining to ʿAbduh held in the National Archives of Egypt, see: Inṣāf ʿUmar, "al-Wathāʾiq al-Rasmiyya li-l-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh wa-Qīmatuhā al-Insāniyya," *Al-Rūznāma. Al-Ḥawliyya al-Miṣriyya li-l-Wathāʾiq* 7 (2009): 9–38. For an overview of the archival documents pertaining to the Azhar: Muḥammad ʿAlī Ḥallah, *Al-Azhar fī al-Arshīf al-Miṣrī. Wathāʾiq min al-Qarnayn al-Tāsiʿ ʿAshar wa-l-ʿIshrîn* (Al-Qāhira: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub wa-l-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2011).

111 See Scharbrodt on the genre of Arabic-language biography in relation to the historiography on ʿAbduh: Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 19–28. While trying to distinguish history from memory from fiction here, the existence of a fictional biography of ʿAbduh might be a further reminder that these distinctions are often blurred, and these (auto) biographical sources should be approached with care: François Bonjean, *Cheikh Abdou l'Égyptien* (Paris: Rieder, 1929).

the editors deemed to be the needs of their times.[112] When referring to and citing from ʿAbduh's texts, this study generally refers to ʿImāra's edition of ʿAbduh's complete works.[113] Yet, whenever possible, the texts were also consulted as they were first published, and each part begins with a history of the way each of the two central works came into being, was published and was edited in the time thereafter.

112 In particular, for this study: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām Dīn al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya*, ed. Ṭāhir al-Ṭannāḥī (Al-Qāhira: Al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-l-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1964).

113 I used the second and most recent edition of publisher Dār al-Shurūq's edition of ʿImāra's collection of ʿAbduh's complete works. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila li-l-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Madīnat al-Naṣr: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006). I have this edition in private possession and it is also held at the library of the University of Amsterdam. At the time of writing, this work could still be ordered from the Dār al-Shurūq-website, moreover (ISBN listed there: 977-09-1458-4, *raqm al-īdāʿ*: 21584/2005). "Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila: al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh," 2015, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.shorouk.com/books/details.aspx?b=905198oc-c36b-42aa-84bd-84088a28f29f>. This edition slightly differs in page numbering from the first edition (1993) that Dār al-Shurūq published and that is widely available in PDF on the internet. Furthermore, both Dār al-Shurūq-editions (i.e. 1993 and 2006) differ in page numbering from the first edition (1972–1974) of ʿImāra's collection of ʿAbduh's complete works (also titled *al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*), published by al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr. Besides these differences in page numbering and an added 5-page introduction to the series as a whole, the text of the Dār al-Shurūq-editions does not seem to differ from that in the 1972–1974-edition.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptualizing 'Religion'

1 Universality and Globalization

Writing on "a generalized concept of religion that informs global discourses about religion," Dietrich Jung states:

> Universality and historicity are not mutually exclusive. To be sure, the modern concept of religion is not transhistorical. But it represents the universalized idea of the religion of a specific epoch.[1]

This study analyzes 'Abduh's reinterpretation of Islam in a context in which there was a global convergence in how 'religion' was conceptualized. It should be clear from the outset that this does not mean that this study seeks to analytically define and study 'religion' as a phenomenon in and around the world. Instead, it is a study about how 'Abduh and his global contemporaries wrote about and conceptualized 'religion.' In order to grasp their conceptualization of 'religion,' it focuses on their comparisons between its members – 'the religions' – especially Islam and Christianity.[2]

This study considers 'religion' to be a key concept for understanding both the self and the other in the modern world – its centrality corroborated by its conceptualization in opposition to modernity itself. Predicated upon a modern discursive distinction between religion and politics, the concept of 'religion' was deeply implicated in a wider field of power relations in modern times. Against the background of colonialism, 'religion' was a central marker for demarcating 'us' from 'them' in transcultural relations; moreover, it was implicated in isolating this categorical 'them' from the spheres of political and social power by imagining 'them' as nearly incurably religious.[3] In this sense,

1 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 77.

2 Following Peter Harrison, I focus on the twin set of 'religion' and 'the religions' here, indicating that I study 'religion' as a collective noun, while 'the religions' implies that 'religion' was thought to have 'specific forms' (members of its species) that were considered to be objectively discernible and susceptible to counting and categorization (hence the definite article in 'the religions'). See also section "Studying Comparisons" in this study's second chapter. Peter Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

3 King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*; Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Tomoko

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'religion' was a "basic concept" (*Grundbegriff*), in Koselleck's words, perhaps even "indispensable to any formulation of the most urgent issues of a given time."[4]

Furthermore, while 'religion' is considered to be a global concept, this study does not presuppose or search for a singular definition or concept of 'religion' that existed around the globe in ʿAbduh's time. Perhaps because of its centrality, a key concept such as 'religion' is necessarily interpreted and contested in various ways; they are, in Skinner's words, "tools" and "weapons of debate", not static statements.[5] Within this global field, the questions regarding 'religion' circulated through translation and were answered in local languages, becoming globalized in the process. Writing and conversing in Arabic, ʿAbduh wrote about '*dīn,*' or, more often, '*al-dīn*' (collective noun)[6] and '*al-adyān*' (plural), while his interlocutors wrote in English, French, Persian, or Ottoman, usually reaching ʿAbduh in Arabic translation. In addition, conceiving of Islam as one of the religions, as *al-dīn al-Islāmī* (the Islamic religion), ʿAbduh reinterpreted Islam *as a religion* in response to these questions that were shared throughout the global field. In this way, ʿAbduh and his contemporaries conceptualized religion in varying and contested ways, in relation to global as well as local semantics and contexts.

1.1 *Deconstructing the Universality of Concepts of Religion Used in Academia*

In his article "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz" from 1983, and then in 1993, in his celebrated book *Genealogies of Religion*,

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Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

4 Reinhart Koselleck, "A Response to Comments on the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe," in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts*, eds. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington: German Historical Institute, 1996), 64 quoted in Richter, "More than a Two-Way Traffic," 10.

5 Skinner, "Rhetoric and Conceptual Change," 137; Koselleck, "Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe," xxi; Richter, *History of Political and Social Concepts*, 39, 46–47. Koselleck, 'Einleitung', xxi; Richter, History of Political and Social Concepts, 39 and 46–47.

6 While the English collective noun 'religion' does not usually carry a definite article, the Arabic term *al-dīn* often – though not necessarily – does. The use of the definite article here is meant to indicate that the term *al-dīn* refers to the genus of 'religion' (*lām li-taʿrīf al-jins*). It does not mean that *al-dīn* refers to an individual entity (i.e. 'the religion') (*lām li-taʿrīf al-ʿahd*). See Wright for this distinction: W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language / Translated from the German of Caspari and Edited with Numerous Additions and Corrections by W. Wright*, 3rd edition, 1st paperback edition (both volumes) (1859–1862; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 269. However, it does not seem grammatically obligatory to add the definite article to indicate that it is an *ism al-jins* (genus, collective noun), and we will also see examples of this use in this study. See: Karin C. Ryding, *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 94.

anthropologist Talal Asad presents a two-fold critique of Clifford Geertz's definition of 'religion.'[7] First, Asad presents Geertz's efforts as illustrative of anthropologists' common conceptualization of 'religion' in terms of a universal and transhistorical essence. Asad argues that Geertz's focus on religion as a system of meaning does not lead to the right questions, as it leads the anthropologist away from questions about how elements of "[that which] he or she translates as 'religion'" came about in the social conditions and power relations of its historical context.[8] Accordingly, in an interview about his *Genealogies of Religion*, Asad explains that he intended to study aspects of 'religion' in premodern and extra-European contexts "as practice, language and sensibility set in social relationships rather than systems of meaning."[9] In doing so, he builds the argument that Geertz's focus upon meanings was not suitable to the knowledge formations of these particular and unfamiliar contexts.

Instead, and this second aspect of Asad's critique pertains more to the focus of this study, Asad argues that universal definitions such as the one Geertz proposes and, more particularly, Geertz's focus upon 'meanings' are themselves "the historical product of discursive processes."[10] He claims that, while such a universal concept of religion may seem plausible at first, it is actually modelled upon the modern history of European Christianity, and especially Protestantism, and its power relations.[11] In order to do so, Asad, inspired by Foucault's emphasis on the profound historicity of knowledge and its concepts, turns briefly to the genealogy of Geertz's universalistic definition of religion as a system of meanings.

Other authors, for example Peter Harrison and Tomoko Masuzawa, have more elaborately discussed the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history of how religion came to be defined and conceptualized in Western academia.[12]

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7 Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz," *Man* 18, no. 2 (1983): 237–59; Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). See also: Craig Martin and Talal Asad, "Genealogies of Religion, Twenty Years On: An Interview with Talal Asad," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 43, no. 1 (2014): 12–17. For Geertz's reply to Asad's criticisms, see the following interview: Arun Micheelsen, "'I Don't Do Systems': An Interview with Clifford Geertz," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 14, no. 1 (2002): 2–20.

8 Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 53.

9 Martin and Asad, "Genealogies of Religion," 12. Cf. Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

10 Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 29.

11 Similarly, Brent Nongbri claims that, for many people, "religion is anything that sufficiently resembles modern Protestant Christianity." Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 18.

12 Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*; Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*. See also: Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–84; Timothy

Furthermore, authors such as David Chidester, Richard King, and Peter Gottschalk have specifically analyzed how these trends responded and were applied to non-Western contexts.[13]

Specifically, these authors have often used the historicity of the conceptualization of religion in academia to question its objectivity and neutrality. In a Foucauldian manner, this corpus of literature has specifically emphasized how religious concepts used in the humanities and social sciences have reflected historically particular relations of power. In this respect, two interrelated aspects have been highlighted, which together underlie the centrality of the concept of 'religion' in modern times.

First, this field of conceptualizations developed in interaction with discourses that are intricately tied to the formation of the modern state, against the background of violent religious conflict. The way that 'religion' came to be defined as a matter of private beliefs and individual conscience mirrored processes but also norms of functional and institutional differentiation in modern times. Seen as a private affair and an autonomous field, 'religion' is separated from politics, but also from economy, law, science, etc. On the one hand, 'religion' could be seen as 'freed' from the interference of the state, and the state 'freed' from the interference of religion and interreligious conflict. On the other hand, as the authors discussed here emphasize, 'religion' was separated from spheres of social and political power. While this 'privatization' of religion has never become an empirical reality, José Casanova calls it one of the "formative

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Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Nongbri, *Before Religion*. An important predecessor to the type of critique Asad proposes is Wilfred Cantwell Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion*. However, Smith employs his historical critique of the analytical concept of religion in order to propose a revised definition of 'religion' and capture the essence of religion better – an enterprise with which Asad, due to his fundamental rejection of universality and essentialism, cannot concur. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York: New American Library, 1964). Preceding Asad's *Genealogy of Religion,* Peter Harrison's history of the concept of religion and the religions (see the list above) is indebted to Smith, not Asad. Hölscher's short article "Religion to the Power of Three" could be considered an initial attempt at writing the history of the history of the concept of religion. Lucian Hölscher, "Religion to the Power of Three," in *Dynamics in the History of Religions Between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Marion Steinicke and Volkhard Krech (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 243–53.

13 David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Fitzgerald, *Ideology of Religious Studies*; Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*; Peter Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire: Classifying Hinduism and Islam in British India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

myths" of the secular state and "nonetheless constitutive of Western modernity."[14] The privatization of religion was constitutive of how 'religion' came to be conceptualized and constructed.

The second, though related, aspect is that the history of how religion came to be conceptualized in modern academia coincided with Europe's encounter and interaction with a new, undiscovered world that European states set out to colonize. Reflecting the widening of its geographical scope, the meaning of religion expanded and came to include a variety of 'religions.' Vice versa, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars – though in interaction with travellers, missionaries, colonial officials, etc. – discovered and constructed the religions of the new world in a familiar image of religion, essentializing these religions in the process. Reflecting the isolation of 'religion' from spheres of social and political authority in particular, these conceptualizations of practices as 'religion' facilitated the monitoring, controlling, and marginalizing of these non-European and non-Christian religions and, moreover, their peoples.

Tomoko Masuzawa explains that the modern discourse on religion and the religions was simultaneously a discourse of *secularization* and *othering*.[15] It reflects the global hegemony of Western secularity, hidden under a cloak of universality. This does not mean that these authors believe that there is one, singular concept of 'religion' in academia in the modern period. Instead, it could be argued that there is a field of universalistic conceptualizations of 'religion' in modern academia – its coherence reflecting a shared and specifically European and Christian history.

1.2 *The Globalization of the Semantic Field of 'Religion'*

Asad and others took care to problematize and historicize the universalistic definitions of religion used in academia in order to reveal how these definitions reflected and performed "the cultural hegemony of the West."[16] In addition, the previous section on intellectual globalization noted how the global hegemony of the West has been translated into the global circulation of concepts that either originated in the West or formed in the interaction between the West and the rest, and in which Europeans took on a exemplary and controlling role.[17] This global circulation resulted in a convergence of concepts

14 José Casanova, "Private and Public Religions," *Social Research* 59, no. 1 (1992): 17; José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); José Casanova, "Public Religions Revisited," in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 101–19.

15 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 20.

16 Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 24.

17 Cf. Asad, 12.

around the world, also building upon convergent conceptual trends that developed autonomous of the West.

One of the converging concepts was 'religion.' The semantic field of conceptualizations of 'religion' was globalized, while silently reflecting its genealogical roots in Protestantism, its relation to discourses of the modern state, and its interaction with the new world. While the spread of the modern concept of religion is a global phenomenon, this section limits itself to studies on its spread and use in the Arabo-Islamic part of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that specifically relate to 'Abduh and result in Islam's reinterpretation as a religion.[18]

First, authors such as Dietrich Jung and Armando Salvatore attribute a particularly foundational role to academic conceptualizations in this process of conceptual globalization, and specifically to those associated with Orientalists. The conceptualizations of academics held great attraction around the world, carrying the authority of both science and the West; as such, they bridged the conceptual and geographic gaps between the concepts of 'religion' in modern Western academia and their counterparts beyond the academy and its geographic boundaries. Thus, Dietrich Jung argues that European scholarship on 'religion' such as that of Max Weber, Ernest Renan, Emile Durkheim, but also literature falling within liberal Protestant theology and biblical criticism, have been crucial in shaping the modern image of religion. Even though these scholars exhibited great variation, they together provided "a good part of the discursive formation on which later generations have comprehended the world."[19] Jung explains how scholars of Islam then applied the logic of the formative discourse on religion, unified by shared themes, to the Islamic religion. In doing so, Jung argues, European scholars of Islam such as Ignaz Goldziher and Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje laid the conceptual foundations for, what Jung calls, "the modern essentialist image of Islam."[20] In addition, Islamic reformists and Islamists have also understood Islam in relation to this

18 For similar studies that do not focus on the Islamic world in particular, see: Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Timothy Fitzgerald, ed., *Religion and the Secular: Historical and Colonial Formations* (London: Equinox, 2007); Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, eds., *Secularism and Religion-Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Lucian Hölscher and Marion Eggert, eds., *Religion and Secularity: Transformations and Transfers of Religious Discourses in Europe and Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

19 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 100. Specifically, Jung describes the ideas of Ernest Renan, Emile Durkheim, William Robertson Smith, a circle of scholars involved in Protestant theology and Biblical criticism (specifically, Heinrich Ewald, Julius Wellhausen, Richard Rothe, and Albrecht Ritschl), and Max Weber. Jung, chap. State, Science, Religion, and Islam: Modern Europe between Positivism and Christian Apology.

20 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, chap. "Islam as a Problem": The Formation of Islamic Studies.

global discourse on religion, Jung argues, and have adhered to a similarly structured image of Islam.[21] Thus, Orientalists' and Islamists' image of Islam, as a 'religion,' shared a conceptual logic in a global public sphere, resulting in the convergence of the two images. Similarly, in his 1997 *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, Armando Salvatore maps the winding genealogy of the modern image of Islam. He tracks its route from Orientalists to the Islamic world, problematizing the distinction between observer and object of observation in the process.[22]

However, despite the centrality of academic conceptualizations, this does not mean that there is only one centre in the global field of conceptualizations of 'religion.' For example, Schulze stresses that there may also be the possibility of a convergence of autonomous developments within conceptualizations of religion across the globe.[23] This relativizes the centrality of the academy in processes of conceptual globalization. In this respect, it is also important to stress that academic concepts are not isolated from society, and this interaction is prone to work both ways. Society adopts and adapts concepts developed in academia, while scholars' concepts echo the language of other people. For example, Jung points out the connections between Ignaz Goldziher's foundational contributions to the formation of Islamic Studies and Goldziher's personal interest in a Jewish reform agenda.[24] Furthermore, in his study of the observations of travellers, missionaries, and colonial officials on the colonial frontier on the topic of 'religion,' David Chidester emphasizes the significant contributions that peripheral perspectives made to the knowledge production of Religious Studies at the centre.[25] In doing so, he geographically and demographically de-centralizes the academy.

These reflections on the structure of the global conceptual field also suggest that ʿAbduh as well as other intellectuals were exposed to global conceptual trends in ways that extended beyond academic conceptualizations. As the previous section emphasized, ʿAbduh was connected to a great variety of interlocutors: Orientalists, colonial officials, European clerics, Ottoman journalists, Azhari scholars, etc. In particular, Johann Büssow's article on ʿAbduh's re-imagination of Islam in a globalizing context can be seen as a promising attempt to

21 Jung, chap. Orientalist Constructions, Islamic Reform and Islamist Revolution.

22 Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse*, xvii.

23 Schulze, "Protestantisierung der Religionen," 139.

24 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 170–182; Dietrich Jung, "Islamic Studies and Religious Reform. Ignaz Goldziher: A Crossroads of Judaism, Christianity and Islam," *Der Islam* 90, no. 1 (2013): 106–26.

25 Chidester, *Savage Systems*, xiv, 6–11.

study one of 'Abduh's texts within this varied global field, following his actual connections around the globe with a plurality of interlocutors.[26]

In addition to pointing out the foundational role of Orientalists in a process of converging conceptualizations of Islam as a religion, these and other authors interpret this convergence in relation to discourses and processes of the autonomization and privatization of religion. Jung argues that functional differentiation was the underlying logic of the modern discourse on religion. He explores the ambivalent relation between the consequent conceptualization (and construction) of 'religion' as autonomous and the modern essentialist image of Islam by both Orientalists and Islamists.[27] Salvatore studies the conceptualizations leading up to the conceptualization of Islam as "basically a political religion" against the background of the reified and secularized Western concept of religion.[28] With a slightly different but related emphasis, Schulze focuses on the 'Protestantization' (*Protestantisierung*) of modern Jewish and Islamic concepts of religion, characterized by an emphasis upon interiorized faith, ethics instead of law, and the separation of faith from history and historical critique.[29]

In most of these studies on the globalization of the concept of religion with regard to the Arabo-Islamic world, Muḥammad 'Abduh's reinterpretation of Islam as a religion figures as one interesting example in which the global convergence of conceptualizations of 'religion' becomes manifest, amongst many other conceptualizations of preceding, contemporaneous, and succeeding Islamic intellectuals. In addition, three papers focus specifically on the production and nature of 'Abduh's reinterpretation of Islam in relation to the globalizing concept of religion in modern times.[30] First, Dietrich Jung studies 'Abduh within the global public sphere, focusing particularly on how 'Abduh's

26 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam."

27 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*; Dietrich Jung, "Islamic Reform," 153–69.

28 Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse*, xx (part of the introduction). Similar questions underlie the studies of Abdulkader Tayob, Talal Asad, and Safdar Ahmed on modern Islam. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, chap. Reconfigurations of Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt; Abdulkader Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse* (London: Hurst, 2009); Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*, chap. 1. Islamic Modernism and the Reification of Religion.

29 Schulze, "Protestantisierung der Religionen," 148–149.

30 In addition, an essay by Jacques Waardenburg focuses on 'Abduh's conceptualization of religion in comparison with two earlier re-conceptualizations of religion as a consequence of intercultural contact, see: Jacques Waardenburg, "Cultural Contact and Concepts of Religion: Three Examples from Islamic History," in *Miscellanea Arabica et Islamica*, ed. F. De Jong (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 293–325.

ideas about Islam relate to the global logic of functional differentiation.[31] Second, Johann Büssow analyzes ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* as part of a global conversation, especially in view of a process of global Protestantization in the conceptualization of religion.[32] Lastly, in a very short contribution to the volume in which Büssow's paper was also published, Joachim Langner discusses ʿAbduh's ideas about Islam's essentials in relation to a greater standardization of religions worldwide, suggested by historian Christopher Bayly in his chapter on "Empires of Religion."[33]

The abovementioned studies and the last three papers in particular are promising. They give insight into ʿAbduh's and others' reinterpretations of Islam as a religion. This study sees itself as a continuation in the direction they have embarked upon. Compared with these studies, this study's approach also introduces a significant change of direction. In contrast with the overview studies of Salvatore, Tayob, Ahmed, Jung, and others, this study zooms in and maps the specificities of ʿAbduh's ideas in their own historical milieu; thus, it can provide a detailed and specific window upon processes of global convergence instead of aspiring to offer a panoramic view. Certainly, Jung and Büssow both point out interesting historical connections and convergences. However, this study goes beyond identifying 'influences' or 'resonances' and situates ʿAbduh's ideas within those of his interlocutors. It provides insight into the meaning of ʿAbduh's texts in relation to his context: how are these texts particular? It also provides insight into their meaning *in interaction*: how do they contest and negotiate the ideas of his interlocutors? How are they involved in a discussion, giving diverging answers to shared questions?

2 Studying Comparisons

The modern concept of 'religion' is a genus, or a category. Sociologist Volkhard Krech explains that, as a collective singular (*Kollektivsingular*), 'religion' names a group composed of members, i.e. 'the religions.'[34] Moreover, when 'religion,'

31 Jung, "Islamic Reform."

32 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam."

33 Joachim Langner, "Religion in Motion and the Essence of Islam: Manifestations of the Global in Muhammad ʿAbduh's Response to Farah Antūn," in *A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880–1940*, ed. Liat Kozma, Cyrus Schayegh, and Avner Wishnitzer (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 356–63; Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, chap. 9.

34 Volkhard Krech, "Religious Contacts in Past and Present Times: Aspects of a Research Programme," *Religion* 42, no. 2 (2012): 197. Cf. Reinhart Koselleck, "Historia Magistra Vitae. The Dissolution of the Topos Into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process," in

is considered in a generic sense, comparison is central to its conceptualization. Conceptually, this enabled comparisons between 'the religions' and laid the conceptual foundation for the science of religion, which studies 'the religions' as particular and objectively discernible species of the genus 'religion,' as Tomoko Masuzawa explains.[35] Comparative religion was an absolutely central enterprise to the study of religions in and around the world, as, for example, Peter Harrison, David Chidester, and Peter Gottschalk confirm.[36]

Yet, in a footnote Masuzawa adds:

> This [i.e. her argument that the notions of 'religion' as a genus and 'the religions' as its species were axiomatic for the modern science of religion and its comparisons], however, is probably more a matter of logical order, rather than a chronological sequence. In fact, there may be something fallacious in thinking that *before* comparison there must be *already* a recognition of multiple, discrete religions. In his illuminating study *Savage Systems* (1996), David Chidester has argued with respect to pioneering European observers in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century southern Africa that the act of comparison was constitutive of the very first recognition – identification, invention – of the native religions.[37]

As Chidester's study on comparative religion in South Africa demonstrates, the comparative enterprise on the colonial frontier constructed religions as 'religions,' as members of the same genus 'religion.'[38] According to him, these comparisons produced the concepts of 'religion' and 'the religions' that allowed for these comparisons in the first place. It was a circle, between genus/species and comparisons, between the frontier and the centre.

Writing on the formative discourse on religion, Jung explains that "[i]n comparing different religions, they [scholars such as Ernest Renan, Emile Durkheim, William Robertson Smith, Max Weber] constructed general aspects of religion (…)."[39] However, at the same time, a pre-conceived idea of what counted as a 'religion' – implicitly modelled upon one religion, the familiar religion they conceived as religion – informed their comparisons. As became clear in

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Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time, trans. Keith Tribe, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 34–35.

35 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 64–65.

36 Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 9–10; Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 17–19, 237–241; Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire*.

37 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 65 (n. 48).

38 Chidester, *Savage Systems*.

39 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 154.

the genealogy of the modern concept of religion discussed above, Christianity – and especially Protestant Christianity – became the implicit model for the genus 'religion' and thus for the other religions that comprised this category. Likewise, Harrison argues, the internal diversity within Christianity became transposed to the differentiation between these religions. The comparative practice of paganopapism – comparing newly discovered religions to Catholicism – was a striking example of this transposition.[40]

This study takes as its starting point the comparisons between religions, and especially between Islam and Christianity, in ʿAbduh's selected texts and their discursive contexts.[41] It does so to gain insight into the conceptualizations of 'religion' and the 'religions' of ʿAbduh and his interlocutors and, specifically, to gain insight into ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam as a religion.

In studying their comparisons between Islam and Christianity and the concepts they used therein (often in conflicting ways), the fourth and seventh chapters of this book identify and analyze the commonalities that were foundational to the comparisons between 'religions' by ʿAbduh and his contemporaries. These commonalities are formulated in the form of questions; these are questions shared by ʿAbduh and his interlocutors, in response to which they formulated their ideas about 'religion' and about Islam (and Christianity) as a religion.

Simultaneously, it seeks to understand the particularity of ʿAbduh's answer to these questions in his reinterpretation of Islam *as a religion*, as a member of the genus of 'religion,' as the Islamic religion (*al-dīn al-Islāmī*)? What type of move did ʿAbduh's answer represent within the broader debate? What were the other answers his answer contested? How should the particularity of his answer be interpreted in relation to the multiple and various power relations of that specific time and place?[42]

3 Comparing Comparisons

Consequently, this study analyzes the concepts of 'religion' and 'the religions' presupposed and produced by these comparisons revolving around shared questions. The questions ʿAbduh and his interlocutors shared in comparing

40 Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 9–10.

41 There is some literature on how ʿAbduh and/or the circle around him – especially Riḍā – viewed Christians and Christianity, see especially: Jane D. McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Modern and Classical Exegesis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity*.

42 Cf. Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 265–266.

'religions' also provide insight into what they thought was shared between 'religions' – that is, what they thought could be asked of all 'religions' as religions. Furthermore, the analysis of their diverging answers to these shared questions regarding specific religions yields knowledge of the way they distinguished and differentiated between specific religions in response to these questions in differing ways.

In his book on the classification of Hinduism and Islam in colonial India, Peter Gottschalk sets forth "the dynamics of comparison and classification."[43] He explains that classification is a cognitive act of distinguishing the one from the other; the category (here 'religion') is distinguished from its outside (non-religion) and the unit of comparison (here 'a religion') from the comparison's other units (other 'religions'). These distinctions are often, though not always, ranked hierarchically.[44]

The boundaries between 'religion' and its others may shift, depending on context and person, revealing a certain "elasticity" in the meaning of concepts such as 'religion' and 'religions.'[45] Indeed, the meaning of 'religion' could shift back and forth within the work of one author or even within a singular text. In addition, the distinctions made could be seen as representing a move or negotiating or challenging distinctions made by others. The demarcation of boundaries between 'religion' and its others was a matter of contestation and of discussion.

This study analyzes the boundaries that 'Abduh drew between 'religion' and its others in conversation, competition, and negotiation with those of his interlocutors. In thus comparing comparisons, this study heeds David Chidester's revision of the comparative study of religion:

> However, as I have tried to suggest throughout this book, comparative religion does not necessarily compare religions. Beyond colonial containments, it can compare the situational, relational, and strategic practices of comparison that have produced *religion* and *religions* as objects of knowledge and instruments of power. In this work of comparing comparisons, comparative religion confronts the play of similarity and difference as a historical problem that can be situated within specific intercultural

43 Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire*, 88–95.

44 Gottschalk, 92. Similarly, in the various contributions to the 2008 volume on *Religion and its Other*, religion's other refers to the non-religious, specifically "the secular in its manifold forms," as well as to other religions. Heike Bock, Jörg Feuchter, and Michi Knecht, eds., *Religion and Its Other: Secular and Sacral Concepts and Practices in Interaction* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2008), 10.

45 Cf. Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire*, 94.

> relations. Neither similarities nor differences are simply given in the world. They are produced through the practices of comparison and generalization that we have surveyed in this history of comparative religion in southern Africa.[46]

After having analyzed the questions ʿAbduh shared with his interlocutors in comparing Islam and Christianity, this study proposes to explore their conceptualizations of 'religion' and its boundaries in a similar manner. It argues that ʿAbduh and his interlocutors distinguished 'religion' from its others in reply to two sets of questions; moreover, they not only shared these questions with each other, but also with their contemporaries in a broader field of conceptualizations of 'religion' and, specifically, with the genealogy of academic conceptualizations of 'religion.'

3.1 *'Religion' and 'the Religions'*

The conceptual interplay between the category of 'religion' and its members can be said to oscillate between generalization and differentiation – between religions being similar as religions and being different from each other as religions – enabling a meaningful comparison.[47] The various positions revolve around the question: How do religions relate as religions? The genealogy of 'religion' in English, Latin (*religio*), and Arabic (*al-dīn*) and the processes of generalization and differentiation behind it indicate that the various answers to this question differed in their references to religious truth.

Stefan Reichmuth and Reinhold Glei wrote an article that eloquently interweaves the genealogies of *religio* and *dīn* together by focusing upon Latin translations of the word *dīn* in the Quran. They claim that the notion of 'religion' as a "generalized uncountable notion," as a basic phenomenon rooted in human mentality and emotion (as 'religiosity'), was found in Latin (*religio*) and Arabic (*dīn*) from antiquity onwards. However, this generalized meaning does not mean that *religio* or *dīn* was used as a collective noun that referred to a group of multiple 'religions' (*religiones*; *adyān*); a conclusion that Reichmuth reiterates in an article on the conceptual history of *dīn* alone.[48]

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46 Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 265–266.

47 Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire*, 88. Cf. Christopher Hill's analysis of universalized concepts, used in a relativizing and universalizing manner, resulting in global similarity or difference. Hill, "Conceptual Universalization," 150–152.

48 Reinhold Glei and Stefan Reichmuth, "Religion between Last Judgement, Law and Faith: Koranic Dīn and Its Rendering in Latin Translations of the Koran," *Religion* 42, no. 2 (2012): 247–260; Stefan Reichmuth, "The Arabic Concept of *Dīn* and Islamic Religious Sciences in

Turning to *dīn* in particular, Glei and Reichmuth claim that the Quranic use of the Arabic word *dīn* as an uncountable and abstract noun seems to refer to true or God-inspired religiosity only.[49] It is in this sense that Christians and Jews were thought to have a *dīn* and, as a group, they were referred to as a *milla* or *umma* – there was no mention of several *adyān* (the plural of *dīn*).[50] Yvonne Haddad stresses that the Quranic conception of *dīn* "does not imply a recognition of religious pluralism or plurality of comparable religions, but rather refers to a distinction of quality."[51] So, although the Quran may testify to the use of the word *dīn* as a generalized and uncountable noun, it does not seem probable that it was also considered to be a collective noun (*al-dīn*).[52]

This raises questions regarding Wilfred Cantwell Smith's assertion that Islam came into existence conceiving of itself "as a religion," as an entity among others, making it a "special case" among the religions.[53] Fred Donner writes that the early Believers (*mu'minūn*) of the Quran did not see themselves as constituting a separate *milla*, a separate religious confession, and that this group was open to believers of other confessional communities that were denoted as a *milla* (Christians, Jews).[54] Only later did those Believers who had formerly been polytheists become referred to as Muslims, in contradistinction from Believers who were and continued to be Christians or Jews.[55]

Turning to Latin and *religio*, Glei and Reichmuth observe that medieval Christian writers only used *religio* for, in their eyes, true religiosity following the true religion (i.e. Christianity). In doing so, Glei and Reichmuth write, "*religio* becomes indeed uncountable because there is only one religion."[56] Compared to the conceptualization of *dīn* in the Quran as described by Haddad, the

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the 18th Century: The Case of Murtaḍā Al-Zabīdī (d. 1791)," *Oriens* 44, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2016): 94–115, <https://doi.org/10.1163/18778372-04401005>.

49 Glei and Reichmuth, "Religion," 268.

50 Glei and Reichmuth, 254. Cf. Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 61.

51 Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Conception of the Term Dīn in the Qur'ān," *The Muslim World* 64, no. 2 (1974): 121.

52 The use of the definite article here is meant to indicate that the term *al-dīn* refers to the genus of 'religion' (*lām li-ta'rīf al-jins*), in contradistinction with the Quranic use of *dīn* as an uncountable, abstract and generalized notion. See note 6 of chapter 2.

53 Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The Special Case of Islam," in *Defining Islam: A Reader*, ed. Andrew Rippin (1962; repr., London: Equinox, 2007), 186. Cf. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The Historical Development in Islām of the Concept of Islām as an Historical Development," in *On Understanding Islam: Selected Studies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981), 41–77; Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*, chap. 5.

54 Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 69.

55 Donner, 71–72.

56 Glei and Reichmuth, "Religion," 250.

Latin conceptualization of *religio* as an uncountable noun also contains no "distinction of quality" within it. In sharp contrast to the way *religio* was used, *secta*, *lex,* or the Greek *haeresis* were words reserved for what we would now call other 'religions,' thus using different vocabularies to distinguish Christianity from its other.[57] This only changed in the seventeenth century, when *religio* came to be used for other 'religions' too.[58] Similarly, in the English language, Peter Harrison dates the erosion of "the privileged status of Christianity" as the only religion and, with it, the emergence of the concept of 'religion' as a genus, alongside its plural 'the religions' to the end of the sixteenth century.[59]

Peter Harrison, who was indebted to Wilfred Cantwell Smith, characterized the process in which 'religion' expanded into a category, underlying the scientific study of religion, as a process of objectification.[60] For the field of Religious Studies, Jonathan Z. Smith argues that 'religion' developed from a theological category into an anthropological category and was no longer premised upon a distinction between truth and falsity.[61] In other words, 'the religions' were not considered to be distinguished hierarchically in terms of truth and falsity; they were no longer distinguished and compared theologically, but 'scientifically.' A specific 'religion,' then, was studied from an outsider's perspective, even one's own religion.

Such theologically neutral conceptualizations of 'religion' and 'the religions' correlated with how the secular state was seen to behave towards religion regardless of whether or not this corresponded with empirical reality. The state was thought to tolerate a plurality of comparable religions in the private sphere, neutralizing religious conflict in the process.[62]

However, several authors have raised serious doubts regarding the claimed neutrality of the anthropological or non-theological category of religion used in religious studies and other scholarly fields. Authors such as Tomoko Masuzawa, Timothy Fitzgerald, and Daniel Dubuisson do so by pointing towards the concept's genealogy and suggest a historical continuity between theological and anthropological – or secular – concepts of religion and the religions.[63] As Dubuisson writes, in English translation:

57 Cf. Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 66.
58 Glei and Reichmuth, "Religion," 265, 267–268.
59 Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 9, 39.
60 Harrison, 1.
61 Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," 269.
62 Hölscher and Eggert, *Religion and Secularity*, 4; Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 97–104.
63 Fitzgerald, *Ideology of Religious Studies*; Dubuisson, *Western Construction of Religion*; Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*.

> We should not forget that it is this 'true' religion that made religions out of these other cults and beliefs – but in the same breath denied them this same status, that is, of being capable of possessing the truth.[64]

These authors claim that the secular, ecumenical concept of religion hides a religiously inspired hierarchical grammar. This concept of 'religion' still favors Christianity over the other religions it created in Christianity's image.

Furthermore, Richard King explains, the hidden legacy of the truth/falsity-binary also translates into scholars constructing other religions in a heavily essentialist manner. Combined with an emphasis upon Christianity-like textualism, it translates into an attempt to define the essential beliefs – the 'orthodox' – of every 'religion,' reflecting a Protestant emphasis on the singularity of truth *and* belief over practice.[65] Masuzawa's previously quoted claim that secularization and othering were intricately interconnected within the modern discourse on religion and the religions perhaps best captures this dynamic between secularization, hierarchy, and essentialization – a dynamic that is itself intricately connected to the colonial context.[66] Lastly, religious representatives in the nineteenth century may have translated the focus upon the orthodox in such conceptualizations of religion into efforts to standardize and unify their religion amongst its believers as well as to convert others around the world to this one true religion. Historian Bayly describes this as the formation of "empires of religion" in both a horizontal and vertical manner.[67]

The complex history of the concept of 'religion' and 'the religions' shows how theological and anthropological categories of 'religion' – and their hierarchies – have been intricately related genealogically and continue to inform each other, both within academia and the field of religion (and thus reflecting the links between these fields). There has not been a steady history of the conceptual secularization of 'religion' in the realms of the state and science, which has been effectively resisted by religious representatives or theologians. Different types of conceptualizations and related hierarchies have coexisted, merged and have not always be distinguishable, creating ambiguity along the way. 'Abduh and his interlocutors formulated their ideas about religion and the religions within this plural conceptual field.

This observation underlies this study's analysis of how 'Abduh and his interlocutors conceptualized the relations between the religions and "the play of

64 Dubuisson, *Western Construction of Religion*, 25.

65 King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 38–39. Cf. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," 270–271; Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*, 45, 74.

66 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 20; cf. Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters*.

67 Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, chap. 9.

similarity and difference" produced by their conceptualization of 'religion' and 'the religions.'[68] The particularity of 'Abduh's answer to a shared question – i.e. how do religions relate as religions? – is studied in terms of a further set of questions underlying this genealogy: do the similarities and differences between religions and the hierarchies these produce reflect a dichotomy between religious truth and falsity? In relating 'Abduh's answers to the multi-levelled power relations in which they were formulated, this study attempts to gain insight into the complexities of 'Abduh's conceptualization of religion and the religions in a colonized world in which both theological and anthropological differentiation between religions often reflected very real hierarchies.

3.2 *Reinterpreting Islam as a Religion*

Secondly, 'Abduh's conceptualization of Islam as a religion is analyzed in response to two sets of shared questions revolving around the relationship between 'religion' and what I call here its outside or 'non-religion' – although 'non-religion' is a somewhat unfortunate designation, as it is exactly that boundary that is contested. These were clusters of questions to which powerful responses have been formulated in the history of the concept of religion, but to which 'Abduh and many of his contemporaries gave answers that often differed from those answers that became dominant.

The first set of questions concerns the relation between religion, the physical or natural world, and reason (*'aql* in Arabic).[69] According to Harrison, and reiterated by others, the expansion of 'religion' to include other 'religions' was intricately connected to the naturalization of 'religion.' Increasingly, religion came to be understood as a natural phenomenon, part of the physical world, subjected to natural laws.[70] Conversely, Harrison explains, nature – including human nature – came to be increasingly de-sacralized, profaned or secularized. He writes:

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68 Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 265–266.

69 Referring to what I call here the 'physical or the natural world,' 'Abduh uses words in Arabic that are very general such as *al-'ālam* (world; cosmos) or *al-kawn* (existence) as well as words that often carry a strong implication of being created such as *al-kā'ināt al-mumkina* and *mawjūdāt*. As we will see in chapters 5 and 8, his choice of words fits well with his views on the close relation between religious and natural knowledge. Additionally, the Arabic term *'aql* carries the meaning of 'reason,' but (not unlike 'reason' in English) may also refer to a field of adjacent meanings such as 'rationality,' 'intellect,' and 'mind,' and also 'comprehension,' 'understanding,' and 'insight.' Throughout this study, I will alternate between these meanings in translating *'aql* to fit its use in a particular instance and to make sure the term's broader semantic field is kept in mind.

70 In contrast with the Quranic concept of *dīn*, for example, which, according to Haddad, remained in the domain of God-action only. Haddad, "The Term Dīn in the Qur'ān," 122.

> As the physical world ceased to be a theatre in which the drama of creation was constantly re-directed by divine interventions, human expressions of religious faith came increasingly to be seen as outcomes of natural processes rather than the work of God or Satan and his legions.[71]

Like nature, religious practices were naturalized, rationalized, and as such, "demystified," Harrison argues, reminiscent of the terminology of Weber's disenchantment thesis.[72] Conversely, this also meant that nature could no longer function as a source of religious knowledge. Religious knowledge became separated from scientific knowledge: the former concerned with the supernatural, the latter with the natural; the former was irrational, while the latter was rational.[73]

In his 2014 book *The Problem of Disenchantment*, Egil Asprem problematizes Max Weber's interpretation of disenchantment by presenting a range of early-twentieth-century intellectuals and, importantly, scientists who did not separate science and religion as neatly as Weber's thesis suggested. As we have seen in the previous section, Asprem reconceptualizes Weber's disenchantment thesis, seeing it not as a *process* but as an intellectual *problem* faced by historical actors, revolving around a set of questions:

> Are there incalculable powers in nature, or are there not? How far do our capabilities for acquiring knowledge extend? Can there be any basis for morality, value, and meaning in nature? Can religious worldviews be extrapolated from scientific facts? If not, why? If yes, how?[74]

In Asprem's reconceptualization, the problem of disenchantment refers to a cluster of questions around the relation between religion, reason, and nature. The historical actors in his study all faced this problem but answered its questions differently than Weber's thesis of disenchantment presupposed.

This study contends that ʿAbduh's conceptualization of Islam as a religion can be fruitfully analyzed as answers to these questions, which were fundamental to the European history of science and of the science of religion and were globalized from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards. It analyzes how ʿAbduh formulated his reinterpretation of Islam as a religion in response to questions such as: what is the relation between God, on the one

71 Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 5, see also 60.

72 Harrison, 2, 5.

73 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 35; Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 78, 147–148; Asprem, *Problem of Disenchantment*, chap. 2.

74 Asprem, *Problem of Disenchantment*, 47.

hand, and nature, man, and their history, on the other hand? Can man yield religious knowledge through using his ability to reason? Is religious knowledge compatible with natural, scientific knowledge? Is religious knowledge rational? These were questions he shared directly with his interlocutors and indirectly with his contemporaries around the world, including both the protagonists of Harrison's history and those of Asprem's study. This study does not measure 'Abduh's conceptualization against others'. Instead, analysing 'Abduh's ideas in relation to those of others gives insight into the particularity of his ideas, as a local configuration of globally shared themes. In addition, his conceptualization is an example of the great variety of answers in response to globally shared questions.

The second, but related, set of questions revolves around the relevance and role of religion in collective matters: Can and should religion have a 'public'[75] role, and, if yes, what role should this be? As we have discussed before in the section on the academic concept of religion and the critiques raised against it, 'religion' was increasingly conceptualized as a private affair, separated from other institutional and functional domains such as politics and law and was excluded from the spheres of social and political power.

The 'privatization' of religion was certainly a forceful idea around the globe, reinforced by actual processes of institutional differentiation – as is argued in the works of Jung, Salvatore, and King, for example.[76] Yet, José Casanova argues that this 'privatization' of religion has not been empirical reality.[77] Moreover, while it was a forceful idea, the isolation of 'religion' to the private domain has always been challenged and negotiated. This study sees it as only one answer to questions about the benefit and role of religion in collective matters, which has been negotiated and contested by the answers of the other participants of this global conversation. Similarly, Jung writes that in the modern period,

> The holistic nature of religion remains in permanent tension with the principle of functional differentiation, leading to continuous social negotiations in maintaining boundaries to other social fields and in particular to secular forms of knowledge and morality.[78]

75 Regarding my use of 'public' in this study, cf. Jeff Weintraub on the individual/collective distinction as one of the basic orientations of the public/private distinction. Jeff Alan Weintraub, "The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction," in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, eds. Krishan Kumar and Jeff Weintraub (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 5.

76 See: Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse*, 25, 72; King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 11; Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 97–104; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 29.

77 Casanova, *Public Religions*; Casanova, "Public Religions Revisited."

78 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 81.

This study analyzes 'Abduh's reinterpretation of Islam as an answer to these questions about the relevance and role of religion in collective matters. It analyzes how he argued for the 'public' role of Islam as a religion – by which I mean its role in collective matters, rendering it an affair that transcends the private and the individual – in opposition to those amongst his interlocutors who argued for an exclusively private role of (Islam as a) religion. In the process, his answers challenged the answers of others, redrawing the boundaries between 'religion' and fields such as 'politics' or 'law.'

Lastly, authors such as Tilman Nagel and Abdulkader Tayob describe how 'Abduh reconceptualised Islam in terms of its civilizational value, emphasizing its political and social functions in this world.[79] This study, then, is interested not only in *that* 'Abduh considered Islam to be relevant politically and socially, but also *how* he interpreted Islam's political and social roles, and how this contested his interlocutors and contemporaries against the background of a global convergence in the conceptualization of 'religion.'

4 Outline of This Study

The remainder of this study is divided into two parts. Part II focuses on 'Abduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* within the context in which it was conceived, while part III studies 'Abduh's reply to Gabriel Hanotaux in the context of the discussions it engaged with.

Parts II and III are structured in a uniform way. The first chapters of each part (Chapters 3 and 6) map the pluralism of the global context in which the two selected texts were conceived or written. Each tracks the diversity of 'Abduh's interlocutors and maps the various connections he had with people, texts, and ideas around the globe from a specific location. They specify how the specific contexts of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and the reply to Hanotaux were simultaneously global and local.

The second and third chapters of each part then study the two selected texts of 'Abduh in the context described in the first chapter. Each second chapter (Chapters 4 and 7) analyzes the comparisons between religions, and

79 Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology*, 274; Yvonne Haddad, "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform," in *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*, ed. Ali Rahnema, 2nd ed. (1994; repr., London: Zed Books, 2005), 38; Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 59–64. Somewhat paradoxically, in the fashion of literary scholar Shaden Tageldin, 'Abduh's type of reconceptualization of Islam could also be called a secularization of Islam, in which the religious almost unnoticeably is drawn into and transmits the natural, the political, and the societal. Tageldin, "Secularizing Islam."

specifically, between Islam and Christianity. Through these comparisons, these chapters search for the questions ʿAbduh shared with his interlocutors, to which they gave different answers.

Next, each third chapter (Chapters 5 and 8) studies the concepts of 'religion,' 'the religions,' and Islam as a religion that is presupposed and produced by the comparisons of ʿAbduh in interaction with his interlocutors. They map ʿAbduh's answer to global questions onto the relations between the religions and between Islam as a religion and its outside. The results of these chapters are seperately discussed in the conclusion, aimed at a reader more generally interested in the logics of a globalizing concept of religion.

In studying two of ʿAbduh's works in this tripartite way, this study hopes to offer more insight into the production and nature of ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam within a globalized and at the same time locally diversified world.

PART 2

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's Risālat al-Tawḥīd *in context*

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CHAPTER 3

Risālat al-Tawḥīd in Its Context of Conception: Beirut in the 1880s

In its preface, ʿAbduh recounts how *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (*The Theology of Unity*) came into existence. He writes that he was living in exile in Beirut in the late 1880s when he was asked to teach theology, among other subjects, at al-Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya (The Sultanic School), a local preparatory (*iʿdādiyya*) school. More than ten years later, well after his return to Egypt, he remoulded these lectures on God's unity (*tawḥīd*) into what came to be his most famous theological book.[1] Thus, although published in Cairo in the late 1890s, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*'s contents were developed a decade earlier, in the intellectual and educational environment of Beirut.

This chapter explores how *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*'s initial discursive context was part of a global discursive field. It focuses on how the text links up with globally circulating ideas, concepts, and discourses that come up against a background of international political developments on a global scale. Yet, the focus on *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*'s direct context simultaneously localizes the text, situating it in the schools, neighborhoods, and societies of Beirut in the late 1880s. Studying the text in its context, global and local, means situating it in the times and places of the many discussions in which it actually participated and grasping the particularity of its contributions.

This contextualizing approach aims to revise readings of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* that measure ʿAbduh's ideas against any supposed "original" and are therefore incapable of capturing what ʿAbduh *does* in this text. For example, in his history of Islamic theology, Tilman Nagel measures *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* against the theological tradition in the Islamic world and observes its complete departure from tradition. He writes, in the English translation of his work: "'Abduh himself probably considered this work to be a renewal of the *kalām*, which he often did advocate vigorously, after all. However, this work is anything but that."[2]

1 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila,* 2006, 3:379–380. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was not the only theological work ʿAbduh wrote. For more on his *Taʿlīqāt ʿalā Sharḥ al-Dāwānī li-l-ʿAqāʾid al-ʿAḍudiyya* (Glosses on the commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dāwānī (d. 1502) on the creed of ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (ca. 1300–1355)), see section "A battle over Islamic orthodoxy" in the first chapter of this study (p29). This latter work has received much less scholarly attention and is at times attributed to Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī instead of to ʿAbduh.

2 Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology*, 271.

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According to Nagel, ʿAbduh was not interested in solving theological issues in this work, in "recognizing God and His plans for this world" but only in Islam as an ideology.[3] In his assessment, Nagel measures ʿAbduh's ideas against his own perception of the essence of Islamic theology as non-ideological. As a result, he points out failure without truly examining what ʿAbduh accomplished in this work. Marwa Elshakry and M.S. Özervarli's attempts to understand ʿAbduh's endeavor as a new form of theology are more promising in this respect, in spite of their somewhat preliminary nature, and I return to these in the fifth chapter.[4]

Furthermore, the context in which ʿAbduh formulated his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* signals that it should be seen as more than a theoretical work of theology that is in dialogue with other theologians of his time and before.[5] The text originated as a bundle of lectures for one of the new-style schools in Ottoman Beirut. This school was established by Beirut's Muslim elite but was open to youth of a non-Muslim background. In this sense, Johann Büssow writes that *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* had a double audience, as a textbook for beginners and as a more profound, yet mainly implicit, engagement with the theological tradition.[6] What ʿAbduh wanted to teach to his students with this work of theology should be understood in the context of the questions he and his contemporaries sought to answer and the outcomes that his particular answers sought to procure. A study of these type of questions begins with placing *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in its contemporary local context, which is itself intricately connected to a context of a global scale.

1 *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* As it Came to Be Published

In his introduction to *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh explains that he used notes that his brother made to convert his lectures into the text that was eventually published. Presumably, this refers to Ḥammūda ʿAbduh, who was with him in Beirut and attended his theology classes at the Sulṭāniyya School, according to

3 Nagel, 274.

4 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 154–156, 181–182; M.S. Özervarli, "Attempts to Revitalize Kalām in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries," *The Muslim World* 89, no. 1 (1999): 90–105.

5 Similarly, I do not think that the thought of ʿAbduh and his circle should be seen as "dominated chiefly by theological considerations," as Charles Adams claims. Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 1.

6 Johann Büssow, "Muḥammad ʿAbduh, The Theology of Unity (Risālat at-Tawḥīd)," in *Religious Dynamics under the Impact of Imperialism and Globalisation: A Sourcebook*, eds. Björn Bentlage, Marion Eggert, and Stefan Reichmuth (Brill, 2016).

one of ʿAbduh's pupils in Beirut.[7] ʿAbduh explains that he had to adjust his brother's lecture notes only slightly, shortening some passages and lengthening others, in order to make them suitable for publication.[8]

According to Rashīd Riḍā, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* received much praise from Sunni, Shīʿi, and Christian scholars and intellectuals, following its publication in 1315h (1897–1898).[9] Furthermore, in November 1898, the Administrative Council of the Azhar, of which ʿAbduh himself was a member, officially included the *Risāla* as a teaching book in the Azhar curriculum.[10]

Yet, in addition to this type of endorsement, great controversy ensued from the publication of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. In 1898, Riḍā reported in his journal *al-Manār* (The lighthouse) that ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was accused of containing "a Muʿtazili incitement to evil" (*nazgha iʿtizāliyya*) and that ʿAbduh denied the unity of God. ʿAbduh's alleged endorsement of the Muʿtazili notion of the createdness of the Quran was especially controversial, to which we will come back at a later stage.[11] This critique seems to have been part of a larger controversy around ʿAbduh and his belief in God's existence, recounted in *al-Manār*, in which the Cairo-based journal *al-Nahj al-Qawīm* (The straight path)

7 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:401. ʿAbduh's most recent biographer Mark Sedgwick questions whether the brother ʿAbduh refers to is indeed Ḥammūda ʿAbduh, suggesting instead that it referred to ʿAbduh's brother-in-law Muḥy al-Dīn Bey Ḥamāda. Sedgwick corroborates his argument by claiming that there is no mention of Ḥammūda ʿAbduh elsewhere. Mark Sedgwick, "Source Notes: Taken from the AUC Press Edition of Muhammad Abduh," 2009, chapter 5, note 6, accessed August 1, 2014, <http://icsru.au.dk/en/projects/individual/sedgwick/abduh/sources/>. However, besides Shakīb Arslān's explicit mentioning of Ḥammūda ʿAbduh attending ʿAbduh's theology classes in Beirut, Ḥammūda (or Hamouda) ʿAbduh also figures quite regularly in the diaries of ʿAbduh's close friend Wilfrid Blunt. See, for instance: Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914*, vol. 1 (London: Martin Secker, 1919), 423; Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914*, vol. 2 (London: Martin Secker, 1920), 36, 41, 42 and 68 (all entries from 1900 onwards).

8 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:379–380.

9 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:779–786. For the first edition of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, see: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 1st ed. (Būlāq, Miṣr al-Maḥmiyya: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kubrā al-Amīriyya, 1897–1898/1315h). In the remainder of this study, ʿImāra's edition of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in ʿAbduh's complete works is referred to: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Risālat al-Tawḥīd," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3: 377–501.

10 ʿAbd al-Karīm Salmān, *Aʿmāl Majlis Idārat al-Azhar min Ibtidāʾ Taʾsīsihi 1312 ilā Ghāyat 1322* (Al-Qāhira: Al-Jāmiʿ al-Azhar, 1905 / 1323h), 45. I also checked this in the original minutes of the Administrative Council of the Azhar, which are available in the Egyptian Dār al-Wathāʾiq, archival unit *Al-Azhar al-Sharīf* (5004-) and archival code 002144: Daftar Maḥāḍir wa-Qirārāt Majlis Idārat al-Azhar, p. 54.

11 See pp 148-9 of this study. "Sajāyā al-ʿUlamāʾ," *Al-Manār* 1, no. 25 (September 6, 1898/Rabīʿ al-Thānī 19, 1316h): 465; Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 169–170.

played a central role.[12] The distrust surrounding *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* continued resonating in the Egyptian press. In 1905, seven years after its first publication, the Egyptian journal *al-Islām* warned its readers against its inherent dangers.[13]

The controversy around the Muʿtazili learnings of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* helps clarify why the text was modified in its second edition in 1908. Mohammed Haddad recounts the history of this second edition, published at Riḍā's publishing house, in which the passage on the Quran's createdness was omitted.[14] According to Haddad, Riḍā claimed that ʿAbduh ordered the deletion himself because it did not conform to the Salafi way. Consequently, Haddad questions Riḍā's assessment of ʿAbduh's wishes, made after ʿAbduh's death. According to Haddad, ʿAbduh may have wanted to delete the passage to maintain good relations with the Azhar prior to 1905, when he was trying to reform the Azhar through his membership in its Administrative Council. However, Haddad does not think that ʿAbduh would have consented to the removal of the passage after leaving the Administrative Council in 1905.[15]

To corroborate this, Haddad points to a meeting between ʿAbduh and the literary scholar Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Tarkazī al-Shanqīṭī (1829–1904), recounted in *al-Manār* in 1898.[16] During this meeting, ʿAbduh is said to have agreed with al-Shanqīṭī that the createdness of the Quran was not part of the way of the *salaf* (*maslak al-salaf*), but he included it anyway in his *Risāla* because of its great importance.[17] Haddad also points to the fact that another follower of ʿAbduh, Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1885–1947), included the controversial passage in the French translation of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* that he co-authored

12 "Al-Azhar wa-Adwāruhu," *Al-Nahj al-Qawīm*, no. 149 (April 29, 189/Dhū al-Ḥijja 8, 1315h): 2–3. The journal *al-Nahj al-Qawīm* is available in the periodicals department of the Egyptian Dār al-Kutub library, despite Falk Gesink's claim that it is no longer extant. *Al-Manār* reported on the controversies in 1898 around ʿAbduh's religious positions in the following articles: "Al-Buhtān al-ʿAẓīm," *Al-Manār* 1, no. 12 (June 8, 1898 / Muḥarram 18, 1316h): 199–206; "Ḥāl al-Jarā'id al-Miṣriyya, wa-l-Ghamīza bi-l-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh," *Al-Manār* 1, no. 18 (July 20, 1898 / Ṣafar 30, 1316h): 339–41.

13 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 210.

14 The original passage can be found in the chapter on God's attributes in the first edition of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in 1315h. ʿAbduh, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 1897–1898/1315h, 27–28.

15 Haddad, "Essai de critique," 97–102; Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh," 209–215.

16 Muḥammad al-Shanqīṭī was also involved with ʿAbduh in editing a large work on Arabic philology, as part of ʿAbduh's involvement in the Jamʿiyya li-Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya (Society for the Revival of Arabic Books). Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 85. In his biography of ʿAbduh, Riḍā also quotes a short poem that al-Shanqīṭī wrote to eulogize ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*: Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:783.

17 "Sajāyā al-ʿUlamā'," *Al-Manār,* 466.

with Bernard Michel.[18] Moreover, Haddad claims, the deletion of this particular passage was especially convenient to Riḍā and his turn to Ibn Saʿūd and the Ḥanbali-Wahhābi school, since Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (780–855) had staunchly denied the createdness of the Quran. In addition, Haddad tells us that Riḍā added more than 110 footnotes to the text, with which Riḍā similarly suggested that ʿAbduh's theology was in line with that of Ibn Ḥanbal.[19]

The text has seen numerous reprints and re-editions since then, sometimes following the first edition and at other times the 1908-edition.[20] ʿImāra, for example, included the controversial passage in his edition of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in ʿAbduh's complete works.[21] Besides the French translation of the text as it was first published, there is also an English translation of the 1908-edition, as well as translations in, among others, Italian, Turkish, and Indonesian.[22] It is not the intention of this study to deliver the final word on ʿAbduh's views about the createdness of the Quran and the inclusion of this doctrine in his *Risāla*, although we will come back to this in more detail in the fifth chapter of this study. However, the discussion shows how a variety of people have tried to strategically deploy *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* for their own ideological projects since its publication. Such a contested text might particularly benefit from a more historical approach, in which it is situated in its own time and place.

The text, as it came to be published, consists of an introduction in which ʿAbduh narrates how the text came into being. The book properly begins with the prolegomena, which recounts the conflict-ridden history of Islamic theology. This is followed by a logical exposition of God's existence and His attributes, subsequently turning to the topics of human nature and its ethics, the character and need for prophecy and revelation, before concluding with the prophet Muḥammad and the Quran. In so doing, the *Risāla*'s first part roughly followed the creed of the fifteenth-century scholar Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-

18 Mohammed Abdou, *Rissalat al Tawhid: exposé de la religion musulmane*, trans. Bernard Michel and Moustapha Abdel Razik (Paris: Geuthner, 1925), 33.

19 Haddad, "Essai de critique," 94–97; Haddad, "Les oeuvres de ʿAbduh," 209–215.

20 See for example the list of editions in the bibliography compiled by the Egyptian Dār al-Kutub: *Al-Ustādh al-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Bibliyyūgrāfiyya Mukhtāra* (Al-Qāhira: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub, 1997).

21 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:402.

22 For the English, French, and Italian translations: Abdou, *Rissalat al Tawhid*; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *The Theology of Unity*, trans. Isḥāq Musaʿad and Kenneth Cragg (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966); Muhammad ʿAbduh, *Trattato sull'unicità divina* (*Risalat at-Tawhid*), ed. Giulio Soravia, trans. Gianna Rami (Milano: Casa Editrice il Ponte, 2012). See Büssow on other translations: Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," n. 46.

Sanūsī.[23] Two chapters follow on the character of the Islamic religion ("al-Dīn al-Islāmī, aw al-Islām") and its historical spread. In both chapters, Islam is often and favorably compared with other religions. Subsequently, ʿAbduh formulates a response to the oft-heard objection that the current state of Muslims looks nothing like the picture ʿAbduh drew of Islam. At the end of the book, it refers to what seem to be the minimal requirements of accepting the message of Muḥammad as true (*taṣdīq*) and concludes with two sets of Quranic verses.

In his analysis of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, Johann Büssow describes the plot structure of the text as one of decline and revival. ʿAbduh opens with the anticlimax: the discordant history of Islamic theology, the miserable state of the Muslims, and their lack of unity. Thereafter, ʿAbduh gradually builds up towards a climax in the chapters on Islam and its early history, reflected in his increased use of imagery and rhetorical device. In these chapters, he sets forth Islam's true character and he presents Islam as the final destination of mankind. With this in mind, the reader is equipped to respond to any attack on Islam. The current misery of the Muslims is not to be attributed to Islam. Rather, Muslims should turn to Islam as a source of revival.[24]

2 The Context of Conception: ʿAbduh in Beirut in the 1880s

At the end of 1882, ʿAbduh was part of a group of Egyptians who came to Beirut after being exiled from Egypt for their involvement in the anti-colonial and anti-khedival ʿUrābī-revolt. One member of this group, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Jawād al-Qāyātī, wrote a travelogue of their journey.[25] In addition, two of ʿAbduh's students, the Druze prince Shakīb Arslān and the local reformist ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ Fatḥ Allāh narrated ʿAbduh's stay in Beirut. Riḍā included these accounts in his biography of ʿAbduh.[26]

In Beirut, ʿAbduh and the other exiled Egyptians soon became acquainted with Beirut's elite. ʿAbduh was particularly close with the Ḥamāda family, including Muḥy al-Dīn, mayor of Beirut at that time, and Saʿd Ḥamāda, whose daughter Karīma he married after the death of his first wife. Also, ʿAbduh be-

23 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:779; Haddad, "Essai de critique," 188–190. Cf. Watt on the creed of al-Sanūsī: William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Creeds: A Selection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 10 and 90–97.

24 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 284–286; Büssow, "The Theology of Unity."

25 Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Jawād al-Qāyātī, *Nafḥat al-Bashām fī Riḥlat al-Shām* (1901; repr., Bayrūt: Dār al-Rāʾid al-ʿArabī, 1981). I would like to thank Johann Büssow for directing me to the travelogue of al-Qāyātī.

26 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:390–413.

friended the journalist ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī who provided housing for him and his fellow Egyptian exiles in the quarter of Bāshūra.[27] Later, ʿAbduh came to live in the neighboring quarter Zuqāq al-Blāṭ, where many of Beirut's leading intellectuals congregated, including the Ḥamāda and al-Qabbānī families, outside the old city walls.[28]

By the final quarter of the nineteenth century, as historians Jens Hanssen and Fruma Zachs observed, the urban elites of Beirut had developed into a closely knit group, transcending confessional boundaries, united by their shared reformist values and political and economic interests.[29] These merchants, religious notables, journalists, writers, and state officials met and worked with each other in the city's schools and colleges, its municipal and provincial councils, its publishing houses and journals, its literary and scientific salons, its charitable societies and Masonic lodges. Their activities and the discourses of which they were part were connected to the world beyond Beirut in multiple and interlinked ways. The following exposition intends to give an idea of the variety of interconnections but should be acknowledged as inevitably incomplete.

First, the presence of European and American diplomats, travellers, merchants, and missionaries linked Beirut's intellectuals to discourses and contexts that were shared across great distances and around the world. Their presence and how it was perceived must be understood against the background of an increased interference – especially by European states – with the Ottoman Empire and its policies, particularly regarding the empire's Christian communities and other religious or ethnic minorities. This interference reflected the growing global power of the West, which was epitomized by the European colonization of large parts of the world, including Egypt – officially under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire.

The close connections between Beirut's elite, especially its Christian members, and the American Protestant missionaries living there, are particularly well documented. Many of Beirut's Christian intelligentsia with whom ʿAbduh came in contact were graduates of the missionaries' Syrian Protestant College (predecessor of the present-day American University of Beirut) or were otherwise involved with the American missionaries or those of the French Jesuit order. Beirut's Muslims, too, were involved with these foreign missionaries.

27 Al-Qāyātī, *Nafḥat al-Bashām*, 12.

28 Hanssen, "Birth of an Education Quarter"; Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (Oxford: Clarendon Press / Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 6.

29 Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*; Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 50–67.

Historian Jens Hanssen notes that until 1870, classes at the Syrian Protestant College were held in the home of ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ḥamāda, one of the Muslim notables of Beirut.[30] He was the father of Muḥy al-Dīn and Saʿd Ḥamāda with whom ʿAbduh became closely acquainted during his stay in Beirut. Furthermore, many of Beirut's intelligentsia published with the American missionaries' press, or at the press of the French Jesuit missionaries and joined societies in which some of the missionaries also participated.

Authors such as George Antonius, Albert Hourani, and Fruma Zachs considered this missionary presence significantly formative for the reformist *Nahḍa* discourse of Beirut's intellectuals, largely through their Christian graduates. In contrast, historian Abdul Latif Tibawi contests the missionaries' prominence and relevance by pointing at Muslim contributions.[31] This seems too simplistic, however, in the rigorous separation of Christians and missionaries from Muslims, which is not justified by the accepted descriptions of interconfessional relations amongst Beirut's elite in the 1880s – to which we will come back. Another historian, Ussama Makdisi, provides a more elegant reinterpretation of the formative 'impact' of the missionaries. Instead of approaching the genesis of liberalism in the Arabic world in terms of influence, Makdisi reconsiders this as an interaction through which Beirut's intellectuals produced a new discourse that was distinct from the missionaries'.[32] The next section describes how the missionaries, especially the American Protestants, were a virtually inescapable aspect of Beirut's intellectual life, especially its educational milieu. They intricately tied Beirut's intellectual elite to discourses of distant origin on a global scale. However, it also explains that it was the local intellectuals, Christian and Muslim, who then creatively engaged with these ideas and used them to their own advantage.

In addition, it should be emphasized that the missionaries were not the only or a one-way connection to global discourses and concepts. Traveling also allowed people in Beirut to go abroad and meet people, which is exemplified by ʿAbduh's own journeys. At the beginning of 1884, ʿAbduh left Beirut for Paris to join his teacher Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī in founding the anti-colonial and pan-Islamic journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* (The strongest bond). From there, ʿAbduh also visited London to advocate the cause of Egypt and Sudan at the British

30 Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 183.

31 A.L. Tibawi, "Some Misconceptions about the Nahda," in *Arabic and Islamic Themes: Historical, Educational and Literary Studies* (London: Luzac, 1976), 304–14.

32 Ussama Makdisi, "The Question of American Liberalism and the Origins of the American Board Mission to the Levant and Its Historiography," in *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean: Late 19th Century Until the 1960s*, ed. Christoph Schumann (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 25.

parliament. He stayed with his English friend Wilfrid Blunt, who introduced him to other intellectuals in London, some of whom were of distant origin. In the beginning of 1885, after a detour that led him to Tunis, ʿAbduh returned to Beirut, where he had acquired considerable fame as the editor of *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*.[33] Back in Beirut, ʿAbduh corresponded with people he had met during his travels or with whom his interlocutors were in contact. These were people of varying origin who resided in cities around the world, including London, Paris, Istanbul, Teheran, and Calcutta. Thus, ʿAbduh's global connections linked him to Europe as well as to Iran and India.

Their correspondences suggest that the encounters between globally dispersed individuals were not always of a personal nature. Print facilitated encounters between Beirut's intellectuals through the production and dissemination of texts and ideas of distant origin. Beirut was an important hub of privately owned presses, newspapers, and journals that were often owned by Christian graduates of the Syrian Protestant College. Texts written in cities around the world were translated, serialized, popularized, read, and discussed in Beirut.[34]

A second context that transcended Beirut's outer limits was the imperial one. The city of Beirut was part of the Ottoman Empire, first within the province of Syria, and from 1888 onwards as the capital of its own province. As such, the Ottoman state served as an important frame of reference and identity for Beirut's citizens, especially as many of its intellectuals were heavily involved in municipal politics.[35] In particular, Beirut's elite were confronted with the autocratic and centralizing reform efforts of Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II (r. 1876–1909). These are generally distinguished from the Ottoman reforms, collectively known as the *Tanẓīmāt* (1839–1876). While ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's reforms responded to internal and external challenges and continued the *Tanẓīmāt*'s aim of strengthening the Empire through centralizing efforts, they diverged from the secularization efforts associated with the *Tanẓīmāt*. In contrast, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's autocratic reign is considered to have been characterized by a discourse of pan-Islamism. Within this central reform project, Beirut

33 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:283, 393, 399. For example, Shakīb Arslān writes that he read about *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* in Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī's journal *al-Ṭabīb* (The doctor). Riḍā, 1:399. In 1884, in its first year of publication, an article in *al-Ṭabīb* indeed refers positively to ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī's journal. "Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā (Jarīda)." *Al-Ṭabīb* (1884–1885): 60.

34 Fīlīb dī Ṭarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfa al-ʿArabiyya*, 4 vols. (Bayrūt: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, 1913); Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*; Glaß, *Der Muqtaṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, vol. 1.

35 Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 159; Malek Shareef, "Urban Administration in the Late Ottoman Period: The Beirut Municipality as a Case Study, 1867–1908" (MA Thesis, American University of Beirut, 1998), chap. 2.

was regarded, in Jens Hanssen's words, "as the platform from where an Ottoman *mission civilisatrice* into the province was launched."[36] Historian Birgit Schaebler has mapped how this Ottoman civilizing project was comparable to other global civilizing processes, born in transcultural interaction with notions of civilization and savagery in France and the empire's Islamic patrimony.[37] Reflecting on the relation between local and imperial contexts, historian Ussama Makdisi considers the relation between Ottoman reform projects and those of Beiruti intellectuals such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī as one of interaction and negotiation, rather than top-down implementation.[38]

Given ʿAbduh's profound engagement with Beirut's educational milieu, the Ottoman dimension of the field of education was especially relevant. The reform efforts of Beirut's elite converged as well as conflicted with the educational reform programs of Ottoman officials such as the Syrian governor, Midḥat Pasha, at a provincial level and with ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's centrally led reforms. This resulted in the expansion of a new-style state education.[39]

Lastly, we might consider the context to which Beirut's elite was linked through their sharing in the Arabic language and Islamic culture. Beirut's elite had many connections with intellectuals, religious scholars, and reformers in cities across the Levantine region, such as Tripoli, Damascus, Sidon, and Jaffa. Furthermore, al-Qāyātī's list of the contacts and whereabouts of his fellow Muslim exiles from Egypt illuminates Damascus as a nexus for intellectuals and scholars.[40] ʿAbduh met with two sons of the Algerian leader ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʾirī, who was residing in exile in Damascus for his military resistance to the French. Through one of the sons, Muḥy al-Dīn al-Jazāʾirī, ʿAbduh also came into contact with a Damascene circle of reformists, most notably including ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Bīṭār who visited ʿAbduh in Cairo in 1903–1904. Like other Egyptian exiles, ʿAbduh also travelled to Damascus.[41]

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36 Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*, 68. Cf. Birgit Schäbler on the internal fault-lines of civilization in the Ottoman Empire: Schaebler, "Civilizing Others."

37 Schaebler, "Civilizing Others."

38 Ussama Makdisi, "After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 4 (2002): 601–17.

39 Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Hanssen, "Birth of an Education Quarter," 156–157.

40 Al-Qāyātī, *Nafḥat al-Bashām*, 109–143.

41 Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 31 and 61; Weismann, "Sufi Reformism and Modernist Rationalism"; Eich, *Abū l-Hudā aṣ-Ṣayyādī*, 35–43, 112–114; Kaïs Ezzerelli, "Muḥammad ʿAbduh et les réformistes syro-libanais: influence, image, postérité," in *Modernités islamiques. Actes du colloque organisé à Alep à l'occasion du centenaire de la disparition de l'imam*

Furthermore, as the stay of Egyptian exiles in Beirut suggests, there was the Arabic region at large, with which there was intensive contact, particularly in Egypt. In addition to the large numbers of Muslim scholars who traditionally left Beirut to study at Cairo's famous al-Azhar institute, many of Beirut's journalists, writers, and publishers headed for Egypt from the 1870s onwards, fleeing sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's oppressive regime.[42] The relevance of these Arabic and/or Islamic dimensions is not contested. Yet, the contextualizing study of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* presented in this study analyzes it primarily in relation to the two contextual dimensions discussed above. Similarly, while we can trace some of ʿAbduh's connections to India and especially Iran, these dimensions are not elaborately discussed.

The next two sections elaborate upon two aspects of the context in which the contents of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* were developed. These were formative aspects of ʿAbduh's experience in Beirut in the latter half of the 1880s, providing an important background for ʿAbduh and his interlocutors' comparisons between Islam and Christianity. The remainder of this chapter firmly roots ʿAbduh's *Risāla* in the educational context in which ʿAbduh lectured on Islam and *tawḥīd* and in his discussions about Islam, religion, and the relations between the religions, with his fellow Muslims and people of other faiths. Both Beirut's educational milieu and the multi-confessional discussions about religion in which ʿAbduh participated offer striking examples of how the local, regional, and global levels were intricately interwoven and interacted with and impacted upon each other.

2.1 *Teaching Islam at a Secondary School in Beirut*

When ʿAbduh returned to Beirut from Paris, his relationship with his once greatly revered teacher al-Afghānī began to gradually fade. He abandoned the vehemently anti-colonial tone that the two had adopted in their journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* and turned his focus towards education-centred reform, perhaps to help persuade the Egyptian authorities to permit him to return to Egypt, which they allowed in 1888.[43] However, the breach between the two men was not abrupt or absolute. While in Beirut, ʿAbduh co-translated al-Afghānī's treatise about naturalism and materialism, originally published in

Muḥammad ʿAbduh 9–10 novembre 2005, eds. Maher al-Charif and Sabrina Mervin (Damascus: IFPO, 2006), 82.

42 Hourani, "Middleman in a Changing Society."

43 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:416; Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 39; Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 99–100.

Persian, into Arabic in 1885–1886.[44] As the other translator, ʿĀrif Abī Turāb, who was another follower of al-Afghānī, had a better command of Persian, ʿAbduh's role was probably limited to that of an editor.[45] Originally written in 1881 in response to the pro-British Indian reformist Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, al-Afghānī's *The Truth about the Neicheri Sect and an Explanation of the Neicheris* (as the original title has been translated and published in English) became henceforth primarily known under its Arabic title *al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn* (The refutation of the materialists).[46] Historian Marwa Elshakry explains that ʿAbduh and Abī Turāb's translation was probably a response to the heated debate in Beirut, revolving around Shiblī Shumayyil and his defence of materialism and Darwinism.[47] A central location for this debate had been Beirut's schools, especially the Syrian Protestant College, which were in numerous ways part of a world that continued beyond Beirut's outer limits.[48]

ʿAbduh was probably introduced to Beirut's educational milieu by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī and Saʿd Ḥamāda. In 1885, ʿAbduh was asked to teach at the local secondary school al-Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya, headed by Aḥmad ʿAbbās al-Azharī.[49] This school was established by the local educational board, a con-

44 Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī, "The Truth about the Neicheri Sect and an Explanation of the Neicheris," in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn "al-Afghānī,"* by Nikki R. Keddie, trans. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 130–74; Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn*, trans. Muḥammad ʿAbduh and ʿĀrif Afandī Abī Turāb, 3rd ed. (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Mawsūʿāt, 1903).

45 Haddad, "Essai de critique," 121–122.

46 The initial title under which *al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn* was published in 1885 might have been "Risāla fī Ibṭāl Madhhab al-Dahriyyīn wa-Bayān Mafāsidihim wa-Ithbāt anna al-Dīn Asās al-Madaniyya wa-l-Kufr Fasād al-Madaniyya" (Treatise on the invalidation of the school of the materialists and proof of their corruptions and confirmation that religion is the foundation of civilization), as found in the bibliography of ʿAbduh composed by the Egyptian National Library Dār al-Kutub: *Bibliyyūgrāfiyya*. However, already in August 1886, the Beirut-based newspaper *Thamarāt al-Funūn* announced its publication under the title "Al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn" and serialized it in 1890/1891 under the title "Al-Dahriyyūn."

47 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 99–129, particularly 119.

48 See: Elshakry, 65–72; Marwa Elshakry, "Darwin's Legacy in the Arab East: Science, Religion and Politics, 1870–1914" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2003), 80–86; Elshakry, "Knowledge in Motion," 707–710; Marwa Elshakry, "The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism in Late Ottoman Beirut," *Past and Present : A Journal of Historical Studies*, no. 196 (2007): 207–211.

49 The following paragraph is based on: Juhayna Ḥasan al-Ayyūbī, "Jamʿiyyat al-Maqāṣid al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya fī Bayrūt" (MA Thesis, American University of Beirut, 1966), 69–81; Donald J. Cioeta, "Thamarat al-Funun: Syria's First Islamic Newspaper. 1875–1908" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1979), 130–150 and 214–219; Linda Schatkowski-Schilcher, "The Islamic Maqased of Beirut – A Case Study of Modernisation in Lebanon"

tinuation of a local and private educational society called Jamʿiyyat al-Maqāṣid al-Khayriyya (Society of Charitable Ends). The Maqāṣid Society was founded in 1878 under the leadership of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī and was a continuation of the Jamʿiyyat al-Funūn (Society of the Liberal Arts), an educational society that al-Qabbānī had been active in from the beginning and that Saʿd Ḥamāda co-founded in 1873. The Maqāṣid Society was supported by Midḥat Pasha, governor of Syria at that time, who administratively facilitated the society's funding from existing and newly established religious endowments (*waqf*s). Since 1876, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī's journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn* (The yields of the liberal arts)[50] had been closely associated with the societies' and board's educational activities.

It is not certain why the private charitable society of the Maqāṣid was turned into a governmental body. There seems to have been a persistent rumor that the society, or at least some of its members, actually comprised a politically subversive society that was associated with anti-Turkish placards that George Antonius thought to be essential in the history of the "awakening" of Arab nationalism.[51] However, historian Donald Cioeta refutes these rumors and concludes that the society was probably dissolved primarily for administrative convenience, and perhaps the political prudence of the Ottoman government was an additional factor.[52]

In his memorandum on educational reform in the province of Syria, ʿAbduh also refers to the dissolution of the society. Lamenting the termination of pri-

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(MA Thesis, American University of Beirut, 1969), 24–54; ʿIṣām Muḥammad Shabārū, *Jamʿiyyat al-Maqāṣid al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya fī Bayrūt* (*1295–1421/1878–2000*) (Bayrūt: Dār Maṣābiḥ al-Fikr, 2000), 60–61.

50 The Arabic word *fann* and its plural *funūn* can refer to scholarly, artistic, and practical disciplines, such as the art of war, the art of history, or the fine arts. I thought it best to translate it here as the liberal arts, conveying a sense of edification that is considerably broader than a (fine) arts education.

51 On these rumors, see: Schatkowski-Schilcher, "Islamic Maqased," 38–49. Abdul Latif Tibawi refers to these rumors to prove that Muslims – instead of (or in addition to) Christians – were among the first proponents of anti-Turkish Arab nationalism. In so doing, he contests the narrative of George Antonius who traces the initiative of the placards to five Christian men, educated at the Syrian Protestant College. This fits into Tibawi's more general contestation of Antonius' emphasis on the role of (Lebanese) Christians and their missionary teachers in the development of the *Nahḍa*. A.L. Tibawi, "From Islam to Arab Nationalism – With Special Reference to Egypt and Syria," in *Arabic and Islamic Themes: Historical, Educational and Literary Studies* (London: Luzac, 1976), 121; George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), chap. v.

52 Donald J. Cioeta, "Islamic Benevolent Societies and Public Education in Syria, 1875–1882," *The Islamic Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (1982): 53–54.

vate educational societies, he mentions the case of the Maqāṣid Society.[53] This and other private charitable initiatives, he writes, ensure that Muslim youth are not sent to foreign schools, in which loyalty is fostered for a foreign state instead of for the Ottoman sultan. ʿAbduh also considers the charitable societies such as the Jamʿiyyat al-Maqāṣid to be very useful for financing the costly education program he envisioned.[54] In addition to this memorandum to the governor of Syria, in 1887 ʿAbduh sent a program for educational reform to the *shaykh al-Islām*, the highest religious official in the Ottoman Empire.[55]

The Sulṭāniyya School was one of many new schools in Beirut.[56] Its establishment in 1883 was an explicit response to the surge of many high-quality missionary schools, especially Protestant ones, where Christians received a better education than Muslims. Muslim youth, too, were increasingly enrolled in these missionary institutions by their parents. The school's founders among others were afraid that such an educational discrepancy between the various Ottoman confessional communities would destabilize the community as a whole. Instead of serving the general interest of the Ottoman Empire, they thought that the missionary schools benefitted the foreign policy of the missionaries' home countries in Europe and the USA.[57] ʿAbduh, too, was very susceptible to the threat posed by foreign missionary schools. In his memoranda on educational reform, both in Syria and in the Ottoman Empire as a whole, ʿAbduh repeatedly points to the existence of foreign missionary schools as a main incentive for reforming the educational system. He warns that Muslims graduate from these schools as Christians – though Muslims in name – or as non-religious "materialists" (*māddiyyūn*).[58]

For many in Beirut, the establishment of local new-style schools such as the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya was seen as an effective remedy to the dire quality of

53 This memorandum is included in ʿImāra's edition of ʿAbduh's complete works: ʿAbduh, "Lāʾiḥat Iṣlāḥ al-Quṭr al-Sūrī," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:93–105.

54 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:103 and 105.

55 ʿAbduh, "Lāʾiḥat Iṣlāḥ al-Taʿlīm al-ʿUthmānī," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:73–91. For a French translation, see: Gilbert Delanoue, "Endoctrinement religieux et idéologie ottomane: l'adresse de Muh'ammad ʿAbduh au Cheikh Al Islam, Beyrouth 1887," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 13–14, no. 1 (1973): 293–312.

56 The following description of the educational landscape of Beirut is based on the following sources: A.L. Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College," *Middle East Journal* 21, no. 1 (1967): 1–15; A.L. Tibawi, *Arabic and Islamic Themes: Historical, Educational and Literary Studies* (London: Luzac, 1976); Cioeta, "Thamarat al-Funun"; Cioeta, "Islamic Benevolent Societies"; Hanssen, "Birth of an Education Quarter."

57 Schatkowski-Schilcher, "Islamic Maqased," 28–32; Cioeta, "Thamarat al-Funun," 130–135.

58 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:73–91, 103. ʿAbduh had expressed similar concerns in Egypt in the early 1880s, see: Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 66–67.

schooling in Beirut, which they blamed for the success of foreign missionary schools. In 1863, Buṭrus al-Bustānī, who was closely associated with the American missionaries, had founded his Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya (The National School). ʿAbduh's friend al-Qabbānī was a graduate of this first and most famous new-style school in Beirut. Essential to these new-style schools were their new curricula, which included secular sciences and European languages, often alongside more traditional subjects. In an announcement of the establishment of the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya's, the journal *al-Muqtaṭaf* (The digest) approvingly compares the new school's curriculum to those of the existing foreign schools.[59]

Beirut's new-style schools also intended to actively build the characters of their students. On the one hand, they strongly emphasized communal concord, unity, and cooperation in response to an increasingly encroaching West. The paramount need for unity was tied to the dramatic historical events of 1860 in Mount Lebanon and Damascus during which great strife erupted between various religious communities, resulting in large-scale massacre. On the other hand, they promoted an ethic of individual striving and steadfast determination that was supposed to contribute to knowledge seeking, individual and communal success, and disciplined students.

In this sense, educational reform fitted well into the central theme of the self-definition of Beirut's new elite and their overarching project of societal reform: the omnipresent concept of civilization (*tamaddun*).[60] They considered their society to be highly deficient in this respect, and many of Beirut's intellectuals thought it urgently needed a profound civilizational reform for which they – being *mutamaddinūn*, or 'civilized,' themselves – were the appropriate agents. Coupling the concept of civilization with its temporal twin concept of progress, their civilizational efforts were intended to let their backward society catch up with 'the spirit of the time' (*rūḥ al-ʿaṣr*): the latest, and effectively the only relevant, stage in world history.

The civilizational efforts of Beirut's elite, gravitating around key intellectuals such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī and ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī, included the establishment of literary and scientific salons, such as al-Jamʿiyya al-ʿIlmiyya al-Sūriyya (The Syrian Scientific Society), and Masonic lodges, such as Le

59 "Al-Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya fī Bayrūt," *Al-Muqtaṭaf* 7, no. 9 (April 1883): 570.

60 The following paragraph draws mainly on: Zachs, *Making of a Syrian Identity*, 67–77; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*; Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, chap. 1–4; Makdisi, "After 1860." On global discourses of civilization, see also: Schaebler, "Civilizing Others."

Liban.[61] There, they discussed the latest scientific insights, which they deemed essential to disseminate to a larger public through journals such as *al-Muqtaṭaf*.[62] In this way, they fought what they saw as their society's harmful ignorance. Besides scientific progress, the continuing relevance of the cultural and scientific Arabic heritage was also a topic of discussion and study in these journals and societies, connected to the increasingly urgent need for authenticity and responding to the increasing penetration of the West.

Similarly, ʿAbduh also shared a special interest in the Arabic language. While in Beirut, he edited two works dealing with eloquence and the art of rhetoric in the Arabic language: *Nahj al-Balāgha* (The way of eloquence), a collection of sayings of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 661) used for teaching the art of rhetoric, and the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī, a stylistically rich collection of stories in rhymed prose.[63] The latter was published at the Jesuit press, perhaps reflecting his friendship with the Catholic linguists Saʿīd al-Shartūnī and Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī. Al-Yāzijī taught at al-Bustānī's Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya, edited several journals, and translated the Bible into Arabic for the Jesuits in Beirut.[64] In a speech at the annual celebration of the Sulṭāniyya School in 1886, moreover, ʿAbduh emphasized the importance of teaching Arabic and Turkish to everyone, while reserving French and other languages to specialists.[65]

Education was thought to be central to the civilizational activities employed in Beirut. In its welcome to the newly established Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya,

61 On Beirut's societies, salons, and masonic lodges, see: Cioeta, "Islamic Benevolent Societies"; Ziegler, "Arab Literary Salons"; Glaß, *Der Muqtaṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 2004; Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut*; Dupont, "Franc-maçonnerie"; Dorothe Sommer, "Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria from the 19th Century Onwards. The First Masonic Lodges in the Beirut Area," in *Freemasonry and Fraternalism in the Middle East*, eds. Andreas Onnerfors and Dorothe Sommer (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 2008), 53–83.

62 On Beirut's journals and newspapers, see: Ṭarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfa al-ʿArabiyya*, vols. 1–2; Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*; Glaß, *Der Muqtaṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 2004.

63 Ibrahim Geries notes that in editing the *Maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī, ʿAbduh deleted passages he deemed improper or shameful. Ibrahim Geries, "Badīʿ Al-Zamān Al-Hamadhānī's Maqāma of Bishr B. ʿAwāna (al-Bishriyya)," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 14, no. 2 (August 1, 2011): 162–163.

64 For more on Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī and Saʿīd al-Shartūnī, see: Ṭarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 2.

65 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:734. ʿAbduh's speech was published in the Beirut-based journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn*: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Murāsalāt: Bayrūt fī 25 Shawwāl," *Thamarāt al-Funūn* 12, no. 591 (August 2, 1886/Dhū al-Qaʿda, 1303h): 3–4. In the remainder of this study, ʿImāra's edition of this speech in ʿAbduh's complete works is referred to: ʿAbduh, "Murāsalāt," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 1:731–34. Al-Qāyātī writes that this speech of ʿAbduh was also attended by other Egyptian exiles: Al-Qāyātī, *Nafḥat al-Bashām*, 161.

al-Muqtaṭaf writes that schools are pivotal to the realization of progress.[66] ʿAbduh also considered education to be of paramount importance in countering the decline of the Ottoman Empire, or the East in general, as he explained in his speech at the Sulṭāniyya School.[67] Back home in Egypt, ʿAbduh was very much involved in introducing empirical sciences into the curriculum of the Azhar, for example as a member of the Administrative Council of the Azhar.[68]

In his book *Imperial Classroom* on state education in the late Ottoman Empire, historian Benjamin Fortna summarizes the contemporary Ottoman perception of education as one of "hope against fear." On the one hand, education itself represented a foreign threat, as embodied in the surge of the Western missionary schools and perceived as a crucial aspect of the West's superior power, which added to the general sense of besiegement. On the other hand, given the Ottomans' belief in the significant impact of schooling, it was hoped that new-style education would provide the tool for realizing the survival and progress of the Ottoman Empire.[69] However, not everyone agreed with the need to create new-style education in response to the surge of missionary schools. One of Beirut's judges, *qāḍī* Yūsuf al-Nabahānī (1849–1932) for example, denounced missionary schools but also opposed new-style education due to its inclusion of secular sciences. He favored the old-style schools, the *kuttāb* and the *madrasa*.[70]

Nevertheless, to the Muslim reformist elite with which ʿAbduh was acquainted, the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya was clearly very dear. Its two-story brick building, still functioning as a Maqāṣid girls' school nowadays, was impressive.

In its first year, the Tripolitan reformist scholar Ḥusayn al-Jisr was attracted to serve as the director of the Sulṭāniyya School in Beirut. In 1879 in his hometown Tripoli, al-Jisr had also established a new-style school with the help of Midḥat Pasha, governor of Syria at that time. This school, which had closed down three years later due to fierce opposition, had been al-Jisr's response to the many educational activities of the missionaries, although it had also used scientific handbooks compiled by American Protestant missionaries.[71] As

66 "Al-Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya," *Al-Muqtaṭaf*.

67 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 1:731–734.

68 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 78, chap. 6; Ahmad Bazli Shafie, "Conceptual and Curricular Dimensions of ʿAbduh's Educational Reform," *Al-Shajarah* 4, no. 2 (2012): 199–230.

69 Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, chap. 2. Hope Against Fear.

70 Samir Seikaly, "Shaykh Yūsuf al-Nabahānī and the West," in *Les européens vus par les libanais à l'époche ottomane*, eds. Heyberger Bernard and Walbiner Carsten (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2002), 178.

71 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 134. Al-Jisr's Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya al-Islāmiyya (National Islamic School) was attended by ʿAbduh's later friend and follower Rashīd Riḍā. Riḍā and

al-Jisr had already returned to Tripoli the following year, ʿAbduh did not work under him at the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya in Beirut. However, they did meet during ʿAbduh's time in Beirut and exchanged letters.[72] Among the Sulṭāniyya School's graduates were the Druze prince Shakīb Arslān and a local reformist named ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ Fatḥ Allāh. As an adult, Shakīb Arslān became politically active himself. Exiled from the French mandate of Syria and Lebanon and residing predominantly in Europe, he advocated a blend of pan-Islamism and Arab nationalism and asserted the right to political self-determination after the First World War.

Over the course of two years, ʿAbduh taught a variety of subjects at al-Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya, including grammar, *fiqh*, rhetoric, logic, Islamic history, and *ʿilm al-tawḥīd*. Fatḥ Allāh and Arslān recount how he was greatly appreciated among his teenage students for encouraging them to work hard rather than boring them.[73] In his introduction to *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh explains that he took care to accommodate his students' needs and capacities in his compendium on Islamic theology, as opposed to the existing compendia that were far too complicated or outdated.[74] This fitted well with his enthusiasm for Herbert Spencer's ideas about education, which advocated a child-centred education catered to the child's developmental stage.[75] In addition, his desire to attune the education of children to their capacity also matched the Islamic educational literature, such as the works of the Plato-inspired Ibn Miskawayh that ʿAbduh knew well.[76] When the director of the Sulṭāniyya School was substituted in 1886 for reasons unknown to me, ʿAbduh resigned. However, he continued to teach Quran interpretation at several mosques in Beirut as well as in his home.

ʿAbduh also met in Tripoli during this time, but the two men only developed a closer connection when Riḍā moved to Cairo in 1897. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:390.

72 Johannes Ebert, *Religion und Reform in der arabischen Provinz: Ḥusayn al-Ǧisr aṭ-Ṭarâbulusî (1845–1909)*, 18 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1991), 84–85.

73 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:394 and 401.

74 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:379.

75 ʿAbduh is said to have translated Herbert Spencer's book *On Education* as a means to improve his French. In the summer of 1903, moreover, ʿAbduh visited the home of the English philosopher in Brighton, only a few months before Spencer's death. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:868–870, 1034; Blunt, *My Diaries*, 1920, 2:69–70; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:521–523. For more on Spencer's educational ideas, see: Stephen Tomlinson, "From Rousseau to Evolutionism: Herbert Spencer on the Science of Education," *History of Education* 25, no. 3 (September 1996): 235.

76 Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 287.

2.2 *Interreligious Dialogue*

Even Christians came to listen to ʿAbduh's lectures about the Quran in Beirut, according to his pupil ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ Fatḥ Allāh. and Arslān also recount how ʿAbduh opened his house to people whose beliefs and convictions differed from his own – including those who were sceptical about religion itself – and taught them about Islam.[77] These stories suggest that ʿAbduh's time in Beirut was characterized by his close contact with people of other confessions and religious persuasions, and often those of distant origin or residence, with whom he spoke about Islam and religion in general.

First, ʿAbduh's friendship with ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās (1844–1921) is fascinating in this respect, even though ill documented. ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās was the son and successor of Bahāʾ Allāh, whose claims to prophecy had led to the separation of the Bahāʾi (Bahá'í) faith within the Bābi (Bábí) religious movement. The Bahāʾi faith stressed the spiritual unity of all religions. Originally from Teheran, ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās arrived in Beirut in mid-1887, where he met ʿAbduh.

ʿAbduh's sympathy for ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās and his movement was a sensitive and debated issue for his followers. Shakīb Arslān emphasizes that ʿAbduh was not a Bābi himself, and al-Afghānī criticizes the Bābi movement in his *Refutation of the Materialists*, where he, moreover, does not further distinguish between the Bahāʾi and Bābi movements.[78] Additionally, in a footnote accompanying Arslān's text, Riḍā claims that ʿAbduh did not even know of ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās' unorthodox positions and thought that he was a Muslim reformist.[79] However, Islamic scholar William McCants questions these bold assertions. He points out that Muḥammad ʿAbduh omitted al-Afghānī's negative reference to the Bābis in his Arabic translation of al-Afghānī's response to materialism.[80]

Intrigued by the meeting between ʿAbduh and ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās, but unable to find more sources on the nature of their friendship, historian Oliver

77 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:397, 402–403.

78 For Arslān's assessment: Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:407. In his rebuttal of materialism, al-Afghānī classifies Bābism as a form of naturalism, or materialism: Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 158.

79 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:407, n.2.

80 William McCants, "'I Never Understood Any of This From ʿAbbās Effendi': Muḥammad ʿAbduh's Knowledge of the Bahāʾī Teachings and his Friendship With ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās," in *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Bābī-Bahāʾī Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 280–281. McCants also suggests that ʿAbduh may have written about the Bahāʾī faith in response to Leo Tolstoy, who asked for this information. McCants further claims that Riḍā shortened this letter substantively. McCants, 289–291.

Scharbrodt studied ʿAbduh's connection with the mystic and millenarian traditions from which the Bahāʾi faith emerged; and, most importantly, he comparatively analyzed the transformations of the religious authority of ʿAbduh and ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās. He analyzed how they both used charismatic authority, rooted in traditions of messianism and Sufism, to establish their dissident interpretations. However, ʿAbduh eventually tried to present his reinterpretation as true, orthodox Islam, while ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās turned his reinterpretation into a new religious movement.[81] Even though ʿAbd al-Bahāʾ ʿAbbās' work is not elaborately included in this study, the Bahāʾi faith and its followers surface from time to time in the context of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, as will be seen.

Secondly, ʿAbduh visited a Masonic lodge in Beirut – as he had been used to in Egypt – as part of al-Afghānī's circle. The particular Masonic lodge that he went to, Le Liban, was predominantly attended by students, graduates, and teachers of the Syrian Protestant College. His good friend Ibrāhīm al-Yāzijī, himself Catholic, also went there.[82] In addition, he might have met the sons of the Algerian prince ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʾirī in this lodge, or another one in Beirut.[83] Their father, who died in 1883, was also a Freemason, yet probably not so active after his initiation in the early 1860s.[84] The lodge Le Liban was open

81 Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*.

82 Shahīn Makāriyyūs, *Kitāb Faḍā'il al-Māsūniyya*, 2nd ed. (1899; repr., Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Muqtaṭaf, 1900), 124–125; Sommer, "Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria," 79–80; Eric Anduze, *La franc-maçonnerie au Moyen-Orient et au Maghreb: Fin XIXe-début XXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 17. On ʿAbduh, or ʿAbduh's circle in Egypt, and Freemasonry, see: A. Albert Kudsi-Zadeh, "Afghānī and Freemasonry in Egypt," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 92, no. 1 (1972): 25–35; Karim Wissa, "Freemasonry in Egypt 1798–1921: A Study in Cultural and Political Encounters," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies. Bulletin* 16, no. 2 (1989): 143–61.

83 Makāriyyūs, *Faḍā'il al-Māsūniyya*, 121; Sommer, "Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria," 56.

84 Mouloud Kebache describes that ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazāʾirī's masonic membership is disputed amongst his Algerian and French historians. An Algerian Muslim's masonic membership is sensitive for some Algerian historians, he analyzes, because of Freemasonry's associations with atheism and colonial collaboration. Kebache seems to conclude, however, that it is very probable that Al-Jazāʾirī indeed became a member of the masonic lodge Al-Ahrām in Alexandria in 1864. Kebache sees no reason why the documents and correspondence relating Al-Jazāʾirī's masonic membership, upon invitation by the Grand Orient de France for his heroic role in saving Christians during the sectarian violence of 1860, should be forged, as some Algerian historians claim unsubstantiatedly. However, the degree of Al-Jazāʾirī's later involvement is less certain and seems one of more distance. In addition, Kebache also describes how Al-Jazāʾirī's interpretation of Ibn ʿArabī's Sufi thinking fits his masonic membership and its acknowledgement of the truth of multiple religions. He thus shows how Al-Jazāʾirī might have reconciled him being a freemason with him being a Muslim. Mouloud Kebache, "Abd el-Kader et la franc-maçonnerie française:

to all religions, although Muslims were in the minority. It was not open to the non-religious, however. Le Liban required its members to believe in the existence of one higher being and the immortality of the soul. Even when the Grand Orient de France, under whose patronage Le Liban fell, abandoned the oath on the 'Grand Architect' in 1877, Le Liban continued to stipulate the belief in a supreme being as a condition of its membership.[85]

Thirdly, ʿAbduh presided over the Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb, or the Society for Harmony and Conciliation, while in Beirut.[86] According to Riḍā's biography, its members discussed the harmony between the three revealed religions and how to eliminate discord between those believing in these distinct religions. In addition, they strove to relieve the European oppression of Easterners and Islam. Lastly, they aimed at teaching the Europeans the truth about Islam as well as this religion's superiority. Based on a letter of one of its members, Shimʿūn Mūyāl, included by Riḍā in his biography of ʿAbduh, it seems that this "society" functioned through correspondence instead of personal meetings. It brought together members of varying confession and origin and functioned as a global correspondence network, discussing globally shared questions regarding religion and the religions.

Within this web, its Persian secretary Mīrzā Bāqir seemed to have been pivotal. Riḍā characterizes Bāqir as a man well versed in both Islam and Christian thought, having retracted his initial conversion from Islam to Christianity. During his previous stay in London, where he worked as the secretary of ʿAbduh's friend Wilfrid Blunt, he became acquainted with many of the people participating in the network, though it seems that he had already met ʿAbduh in Paris through al-Afghānī. Besides listing ʿAbduh and Bāqir as the correspondence club's president and secretary respectively, Riḍā lists the names of a couple of its members, without providing additional information. The name "Bīrzādeh" probably refers to Ḥajjī Muḥammad ʿAlī Pīrzādeh, who was a Persian *ʿālim* and Sufi who wrote a travelogue (*Safarnāmeh*) on his journey to Europe in the 1880s, in which he was very critical about any Westernization project for Iran.[87]

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une relation controversée," in *Abd el-Kader, un spirituel dans la modernité*, ed. Ahmed Bouyerdene, Éric Geoffroy, and Setty G. Simon-Khedis (Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2012), 83–98, <http://books.openedition.org/ifpo/1815>.

85 Makāriyyūs, *Faḍāʾil al-Māsūniyya*, 125–126; Sommer, "Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria," 76.

86 The following section is based on: Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:817–829.

87 Monica M. Ringer, "The Quest for the Secret of Strength in Iranian Nineteenth-Century Travel Literature: Rethinking Tradition in the Safarnameh," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, eds. Nikki R. Keddie and Rudolph P. Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 153–154. Ḥajjī Muḥammad ʿAlī Pīrzādeh seemed to have been in Beirut when the network was established.

Further, Riḍā lists Abī Turāb, whom we have already encountered as a fellow follower of al-Afghānī who had also been in Paris with him and who co-translated al-Afghānī's *Refutation of the Materialists* with ʿAbduh. Then, Riḍā mentions Jamāl Bey, the son of one of Beirut's *qāḍī*s, Rāmiz Bey al-Turkī, a Persian minister named Muʾayyad al-Mulk, and Ḥasan Khān, a counsellor of the Persian embassy in Istanbul.[88] Riḍā does not explicitly mention if these Persian members were Shīʿi, but this seems probable, indicating the presence of intra-religious, in addition to interreligious, dialogue.[89]

Riḍā introduces other members more elaborately. First, Isaac Taylor, a priest in the Anglican Church, had been one of Bāqir's acquaintances in London.[90] He seems to have had quite a prominent role in the network, as he is described as its representative in London. Bāqir translated three of Taylor's writings into Arabic, which were all published in *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, the Beirut-based journal led by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī. The first of these was a speech that Isaac Taylor delivered in 1887 to the Wolverhampton Church Congress – an annual meeting of members of the Church of England – on the success of Islam's mission in Africa in comparison to the failing Christian missionary efforts there. This lecture had aroused great controversy in the English press, with *The Times* condemning it and the *St James' Gazette* lauding it.[91]

88 I have not found articles by Ḥajjī Muḥammad ʿAlī Pīrzādeh, Abī Turāb, Jamāl Bey, Muʾayyad al-Mulk, or Ḥasan Khān in the Beirut-based journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, in which other members of the network published, or any correspondence with ʿAbduh. Only Jamāl Bey is mentioned as ʿAbduh's friend and as having given ʿAbduh a letter from Isaac Taylor in a letter from ʿAbduh to Taylor: ʿAbduh, *al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:359. A further qualification of how ʿAbduh related to these members of the correspondence network and to their ideas is therefore difficult to assess, and in my analysis, I have limited myself to other people in this network.

89 Al-Afghānī tried to hide his (intellectual) roots, which lay in Shīʿi Iran, through his claim of being of Afghan descent. Nikki Keddie, *Sayyid Jamāl Ad-Dīn Al-Afghānī: A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). It was al-Afghānī through whom ʿAbduh became acquainted with both Mīrzā Bāqir and Abī Turāb.

90 Isaac Taylor was made canon of York and prebendary of Kirk Fenton in 1885. rev. C.E.A. Cheesman, "Taylor, Isaac (1829–1901)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed July 8, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36433>.

91 For the Arabic translation: Isḥāq Ṭaylur, "Aḥwāl al-Muslimīn fī Ifrīqiyyā," *Thamarāt al-Funūn* 14, no. 656 (November 14, 1887/Ṣafar 28, 1305h): 2. For the English original: Isaac Taylor, "Islam in Africa," *St James's Gazette*, October 8, 1887. For a second rendering of Taylor's address in the British press of that time: Isaac Taylor, "The Church Congress," *The Times*, October 8, 1887. On the controversy in the English press caused by Taylor's address to the Church Congress, see: Thomas Prasch, "Which God for Africa: The Islamic-Christian Misionary Debate in Late-Victorian England," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 1 (1989): 51–73.

A year later, in 1888, two excerpts of Taylor's book *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook* were published in *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, originally published in the *St James' Gazette*.[92] In this book, Taylor wanted to describe how educated Muslims in Egypt viewed themselves and their religion, in order to counter the manifold allegations of Islam's barbarity. The two excerpts, titled "Al-Islām wa-l-Muslimūn" (Islam and Muslims) and "Al-Qur'ān wa-l-kutub al-munzala" (The Quran and the revealed books) in Arabic, focused specifically on Muslims' ideas of their relation to Christianity and their views towards the Bible.[93]

Furthermore, two letters from ʿAbduh to Taylor are included in ʿAbduh's complete works. In the first, ʿAbduh responds very positively to Taylor's address to the Church Congress, and in the second to Taylor's reply to him.[94] Excerpts of ʿAbduh's first letter were anonymously published in Taylor's *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook* in 1888, introducing him as "a pious and learned Sheikh" educated at the Azhar and with great religious authority. Preceding ʿAbduh's letter were equally favorable replies to Taylor's speech, very possibly alluding to other members of the Society for Union and Conciliation: "a Persian Soufi" with great influence in Teheran, possibly referring to Pīrzādeh, "a young Turkish Bey," very possibly the network's member Jamāl Bey, and finally, a Persian residing in Syria with great knowledge of the New Testament, probably describing Mīrzā Bāqir.[95] These letters provide some insight into the workings of this correspondence network.

It was not only the correspondence network's members who spoke favorably of Isaac Taylor. Ḥusayn al-Jisr refers to Taylor positively in his introduction to his main work *al-Risāla al-Ḥamīdiyya* (The Ḥamīdian treatise) on the compatibility of religion and science. He describes Taylor as someone who defends

92 The two excerpts were adaptations of chapters XIII and XIV of Taylor's *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook.* Isaac Taylor, *Leaves From an Egyptian Notebook* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1888). In the remainder of this study, this publication is referred to, as it is widely available. For the excerpts in Arabic translation: Isḥāq Ṭaylur, "Al-Islām wa-l-Muslimūn," *Thamarāt al-Funūn* 14, no. 683 (May 21, 1888/Ramaḍān 10, 1305h): 2–3; Isḥāq Ṭaylur, "Al-Qur'ān wa-l-Kutub al-Munzala," *Thamarāt al-Funūn* 14, no. 690 (1888): 2. For the English source of these excerpts: Isaac Taylor, "Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook. IX. – Mahomeddans on Mahommedanism," *St James's Gazette*, April 18, 1888; Isaac Taylor, "Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook. Conclusion," *St James's Gazette*, May 12, 1888.

93 These articles were republished in *al-Manār* in 1902 and as such discussed by Umar Ryad: Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity*, chap. 3.

94 Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Risāla ilā al-Qiss Isḥaq Ṭaylur," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:357–58; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Risāla Thāniyya ilā al-Qiss Isḥaq Ṭaylur," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:359–60.

95 Taylor, *Leaves From an Egyptian Notebook*, 127–130.

Islam's interests in England.[96] Riḍā claims that the Cairo-based newspaper *al-Muʾayyad* cited the translations of Taylor's articles.[97]

Another British member of this network was Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner. Riḍā does not give any more information about Leitner besides that he was an inspector of schools in British India. However, aside from having been very active in reforming the Indian educational system in the 1860s and 1870s, Leitner was a renowned Orientalist and linguist, who learnt many Oriental languages during his youth in Constantinople, where he studied Islamic sciences.[98] This lack of information on Leitner might suggest that his participation in the network was rather limited. However, his defense of Islam against his countrymen's vicious allegations, for example in a treatise called *Mohammedanism* (1889), fits well with the network's aims. This concern also figured prominently in one of his articles on Muslim schools in India in *The Daily Telegraph*, which was translated into Arabic and published in *Thamarāt al-Funūn*.[99] In this article, mentioned and summarized by Riḍā, Leitner refuted the idea that Muslim schools were abodes of indecency.

Although the correspondence network favored the union between the three revealed religions, there were no Jewish members known to Riḍā. However, after ʿAbduh's death, Riḍā describes how a Jewish doctor named Shimʿūn Mūyāl, residing in Jaffa, sent him a letter in which he also mentioned his membership in the Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb. In an article on Mūyāl's wife Esther, scholar Lital Levy touches upon the life and thoughts of this intellectual. Shimʿūn Mūyāl (1866–1916), originally from Jaffa, was attending a Jewish new-style secondary school in Beirut in the early 1880s. He left Beirut for Cairo to attend the Azhar University in Cairo in the mid-1880s, acquainting himself with ʿAbduh's circles there. In the late 1880s or early 1890s, he returned to Beirut to study medicine.[100] Given this biography, it is quite possible that he was acquainted with ʿAbduh and other members of the network in Beirut.

96 Ebert, *Religion und Reform*, 139–140.

97 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:822.

98 W.D. Rubinstein, "Leitner, Gottlieb Wilhelm (1840–1899)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed July 8, 2014, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/51109>. Gottlieb Leitner was born as Gottlieb Sapier, a Hungarian Jew. He received his last name through his adoption by his mother's second husband. In 1862, he was naturalized as a British subject.

99 G.W. Leitner, "Islam and Mohammedan Schools," *The Daily Telegraph*, February 2, 1888. For the Arabic translation: Jī Dublyū Līṭnar, "Al-Islām ʿind al-Inkilīz," *Thamarāt al-Funūn* 14, no. 672 (March 5, 1888/Jumāda al-Thāniyya 22, 1305h): 2.

100 Lital Levy, "Partitioned Pasts. Arab Jewish Intellectuals and the Case of Esther Azharī Moyal (1873–1948)," in *The Making of the Arab Intellectual*, 136–139 and n.45.

Lastly, Riḍā mentions Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra (1835–1901), originally from Damascus and holding the rank of archimandrite within the Greek Orthodox Church.[101] It is unclear if Jibāra was an actual member of the Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb. His ideas about the fundamental unity of the three revealed religions fit well into the network's discussions and concerns. Furthermore, Riḍā explicitly mentions the sympathy ʿAbduh had for Jibāra, who was scorned by many others.[102] Also, Jibāra published some of his early work in Beirut, which indicates that he was acquainted with Beirut's intellectual milieu.[103] However, during the time ʿAbduh was in Beirut, he seems to have lived in Moscow.[104]

In 1892, having fallen out with the Orthodox Church for his disbelief in Jesus' divinity, Jibāra travelled to the United States.[105] In New York, he came into contact with a fellow Syrian Christian, Ibrāhīm Khayr Allāh, a graduate of the

101 There are many different spellings of the name Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra: Khrīsṭūfūrus Jibāra, Khrisṭūfūr Jibāra, Christopher Jabara, Christophoros Gibāra, and many combinations of these. Information on Jibāra is scattered and often quite limited: Fīlīb dī Ṭarrāzī, *Tārīkh al-Ṣaḥāfa al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 4 (Bayrūt: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, 1913), 168–169; Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e Islamici, 1990), 297–298. In addition, there is the insightful Orthodox History blog written by Matthew Namee, a student of history from Wichita State University studying Wichita's Lebanese heritage: Matthew Namee, "Fr. Christopher Jabara, the Ultra-Ecumenist," *Orthodox History. The Society for Orthodox Christian History in the Americas*, November 24, 2009, accessed July 7, 2014, <http://orthodoxhistory.org/2009/11/24/fr-christopher-jabara-the-ultra-ecumenist/>. Lastly, father Georges Berbery of Balamand University gave me copies from a course reader, taught by Ṭāriq Mitrī, which also contained information about Jibāra. Ṭāriq al-Mitrī, "(Al-Arshmandrīt) Khrisṭūfūr Jibāra," in *Christian thoughts and Islam* (*Course Reader*) (Balamand: Institute of Theology, Balamand University, 1989), 65.

102 See also: "Taʿāzin wa-Wafayāt," *Al-Manār* 4, no. 12 (August 31, 1901/Jumāda al-Ūlā 16, 1319h): 478–80.

103 In 1869, Jibāra translated a catechism of the Orthodox religion in Beirut: Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra, *Taʿlīm Wajīz fī Uṣūl al-Dīn al-Urthūdhūksī* (Bayrūt: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Waṭaniyya, 1869). In 1879 he published a translation of Vladimir Guettée's catechism of the Orthodox faith in this city, which is available in the AUB Archives and Special Collections. Guettée was a French priest converted to Russian Orthoxy. Khrīsṭūfūrus Jibāra, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-Urthūdhuksiyya wa-Ikhtilāfāt al-Naṣrāniyya* (Bayrūt: Maṭbaʿat al-Jamʿiyya al-Urthūdhuksiyya al-Khayriyya, 1879).

104 From 1879 until 1887, Jibāra worked as a bookkeeper of a Greek Orthodox *waqf* in Moscow. *Maḥfūẓāt Abrashiyyat Bayrūt li-l-Rūm al-Urthūdhuks*, vol. 1 (Bayrūt: Jāmiʿat al-Balamand, 1998), 123.

105 For more information on the period that Jibāra spent in the USA, see: Richard Hollinger, "'Wonderful True Visions': Magic, Mysticism, and Millenialism in the Making of the American Bahá'í Community, 1892–1895," in *Search for Values. Ethics in Bahá'í Thought*, eds. John Danesh and Seena Fazel (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 2004), 214.

Syrian Protestant College, who came to the US as a missionary of the Bahā'i faith. Khayr Allāh's Egyptian friend Anṭūn Ḥaddād translated Jibāra's book *Wifāq al-Adyān wa-Waḥdat al-Īmān fī al-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl wa-l-Qur'ān* into *Unity in Faiths and Harmony in Religions, based on the Ordinances of the Old and New Testaments and the Koran*, which was published in 1893.[106] In this book Jibāra argued for the fundamental unity of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and studied two of the most controversial issues in the relation between Islam and Christianity: crucifixion and the position of Jesus in relation to God.[107] Also, he added a section on using the Quran to correctly understand the Bible. In the presence of Jibāra, both essays were read out loud at the *World's Parliament of Religions*, held in Chicago in September 1893.[108] A third section of the book was comprised of a letter that was originally sent to the Synod of the Syrian Protestant Mission in Lebanon in 1878. Jibāra wrote that he never received an answer and, therefore, tried once more by sending it to the world's congress of religions in Chicago.

In the middle of the 1890s, Jibāra travelled to Cairo where he launched a fortnightly literary religious journal named *Shahādat al-Ḥaqq* (The testimony of truth) in 1895.[109] The journal's caption included quotes from both the Bible and the Quran. It was Jibāra's intention to publish it in both English and Arabic, but the English edition was delayed from the start. The journal only ran for half a year, but it reflected many of the issues dear to Jibāra's heart: the fundamental unity of religions, the status of the revealed books and their relation to each other, the controversial issues of crucifixion, and the status of Jesus. Regularly, it reprinted excerpts from his *Wifāq al-Adyān*. In addition, the journal bears witness to the many polemics in which Jibāra got involved through his religious ideas. In it, Jibāra printed letters from readers and replies to other

106 Hollinger, 208–209 and 214. For the English translation: Christopore Jibara, *Unity in Faiths and Harmony in Religions. Based on the Ordinances of the Old and New Testaments and the Koran* (New York: Acton, 1893). I consulted the following Arabic edition: Khrīsṭūfūrus Jibāra, *Wifāq al-Adyān wa-Waḥdat al-Īmān fī al-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl wa-l-Qur'ān* (Bayrūt: s.n., 1895). In 1901, W*ifāq al-Adyān* was also published in Cairo by Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif; this edition is held by the Dār al-Kutub in Cairo but is damaged.

107 For more polemics regarding Jesus' divinity and crucifixion, see Ryad's analysis of the polemics between Muslim reformists and Christian missionaries: Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity*, chap. 6.

108 John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893* (London: "Review of Reviews" Office, 1893), 137; Richard Seager, *Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices From the World's Parliament of Religions, 1893* (La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1999), 198–201.

109 *Shahādat al-Ḥaqq* (Feb 1–July 12, 1895).

journals such as *al-Hilāl* (The crescent), *Ṭarābulus al-Shām* (Tripoli) and to Muḥammad Ḥabīb who strongly disagreed with Jibāra's interpretation of the Quranic passage on Jesus' crucifixion.[110] According to Jibāra, the Quran did not deny Jesus' crucifixion but only its attribution to the Jews and the unbelievers, condemning their false claim. Interpreted this way, Jibāra asserts that the Quran and Gospel did not contradict each others' views of Jesus' death.[111] In addition, Jibāra published two other treatises on the essential unity of the religions and the controversial issues of crucifixion and the status of Jesus.[112] He died in 1901; when no religious community agreed to bury him on their grounds, an Egyptian Christian testified that Jibāra had returned to his Orthodox faith, so he could be buried according to the Orthodox manner.[113]

Jibāra's far-reaching conclusions regarding the unity of religions and his trouble with a multitude of his religious contemporaries are indicative of the sensitivity of some of the discussions occurring between members of this network. It is perhaps telling that Riḍā included his description of the correspondence network in a section of ʿAbduh's biography titled "al-Difāʿ ʿan al-Islām wa-l-Daʿwa ilayhi" (The defense of Islam and the call towards it), which seems to emphasize that the network's activities ultimately fit into an Islamic framework and contributed to the upholding of Islam. Furthermore, Riḍā described the interreligious network as secret, although it is not clear what this secrecy implied. The network was also not registered, and there are no references to it in the Arabic press of that time, not even when articles of its members were published.

Additionally, harmony or even union between religions that was desired might have been politically sensitive. Wilfrid Blunt's diary includes a story by ʿAbduh about a letter that ʿAbduh and some fellow reformists sent to Isaac Taylor in 1883. In it, they responded quite positively to Taylor's wish to bring about a union between Islam and the English reformed church. When Taylor published this letter and the Ottoman Sultan found out, the Sultan wanted to expel ʿAbduh and the others from Syria, although this did not happen in the end.[114]

110 See also: Muhammad Ḥabīb, *Al-Suyūf al-Battāra fī Madhhab Khrisṭūphūrus Jibāra* (Al-Qāhira: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿĀṣima, 1895). Jibāra was also involved in a polemic with the bishop of Beirut, Gerassimos Messara, who replied to a letter Jibāra had sent to the patriarch of Alexandria in 1901.

111 Jibara, *Unity in Faiths*, 25–34.

112 Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra, *Khilāṣat al-Adyān wa-Zubdat al-Īmān fī al-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl wa-l-Qurʾān* (Al-Qāhira: s.n., 1895); Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra, *Bayān al-Raʾy al-Ṣawāb wa-Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī al-Ṣulb wa-l-Bunuwwa wa-l-Waḥdānīyya* (Miṣr: s.n., 1898).

113 "Taʿāzin wa-Wafayāt," *Al-Manār*, 480; Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity*, 5–6 (n. 18).

114 Blunt, *My Diaries*, 1920, 2:96–97.

In the foregoing description of ʿAbduh's time in Beirut, the diversity of his connections and the plurality of the contexts in which he operated are salient. The schools and societies in specific quarters of Beirut were tied to global conversations, involving interlocutors around the world. This multi-faceted discursive context is the starting point for the next two chapters, which study *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in context, specifically against the background of converging conceptualizations of 'religion' and 'the religions.' Perhaps inevitably, given its almost endless extent and richness, the context of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in Beirut is not exhaustively mapped, and not all of its cues have been acted upon. The educational milieu in which ʿAbduh taught and the interreligious dialogue in which he participated are highlighted. Yet, even if it is inevitably incomplete and selective, the study of the interaction between *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its diverse and pluralist context opens up a specific window onto the way 'religion' and 'the religions' were conceptualized in a specific locale within a globally interconnected world.

CHAPTER 4

Comparing Religions in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in the Context of Its Conception

This chapter analyzes *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in its context, that is, Beirut in the late 1880s, and the global context that it was tied to at the same time. It argues that ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* responded to two predominant clusters of questions that were asked of Islam and Christianity in the context of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. The first inquires into how 'religion' and 'the religions' were conceptualized in response to questions about how to uphold morality, focusing especially on the communal benefit of (religio-)moral education. The second analyzes how 'religion' and 'the religions' were conceptualized in response to questions concerning the human intellect (*al-ʿaql*), focusing especially on the autonomy of the intellect within this relation. At the same time, this chapter focuses on ʿAbduh's particular answers to these questions in his presentation of Islam in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, in order to understand how he reinterpreted Islam as a religion within a globally converging but locally differentiated conceptual field.

1 How to Uphold Morality?

In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* ʿAbduh writes that religion should never be an obstacle between the souls and their God-given capacities for the attainment of knowledge of the contingently existing world (*al-ʿilm bi-ḥaqāʾiq al-kāʾināt al-mumkina*).[1] For ʿAbduh, this contingent world "requires by necessity the necessarily existent" (*wujūd al-mumkin yaqtaḍī bi-l-ḍarūra wujūd al-wājib*) by which he means God. It is His creation, including the physical world.[2] On the contrary, religion should incite the souls towards the striving for this knowledge (*ṭalab al-ʿirfān*).[3] He does not see a conflict between science and religious knowledge

1 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:447.

2 ʿAbduh, 3:394.

3 Ibid., 3:447. The terminology of 'contingent' (or 'possible') and 'necessarily existent' is rooted in older discussions within the discipline of *kalām* on the rational and logical justification of existence of God. Ayman Shihadeh, "The Existence of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 197–217, doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521780582.011. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* these categories are discussed in the first chapters, which are focused on logically proving the existence of God,

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004398382_006

(both for which he uses the word *ʿilm*)[4], as will be discussed more elaborately below and in the next chapter.

Moreover, ʿAbduh does not only argue that religion encourages the attainment of knowledge. In his address to the Sulṭāniyya School and his Ottoman educational memoranda, he writes that religion itself is best equipped to provide knowledge of the human life (*ʿilm al-ḥayāt al-bashariyya*). For this reason, religious knowledge (*ʿilm*) is vital to the field of the moral education of the soul (*al-nafs*), also called *tahdhīb*.[5] This also means that secular scientific education does not make religious knowledge redundant and should not be discarded.

In the following, ʿAbduh's focus upon religion's morally edifying capacities is studied as a response to a widely shared concern with upholding a morality that was perceived to be under threat. ʿAbduh and his interlocutors considered the decline of morality to present an imminent danger to the social order, which should be averted. I argue that part of ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam was formulated in answer to a question that he shared with his interlocutors in Beirut and beyond: how could people's morality be produced and maintained in a rapidly changing society?[6] In ʿAbduh's lectures in Islamic theology, collected in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, he emphasizes the moral value of Islam, in addition to other values and characterizations. In addition, this study proposes that these lectures in theology were ʿAbduh's contribution to the moral education of the teenage pupils at the Sulṭāniyya School, teaching them virtues of perseverance and community spirit.

A key and global concept of this era, both in Beirut and beyond, reflected the widely shared concern about morality amongst ʿAbduh and his contemporaries: 'civilization' (*tamaddun*). In the lemma on "Zivilisation, Kultur" in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Jörg Fisch stresses that the nineteenth-century concept of 'civilization' in European languages such as German and especially French (but also Dutch) had strong moral-cultural connotations – though these were not as clear in the English language. In this sense, civilization refers to the individual's inner life and its development, often in tandem with the

right after the prolegomena on the history of Islamic theology. Riḍā writes that this part of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* is considered to be heavily indebted to the creed of the fifteenth-century scholar al-Sanūsī, which was imbued with logic and philosophy. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:779. Cf. Watt on the creed of al-Sanūsī: Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 10 and 90–97.

4 In the case of ʿAbduh, the Arabic word *ʿilm* then can be translated as "science", "religious knowledge" or "knowledge" in general, indicative of the semantice this word had in a global conversation in which people like ʿAbduh also drew upon more local and religious traditions.

5 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 1:731–734; cf. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:73–91.

6 Cf. Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 132.

intellectual, moral, and religious formation of the collective. Fisch considered the work of François Guizot on civilization, translated into Arabic by an Egyptian student of al-Afghānī's in 1876, exemplary of this semantic facet.[7] The omnipresent desire for 'civilization' also reflected a desire for moral-cultural development.

This semantic aspect of 'civilization,' directed towards individuals' inner life, was also central in the civilizational efforts of Beirut's late-nineteenth century elite. For example, Marwa Elshakry mentions how the editors of *al-Muqtaṭaf*, Fāris Nimr and Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf, had an individualistic, soul-directed approach to the civilizational project in which they, as members of Beirut's elite, were involved. For them, character formation and self-improvement were considered to be key to progress.[8] Samuel Smiles' book *Self-Help* (1859) was pivotal within this discourse. Encouraged by the American Protestant missionary Cornelius van Dyck, Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf had translated the book into Arabic as *Sirr al-Najāḥ* (The secret of success), after which it was published in Beirut in 1880, and in Cairo in 1888.[9] According to Smiles, societal reform begins with the reform of the self. A better self is rooted in nourishing better habits, instead of granting the subject more rights. Self-help, for Smiles, is self-culture, self-education, or self-discipline, resulting in the formation of character and corresponding conduct.[10]

Similarly, Freemason Shāhīn Makāriyyūs, a member of the lodge Le Liban with which ʿAbduh was acquainted, celebrates the civilizational effect of Freemasonry in terms of its members' moral edification (*tahdhīb*).[11] In addition, Makāriyyūs stresses that the Masonic constitution is moral (*adabī*): it stipulates

7 For the discussion of Guizot's conception of civilization, see: Jörg Fisch, "Zivilisation, Kultur," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, eds. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 753; For Guizot on civilization, see: François Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, trans. William Hazlitt (1846; repr., New York: A.L. Burt, 1899), chap. First Lecture.

8 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, 82.

9 Ṣamūʾīl Ṣmaylz, *Kitāb Sirr al-Najāḥ*, trans. Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf (Al-Qāhira: Maṭbaʿat al-Muqtaṭaf, 1922), chap. Tamhīd.

10 Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character, Conduct and Perseverance*, ed. Peter W. Sinnema (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3–5, 6–8, 17–36; On Smiles' idea of self-help, see also: Timothy Travers, "Samuel Smiles and the Pursuit of Success in Victorian Britain," *Historical Papers / Communications Historiques* 6, no. 1 (1971): 157–160.

11 In a section titled "Al-Mabādiʾ al-Māsūniyya Tuhadhdhib al-Akhlāq wa-Tumaddin al-Mutawaḥḥishīn" (The Masonic principles refine the morals and civilize the barbarians), Makāriyyūs addresses the civilizing effect of Freemasonry on an Indian man who entered a Masonic lodge in Paris. Makāriyyūs, *Faḍāʾil al-Māsūniyya*, 21–23. It should be noted that Makāriyyūs was no longer in Beirut at the time that ʿAbduh attended the lodge Le Liban.

the need for Freemasons to do good, be virtuous, hold onto their morals, teach their children accordingly, and as such to live by example.[12] Through living morally themselves, they set the example for their newest members, their children and others for what it meant to be civilized.

Furthermore, and most importantly for this study, the emphasis on ethics (*adab*, *akhlāq*) was central to the educational efforts in schools in Beirut and beyond. Benjamin Fortna describes a global emphasis upon the inclusion of moral formation within educational curricula and examines how the Ottoman educational policy fit into this.[13] Similarly, Marwa Elshakry notes the moral dimension of education for the late-nineteenth-century Arabic world.[14]

Elshakry also mentions that this educational emphasis upon morality was rooted in older notions of education as moral training. As Franz Rosenthal explains in his *Knowledge Triumphant*, the idea of education-as-*tahdhīb* was a classic theme in Islamic educational literature. Reflecting Platonic and Neo-Pythagorean ideas, "the formation of character and the acquisition of good manners and ways of behavior" were considered to be the principal task of education.[15] This trend was exemplified by Ibn Miskawayh in his tenth-century treatise *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* (The refinement of character), whose exposition on education was included in al-Ghazālī's classic work *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn* (The revival of the religious sciences).[16] By analysing how one of the works of the Egyptian Rifāʿa al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801–1873) draws upon Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* as well as other works, Juan Cole argues that there was a revitalization of the tradition of practical philosophy in the nineteenth century.[17] ʿAbduh himself taught Ibn Miskawayh's *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* in Cairo, as a teacher at the *Dār al-ʿUlūm*, where the book was also officially included in the new curricula at the beginning of the twentieth century.[18] In his memorandum on educational reform for the Ottoman Empire, furthermore, ʿAbduh especially recommends al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn* in the field of ethics (*akhlāq*) for the education of teachers in Islam.[19] Similarly, Fortna describes how the Ottoman

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Makāriyyūs had joined Fāris Nimr and Yaʿqūb Ṣarrūf in leaving Beirut for Cairo in the early 1880s, where they continued their journal *al-Muqtaṭaf*.

12 Shahīn Makāriyyūs, *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūniyya* (1900; repr., s.l.: s.n., 1983), 11–17.

13 Benjamin Fortna, "Islamic Morality in Late Ottoman 'Secular' Schools," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000): 371–373.

14 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 19.

15 Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 285–286.

16 Rosenthal, 289.

17 Juan Ricardo Cole, "Rifāʿa Al-Ṭahṭāwī and the Revival of Practical Philosophy," *The Muslim World* 70, no. 1 (1980): 29–46.

18 Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, 44; Cole, "Revival of Practical Philosophy," 36.

19 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:85.

state referred to this type of classical *akhlāq*-works, amongst other classical works, to foster the moral development of its citizens in 'new-style' state schools.[20] In the following, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam as a particular response to the widely shared question of how to uphold morality is situated amongst the answers his interlocutors gave to this question.

1.1 *'Religion,' Islam and* Tahdhīb

ʿAbduh's contemporaries shared a question of how to maintain moral order, but differed in their answers. Most of ʿAbduh's interlocutors agreed on the special role of 'religion' and the religions in relation to the question of morality, yet differed in whether they attributed this special responsibility to one particular religion or to 'religion' in general (and, consequently, to 'any' religion).

In his *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūniyya*, Shahīn Makāriyyūs includes an article on Freemasonry and religion ("Al-Dīn wa-l-Māsūniyya") by another unnamed Freemason.[21] The anonymous author of this article intricately connects 'religion' (*al-dīn*), as a generic, to having virtues (*faḍā'il*). For example, he argues that one can conclude from Freemasons' virtuousness that they are not opposed to religion. Further on in the article, religion is specifically presented as a reservoir of virtues, a stock of morals. Because of this moral merit, moreover, the author explains that religion is supported and defended by Freemasonry.[22] Such a conceptualization of religion and its worth perhaps also helps to explain why Beirut's Masonic lodge Le Liban considered a belief in God and the eternity of the soul to be the minimal requirements for qualifying as religious and thus essential for its membership even after its 'mother' organization (the Grand Orient de France) decided to drop this criterion, as we have seen in the previous chapter.[23]

Similarly, the British colonial official G.W. Leitner, a member of ʿAbduh's correspondence network on the conciliation between the revealed religions, argues in his articles on Indian schools that 'religion' is indispensable for upholding and improving the morals of the subjects of British India. Accordingly, he strongly advises against, in his words, "our system of secular education" in India. Furthermore, he explains that the close connection between 'religion' (clearly used as a collective here) and morality holds for Islam, as it does for the

20 Fortna, "Islamic Morality"; Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, chap. 6.

21 "Al-Dīn wa-l-Māsūniyya," in *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūniyya*, by Shahīn Makāriyyūs (1900; repr., s.l.: s.n., 1983), 18–30. I have not been able to retrieve the author or date of this article, but it seems likely that it was amongst the Freemasons' responses to the vehement critique that Jesuits raised against Freemasonry. See note 125 of chapter 4 below.

22 Makāriyyūs, *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūniyya*, 20, 23.

23 Makāriyyūs, 18.

Christian religion. It applies to Islam as a religion, like any religion. Additionally, the many similarities Leitner observes between Islam and Christianity strengthen his contention that Islam is conducive to morality, as Christianity is. Thus, the British government should encourage Muslim education. Although Muslim educational institutions have the reputation of being "dens of iniquity" or nests of impropriety among the British public, Muslim schools are actually beneficial due to their high quality instruction in religion and morality (*akhlāq*).[24]

Likewise, in his speech on Islam's spread in Africa, Isaac Taylor, another member of ʿAbduh's network on reconciling religions, praises Islam for the moral benefits it brings to the African continent. Accordingly, the success of Islam in Africa, contrasted with the failure of the Christian missions there, should not be regretted: compared to pagan morality, Islamic morality is a great improvement and an important step on the ladder of civilization. Islam can indeed be used to educate the 'barbarians,' to refine their morals (translated in the Arabic version as *tahdhīb*), and lift their condition (translated in Arabic as *tarqiyya*), as it dispels, for example, cannibalism, indecency, and a belief in magic. Islam's approval of polygamy and slavery are, however, unfortunate in this respect, Taylor writes. In contrast, Taylor appreciates Islam's strict ban on alcohol and gambling to such an extent that he believes that Islam is more suited to doing the civilizational work in Africa than drunk and gambling English traders.[25]

Furthermore, in his *Refutation of the Materialists*, translated by ʿAbduh, al-Afghānī explains that religions and their beliefs result in three character traits (sg. *khaṣla*, pl. *khiṣāl*): shame, trustworthiness, and truthfulness, which are beneficial, even vital, to a society's build-up as well as to civilization and progress. Moreover, a religion, any religion, even the 'lowest' one, is better than materialism.[26] Islam, however, is best equipped of all religions, mainly due to its appeal to autonomous reason, and this will be elaborated upon in the next section of this chapter.

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24 Leitner, "Islam and Mohammedan Schools;" Lītnar, "Al-Islām ʿind al-Inkilīz," *Thamarāt al-Funūn*.

25 Taylor, "Islam in Africa"; Ṭaylur, "Aḥwāl al-Muslimīn fī Ifrīqiyyā." In his reply to Hanotaux, discussed in the next part of this study, ʿAbduh cites Taylor's evaluation of Islam's beneficial moral effect in Africa to reinforce his argument that Islam is conducive to civilization. He also specifically mentions Taylor's preference of Islam over Christianity due to its ban on alcohol. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:234.

26 Al-Afghānī, "The Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 130–74; Al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn*.

The Ottoman Empire's educational policies reflected a similar reliance on religion in fostering the moral developments of its citizens in 'new-style' state schools, which is why Fortna carefully and purposefully avoids characterizing these schools as 'secular.' In contrast to al-Afghānī, Taylor, Leitner, and Makāriyyūs, the Ottomans specifically turned to Islam as a moralizing instrument, reiterating the religio-political foundation of the Sunni Islamic Ottoman Empire. According to Fortna, this turn to Islam entailed teaching subjects such as morality (*akhlāq*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the biographies of the prophets (*sīra*), as well as theological subjects.[27] Complying with this late-Ottoman educational policy, the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya, where ʿAbduh taught his theology classes, explicitly promised to uphold Islamic morality in its appeal to the Ottoman governor of Syria Midḥat Pasha for administrative and financial support.[28]

ʿAbduh's conception of the importance of Islamic religious education matched this close connection between religion, specifically the Islamic religion, and morality. In his address to the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya, ʿAbduh explains that what was to be taught in such new-style schools in the East (*al-Sharq*) was not so much knowledge (*ʿilm*) concerning industry, commerce, or agriculture, but "the knowledge (*ʿilm*) behind these sciences," which is "the science of human life" (*ʿilm al-ḥayāt al-bashariyya*), or that which gives insight into the human soul. This precious type of knowledge is to be found in religion (*al-dīn*) and its ethics (*ādāb*).[29] For ʿAbduh, education (*taʿlīm*) also included, and even most importantly, religious education-as-*tahdhīb* or *adab*, which seeks moral refinement, or edification, and cultural development.[30] Similarly, ʿAbduh explains in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* that education (*taʿlīm*), ordered by the Quran, refers

27 Fortna, "Islamic Morality"; Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, chap. 6.

28 Hanssen, "Birth of an Education Quarter," 155.

29 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 1:733. Cf. ʿAbduh, "Lā'iḥat Iṣlāḥ al-Taʿlīm al-ʿUthmānī," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:80. Indira Falk Gesink describes similar arguments in favor of religious education for ʿAbduh's earlier thoughts on education, before his exile from Egypt. Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 80.

30 In al-Afghānī's response to the materialists, translated by ʿAbduh, the Islamic injunction to teach is expounded upon. On the one hand, al-Afghānī states, a *taʿlīm* is ordered, which focuses on the enlightening of the minds with true knowledge (*al-maʿārif*). On the other hand, al-Afghānī writes that Islam teaches the duty of *tahdhīb* (edification), or *tathqīf* (cultivation), aimed at correcting the souls by teaching about virtues and vices. ʿAbduh's conception of religious education tends towards the second type of education, although he would certainly agree that using one's intellect (*al-ʿaql*) to study the world and its workings is one of the virtues that Islam teaches, as we will see in the remainder of this chapter. Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 172–173; Al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn*, 67. According to Shafie, ʿAbduh uses both the concepts of *tathqīf* and *tahdhīb* to refer to spiritual education, but the first addresses the cultivation of the intellect (*al-*

to the right guidance of the masses, "to enjoin the good and to forbid that which is wrong" (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*).[31]

Moreover, religion is not just one possible source of this moral type of knowledge. In his section on good and bad deeds in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh concludes that man cannot go without prophecy in these matters. He explains that the human intellect alone is insufficient to guide man morally, despite the principal ability of 'reason' (*al-ʿaql*) to reach the uniform truth on bad and good autonomously.[32] A few pages onwards, ʿAbduh reiterates that religion (*al-dīn*, here seemingly referring to Islam) has an exceptionally important role in the field of ethics (*akhlāq*), even rendering it indispensable in putting these into practice.[33] The "uprightness of habits" (*qiwām al-malakāt*), or one's 'habitus', is grounded in beliefs and can only be built on religion, a natural propensity, he states.[34] Reason cannot completely substitute religion's role herein.[35] The next chapter will further discuss the relation between 'religion' and 'reason.'

ʿAbduh's terminology of 'religion' (*al-dīn*), 'prophecy' (*al-nubuwwa*), and 'the prophetic mission in general' (*al-risāla al-ʿāmma*) might give the impression that ʿAbduh also refers to the moral worth of other religions (*adyān*). However, it is clear that in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* he speaks about the moral worth of the Islamic religion in particular (including the Islamic conception of the truth of other prophecies, which I return to in the next chapter). Similarly, in his educational memoranda to the governor of Ottoman Syria and the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām, he elaborates on the desirability of training the Ottoman Empire's Muslim subjects in Islam in particular, explicitly in response to the omnipresence of Christian missionary education.[36] At the same time, his emphasis on teaching Islam for its moral merit refers to teaching Sunni and not Shīʿi Islam. In his memorandum to the governor of Syria, ʿAbduh recommends educating the Nuṣayris (nowadays often called ʿAlawites or ʿAlawis) in the school (*madhhab*) within Islam that the Ottomans followed.[37] Likewise, in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*,

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ʿaql), while the latter specifies the refinement of the soul (*al-nafs*). Shafie, "'Abduh's Educational Reform," 204–207.

31 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:481.

32 ʿAbduh, 3:418–423, especially 421–422, and 449.

33 See also section "Teaching *ʿamal* in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*" of chapter 4 of the present study on the connection between inner knowledge and outer practice for ʿAbduh and his interlocutors.

34 See Saba Mahmood on translating *malaka* with '*habitus*', referring to Ira Lapidus' analysis. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 137.

35 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:449.

36 ʿAbduh, 3:73–91, 93–105.

37 ʿAbduh, 3:100–101.

ʿAbduh condemns the early division of Islam in strong words as well as the elevation of ʿAlī to a divine status by Shīʿi Muslims as exceeding proper bounds.[38]

1.2 (*Religio-*)*Moral Formation for Collective Benefit*

Dyala Hamzah describes how the notion of *maṣlaḥa* (well-being, welfare) and more precisely *maṣlaḥa ʿāmma* (common good), or sometimes *manfaʿa ʿāmma* (public benefit), came to play a pivotal role in the Arabic public sphere of the second half of the nineteenth century.[39] Despite *maṣlaḥa*'s roots in methodological debates over Islamic law, it was very much secularized by that time; the concept was used outside of the field of Islamic law, bureaucratized, but, most importantly, turned into a key concept that was used by Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals alike.[40] Indeed, *maṣlaḥa* expresses a formative logic to the *Nahḍa* discourse: ʿAbduh and others present their actions and ideas as being for some common good, invoking a sense of public benefit to mobilize people to act accordingly.

This section argues that ʿAbduh and his interlocutors' concern with upholding morality was specifically catered to its contribution to the common good; it was presented and assessed in terms of its collective or public benefit. In short, it was an answer to the following shared question: How to benefit and strengthen a community or collective? Similarly, the virtues ʿAbduh meant to instil with his lectures in Islamic theology, collected in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, were

38 ʿAbduh, 3:384–385.

39 Dyala Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh à l'age utilitaire: l'interêt géneral entre maṣlaḥa et manfaʿa," in *Modernités islamiques. Actes du colloque organisé à Alep à l'occasion du centenaire de la disparition de l'imam Muḥammad ʿAbduh 9–10 novembre 2005*, eds. Maher al-Charif and Sabrina Mervin (Damascus: IFPO, 2006), 34–35 and 44. In her article on "*Maṣlaḥa* in Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory," Felicitas Opwis writes: "Literally, *maṣlaḥa* means a cause or source of something good or beneficial. In English it is frequently rendered as 'public interest,' although it is much closer in meaning to well-being, welfare, and social weal." She adds in a footnote that she thinks it is only correct to translate *maṣlaḥa* as "public interest," when *maṣlaḥa* actually refers to "public" wellbeing in reference to the sphere of politics. Most *fatwā*s, in contrast, refer to a single, private case. Felicitas Opwis, "Maṣlaḥa in Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 2 (2005): 182–183, n.3. In this study, however, I generally translate *maṣlaḥa* as *maṣlaḥa ʿāmma* ('common good' or 'public good') to emphasize the collective dimension of its use by the interlocutors studied here (primarily outside the Islamic legal realm). Importantly, this 'collective dimension' does not necessarily connect *maṣlaḥa* to the political sphere, however. It is the welfare of a collective, the well-being of a community, or 'social weal.' In addition, I will explicitly indicate it when *maṣlaḥa* refers to the (cause or source of) welfare for an individual instead of the collective or community.

40 This conceptual broadening of *maṣlaḥa* did not mean that the concept was no longer used within the field of Islamic law, cf: Yasir S. Ibrahim, "Muhammad ʿAbduh and Maqasid Al-Sharia," *The Maghreb Review* 32, no. 1 (2007): 2–30; Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, 80.

a particular answer to this question, as we will see. In short, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam responded to questions of *maṣlaḥa*, presenting Islam through its moralizing potential as a religion that was relevant and beneficial to the community (*maṣlaḥa*). Not everyone agreed with ʿAbduh's answer that 'religion' or, more specifically, Islam was needed for morality to be advantageous to the common good, as the previous paragraph illustrates in a somewhat similar way. In addition, ʿAbduh differed from his interlocutors regarding which community or collective was the intended beneficiary.

Many of ʿAbduh's contemporaries stressed the need for moral formation with regard to its benefits for the collective, of which the morally edified individual was a part. For example, Samuel Smiles postulated a link between the formation of the moral self and collective elevation. In his book's first chapter, titled "Self-Help: National and Individual," Smiles argues that a nation's character and its well-being is defined by the characters of its individuals, which make "[n]ational progress (...) the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness (...)."[41]

For many of ʿAbduh's interlocutors in Beirut in the latter half of the 1880s, 'religion,' and religious morality in particular, were answers to questions of how to benefit a society. Similar to what we have seen in the previous paragraph regarding morality, they differed, however, in whether they attribute this collective benefit to 'religion' in general – and its morality – to any religion's morality, or to a religion in particular and its moral lessons.

Al-Afghānī's *al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn* states that no human society, no social order, nor even human civilization as such, can survive without relying upon religion and its beneficial consequences for its believers' morals.[42] Likewise, Herbert Spencer considered religion to be conducive to social cohesion, while François Guizot describes religion as a principle of association, and ʿAbduh was quite familiar with the work of both.[43] Furthermore, many of his

41 Smiles, *Self-Help*, 18. It should be stressed that Smiles – while sharing an emphasis on the building of character traits, both nationally and individually, with ʿAbduh – encourages the individual not only to educate his self, or his soul, but to do this himself, too, and not to rely on the state. ʿAbduh's reformist plans, on the other hand, are often considered to favor state intervention, to be an expression of the expansion of the modern state, imposing its order "from the inside out," at the expense of the autonomy of *ʿulamāʾ*. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 94 and chap. 3; Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 9, 38, chap. 3; Talal Asad, "Reconfigurations of Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 254–255.

42 Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect."

43 Herbert Spencer, *Herbert Spencer on Social Evolution: Selected Writings*, ed. John Peel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 220–222; Guizot, *History of Civilization*, chap. Fifth Lecture.

contemporaries thought that religious morality was suitable for invoking a concern for the general interest (*maṣlaḥa*) over personal interest.[44] This line of thought was perhaps epitomized in Buṭrus al-Bustānī's frequently cited motto *ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān*, meaning "loving one's country is part of faith."[45] Al-Bustānī had converted to Protestantism himself, but this particular phrase was ascribed (even though probably incorrectly) to the Prophet Muḥammad and was also used by the Young Ottomans.[46] It therefore seems probable that al-Bustānī intended to appeal to a variety of confessional communities with his motto, which is also in line with his hope to transcend sectarianism through patriotism (*waṭaniyya*).

In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh describes how Islam teaches people to work for the general interest (*al-maṣlaḥa al-ʿāmma*, or *al-maṣāliḥ al-ʿāmma*) instead of only for personal interests.[47] He also writes that prophets (as recognized within Islam) teach men what is required for living in a community, and they teach fellowship (*ulfa*) and love (*maḥabba*) as the principles of the whole social order. Human intellect alone is not capable of bringing these virtues about, even though man is communal by nature. For ʿAbduh, this is more proof that mankind is in need of prophecy, and prophets are to the community what the intellect is to the individual.[48] In his memorandum to the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām on educational reform, moreover, ʿAbduh stresses that terms and phrases such as *waṭan* (fatherland) or *maṣlaḥat al-bilād* (the interest of the country) can never suffice to kindle a love for the Ottoman state; only religion (*al-dīn*, but seemingly referring specifically to Sunni Islam here) can truly incite people's zeal for their community (*umma* and *milla*).[49]

While ʿAbduh and his diverse interlocutors agreed in connecting religious morality and communal benefit, they were not uniform in their beliefs about the specific community that should benefit. *Maṣlaḥa* could refer to the collective interest of a variety of communities: empires, nations, confessional communities. Furthermore, these collective entities were given varying political connotations. Even for a single author, this reference could vary according to circumstance, using terms such as *milla*, *umma,* and *waṭan* with considerable

44 Jibara, *Unity in Faiths*, 40; Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 151; Khuri-Makdisi, "Fin-de-Siècle Egypt," 73, 82.

45 On al-Bustānī and his motto, see: Makdisi, "After 1860," 607–608; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 101; Zachs, *Making of a Syrian Identity*, 166–167.

46 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 101.

47 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:445–446.

48 ʿAbduh, 3:432–439, 445–446, 450. The English translation aptly suggests "fellowship" as a translation for *ulfa*: ʿAbduh, *The Theology of Unity*, 102.

49 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:76.

overlap.[50] These differences also depended on whether they focused upon the moral merit of 'religion' in general or of a particular religion. At the same time, we will see that even a morality rooted in a specific religion – for example, Islamic morality – did not necessarily or only benefit the according confessional community (i.e. the Muslim community in this example). In what follows, specific examples of disagreements and ambiguities in what community was targeted in relation to which religion will be identified.

First, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* – as a work of Islamic theology – seems to intend to particularly and primarily address and benefit the Muslim community. In his rebuttal of materialism, al-Afghānī expounds upon the connection between religion and communal zeal. He states that the sowing of a deep conviction that one's own community is superior to others is one of the benefits of religion in general, regardless of the particular religion. This feeling of superiority then inspires rivalry and competition, a determination to never surrender or to decline.[51] In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* ʿAbduh seems to impart such a feeling of superiority through its recourse to Islamic history (*al-tārīkh al-dīnī*) in particular – one of the disciplines recommended by ʿAbduh in his memorandum on Ottoman religious education.[52] In this memorandum, ʿAbduh stresses that history should be taught from a purely religious perspective, aimed at instilling religion (here Islam) among the students. Similarly, history in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* is first and foremost an emblematic history, written to instil religio-moral lessons, to imprint certain beliefs and corresponding character traits upon the soul.[53] ʿAbduh recounts the story of Islam's rapid spread, with which he might

50 Cf. Visser, "Identities in Early Arabic Journalism," 54–71. Dyala Hamzah describes how the terms *maṣlaḥa* and *manfaʿa*, used interchangeably by ʿAbduh, subsequently became more clearly defined in relation to the community that they represented. While Rashīd Riḍā's use of *maṣlaḥa* referred to a pan-Islamic community, Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid employed *manfaʿa* to refer to the interest of the nation, a nation that is itself not ethnically or religiously defined but is in accordance with utilitarian considerations. Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh," 45–49.

51 Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 141–143. Yet, in an article on Islam and Christianity in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* in 1884, al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh distinguish between the religions in this respect. They lament the patriotic aggression Christians display, claiming that this military competition is contrary Christianity's nature of peacefulness and renunciation, while it is very much in line with the Islamic essentials. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Naṣrāniyya wa-l-Islām wa-l-Ahluhā," in *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 61–71.

52 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:80–81.

53 Cf. "(…): Wo ʿAbduh nach der Geschichte fragt, tut er das nicht, um mit Hilfe aller zu Gebot stehenden Mittel ihren tatsächlichen Verlauf zu rekonstruieren, sondern um aus ihr ein Verständnis seiner Gegenwartssituation zu gewinnen, das es ihm erlaubt, seinen Glauben an die Überlegenheit der islamischen Religion aufrechtzuerhalten, obgleich die

have wished to impart a sense of pride and love for one's religion and community – especially as Islam's spread is contrasted with that of other religions, emphasizing that until then, such a rapid expansion was "unknown in the history of religions."[54]

Similarly targeting and benefitting the Muslim community, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was meant to teach communal unity within Islam. In his prolegomena, ʿAbduh addresses the history of Islamic theology without engaging in intellectual and theological arguments about Islamic doctrines.[55] He regrets that this history is ridden with conflict and controversies and is hesitant to formulate a final position on these matters, as he announces in the introduction.[56] Instead, he concludes this section by saying that Islam is a religion of doctrinal unity (*al-dīn al-Islāmī dīn tawḥīd al-ʿaqāʾid, lā dīn tafrīq fī al-qawāʿid*) because it is founded upon reason.[57] Johann Büssow explains that this conclusion resonates with the overarching rhetorical structure of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. After having lamented the state of Islamic theology, ʿAbduh rebuilds Islam's principles before the final chapter offers a résumé of that which all Muslims are likely to agree upon.[58] Mohamed Haddad and Charles Adams describe this emphasis on Islam's theological unity as one of the key elements of ʿAbduh's thought, not only in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* but also in his earlier theological work.[59]

The theme of Muslim unity was already prominently featuring in ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī's Paris-based journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* (The strongest bond) since 1884. Analysing this journal, historian Aziz al-Azmeh concludes that the theme of unity was a fundamental, perhaps even existential, category for modern Arabic historical understanding. He explains how *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*'s emphasis on societal unity, as a prerequisite for its survival, resonates with contemporary intellectual trends such as romanticism, vitalism and organicism, represented by the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, but also with social Darwinism.[60] In addition, referring to *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, Malcolm Kerr points out how the stress on a sense of unity was rooted in Ibn Khaldūn's ideas

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Welt des Islam augenblicklich politisch, wirtschaftlich, und kulturell eher unterlegen erscheint. Wir können ihn daher nicht als historisch-kritischen Denker betrachten, wohl aber als Geschichtsphilosophen würdigen." Rotraud Wielandt, *Offenbarung und Geschichte im Denken moderner Muslime* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971), 56. Cf. Radler, *Eine Biographie als politisches Mittel*, chap. 2.

54 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:485.

55 ʿAbduh, 3:381–391.

56 ʿAbduh, 3:379.

57 ʿAbduh, 3:390.

58 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 296–297.

59 Haddad, "Essai de critique," 180; Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 116.

60 al-Azmeh, "Islamist Revivalism"; al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, 102–103.

on *ʿaṣabiyya*, which Kerr translates as group solidarity, and its indispensability for political success.[61] ʿAbduh taught Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddima* (Prolegomena) at the Dār al-ʿUlūm in Cairo before his exile.[62]

Second, ʿAbduh and his interlocutors did not only seek unity for the benefit of the Muslim community. In response to the sectarian violence of the 1860s in Mount Lebanon and Damascus, many of Beirut's new-style educational initiatives were ultimately aimed at promoting communal unity. In this way, Beirut's elite often referred to the *waṭan*, even though it remained ambiguous if this referred to the Ottoman Empire or to a Syrian identity (probably without political connotations).[63] For educators such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī, the *waṭan* was emphatically not a religious community, as the *waṭan* was a way to transcend sectarianism, bypassing political and exclusivist conceptualizations of particular religious communities. Al-Bustānī wished to return to the peaceful coexistence of pre-1860 and accordingly forbade proselytizing in his school (al-Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya), opening its doors to all.[64] Ottoman Freemasons, including Beirut's lodge of Le Liban, were similarly in favor of non-confessional schools that were open to all.[65] Furthermore, the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya was also founded on non-sectarian principles. Historian Donald Cioeta writes that the Maqāṣid Society behind the Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya was very much in favor of communal harmony. Its members thought that the society's sectarian constitution, being run by Muslims only, was unfortunate but necessary for withstanding the Christian sectarian societies and their schools.[66]

Similarly, the sense of community and unity to which *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* exhorted was not necessarily reserved just for fellow Muslims. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* Islam encouraged tolerance towards other religions.[67] Describing the spread of Islam, ʿAbduh points at how the spirit of Islam implied affection (*ʿaṭf*) for one's non-Muslim neighbors, too.[68] Also, in his biography of ʿAbduh, Riḍā writes that *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was praised for its contribution to the reconciliation between religious sects (*ta'līf bayna al-ṭawā'if*) in Syria by a Christian notable from Tripoli.[69]

61 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 137–139.
62 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 132.
63 Zachs, *Making of a Syrian Identity*; cf. Visser, "Identities in Early Arabic Journalism."
64 Hanssen, "Birth of an Education Quarter," 152; Makdisi, "After 1860."
65 Paul Dumont, "Ottoman Freemasonry and Laicity," in *Freemasonry and Fraternalism in the Middle East*, eds. Andreas Onnerfors and Dorothe Sommer (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 2008), 163–165.
66 Cioeta, "Thamarat al-Funun," 135.
67 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:475–483, 486.
68 ʿAbduh, 3:488.
69 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:780.

ʿAbduh's combination of targeting Muslims while rejecting sectarian strife translates well into his proposals to strengthen Islamic moral teaching to benefit the Ottoman Empire: a multi-confessional political entity that had Sunni Islam as its state religion. Writing to the governor of the Ottoman province of Syria, ʿAbduh includes Leitner's quotation of the Indian Mughal Emperor Akbar that states that religion and government are twins (translated in Arabic as: *al-dīn wa-l-mulk taw'amān*).[70] While Leitner refers to this citation to reinforce his argument that religion, any religion, can foster loyalty to the British government in India through its morals, ʿAbduh, in turn, uses this quote to illustrate how his proposed reforms in Islamic religious education can benefit the Ottoman Empire (*al-dawla al-ʿaliyya al-ʿuthmāniyya*).[71]

In doing so, ʿAbduh appeals to Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd's pan-Islamic aspirations and the Ottoman educational policy in which Islamic morality was used to strengthen the religio-political foundation of the Sunni Ottoman Empire.[72] This is in spite of the fact that ʿAbduh was very critical of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish rule in general at other times.[73] ʿAbduh does not discuss whether other (indigenous) religions than Islam, such as one of the many forms of Eastern Christianity, could similarly inculcate a love for a community or for the Ottoman Empire in particular, but he is clear in both of his Ottoman educational memoranda that Christian missionary education only leads to the opposite: a love for and loyalty to foreign governments and states.[74] Furthermore, it becomes clear that ʿAbduh was wary of the possibility that Shīʿi Islam could result in loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. As Shīʿis such as the Nuṣayris denied the caliphate, they were susceptible to foreign influence. It was best, ʿAbduh writes, to educate them religio-morally (*tahdhīb*) in (Sunni) Ottoman schools in order to guarantee their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.[75]

Besides these abovementioned educational memoranda, there is often ambiguity surrounding which specific communities benefit from upholding and restoring Islam and Islamic morality. In his celebratory address to the Sulṭāniyya School in 1886 on the problems of 'the East' (*al-Sharq*) and its remedies, he describes how 'religion' encourages people to work for fatherland (*al-waṭan*),

70 Leitner, "Islam and Mohammedan Schools"; Līnar, "al-Islām."

71 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:102; cf. ibid., 3:88.

72 Fortna, "Islamic Morality," 370.

73 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 177–183; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 207–215. It is not clear if ʿAbduh's critique of the Ottomans led him to a preference for an Arab-based caliphate, as his friend Blunt favored and if this caliphate would be a political or a spiritual form of Muslim leadership. Cf. Blunt, *The Future of Islam*.

74 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:76, 93–105.

75 ʿAbduh, 3:100–101.

state (*al-dawla*), and (confessional) community (*al-milla*), remaining unclear as to what each term specifically refers.[76] In short, it is possible that the community that ʿAbduh hopes will benefit from Islam is the Muslim community in the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman Empire as a whole, Egypt, the East, or the Muslim *umma* (communities between which he probably saw considerable overlap), while he also remains ambiguous about the potential political connotations of these communities.

In short, ʿAbduh's focus lay first and foremost on uniting and strengthening Muslims, collectively, through Islam, so that they contribute to their communities' social cohesion and strength – whether their community (or *waṭan*)[77] was the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, or the Muslim community (again with varying political connotations). It is clear in this 1880s context, moreover, that the *waṭan* of the Muslims he addressed could *not* refer to a foreign (Christian) state that demanded loyalty, even though he certainly considered cooperation with the British government in Egypt pragmatic in later stages of his life. Instead, their *waṭan* seems to refer to a community of Muslims, a community in which Muslims were a majority, or a community in which Islam was the state religion.

ʿAbduh's ambiguity in these matters raises questions about whether he thought that Islamic morality could also benefit a community without a Sunni Muslim majority or without presupposing Sunni Islam as the state religion. It raises questions about ʿAbduh's views of the relation between Islam and the state and, coincidentally, about what this relation entails for religious minorities, for example in his home country Egypt. This relation was configured in many and diverging ways by ʿAbduh's successors. I further discuss ʿAbduh's views on these and related topics in the next chapter.

1.3 *Teaching* ʿAmal[78] *in* Risālat al-Tawḥīd

ʿAbduh did not only reinterpret Islam in response to the globally felt need for a collectively beneficial morality; his reinterpretation was also a reconfiguration of a global emphasis on action – which will also be discussed in the next chapter. This study argues that his reinterpretation is an answer to a question that

76 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 1:733.

77 It seems that the word *waṭan* (usually translated as 'fatherland') could even be used to refer to a religious community. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, for example, ʿAbduh uses a verb derived from the root w-ṭ-n to denote the communal allegiance that prophets taught (form X, *istawṭana*). ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:446.

78 In the next section, I translate *ʿamal* (and its plural *aʿmāl*) in varying ways: ranging from practice, deeds and conduct to action(s) and activity. The range of meanings show the extent of the semantic field in which ʿAbduh thought and wrote, drawing upon traditions within the Islamic traditions as well as linking with notions of activity in contemporary global conversations.

was widely shared amongst his diverse interlocutors about how to get people to actually *act* virtuously, specifically for the sake of community?

In his reform plans for education in the Ottoman Empire, ʿAbduh writes that the teaching of religious sciences should result in corresponding deeds, springing forth without any effort.[79] Furthermore, he concludes his plans for higher Ottoman education by saying that the combined result of the various disciplines would be "the two virtues of knowledge and practice" (*faḍīlatay al-ʿilm wa-l-ʿamal*); yet, at the same time, these two virtues were the main criterion for the students' initial selection at this level of education.[80] Furthermore, in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh urges the minds to act resolutely according to their understanding of the religion of God as laid down in the revealed books.[81]

Virtuous practice is a familiar theme in the literature on morality in the Islamic introduction. In her book, Samira Haj argues that ʿAbduh's concept of the Muslim moral self was rooted in the work of al-Ghazālī. Following al-Ghazālī, Haj explains, ʿAbduh conceived of ethics as the interiorization of knowledge that is reflected on the outside through corresponding conduct.[82] For ʿAbduh, therefore, the first concern was a believer's beliefs and the internalization of these, which will then translate into right and virtuous practice. According to Franz Rosenthal, this particular combination of *ʿilm*, knowledge, and *ʿamal*, practice, is central to the Islamic tradition of educational literature, prominently including the works of al-Ghazālī. Knowledge should not just be acquired, but it should be necessarily connected with according deeds.[83]

However, this combination of the formation of the self and its conduct can similarly be found in Smiles' book, exemplified in its subtitle, where he promises to give examples of "character, conduct, and perseverance."[84] Furthermore, this last facet of Smiles' subtitle, i.e. "perseverance," is indicative of the importance he attached to virtues that specifically aimed at drawing "character and conduct" firmly together, repeatedly referring to "energy," "industry," and "work." Similarly, virtues such as perseverance (*daʾb* or *thabāt*), but also determination (*ʿazīma*, pl. *ʿazāʾim*), striving (*ṭalab*) and effort (*himma*, pl. *himam* and *saʿy*), were stressed by many of ʿAbduh's interlocutors.[85]

79 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:80–81.

80 ʿAbduh, 3:86, 87.

81 ʿAbduh, 3:472.

82 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 109–117.

83 Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 246–252.

84 Smiles, *Self-Help*.

85 The Arabic word for perseverance used in Ṣarrūf's translation of *Self-Help* is *thabāt*. The term's discursive importance might be indicated by its use as the name of the Masonic lodge al-Thabāt, or al-Thabāt al-Muʿtabar (Esteemed Perseverance), which emigrated

According to ʿAbduh, these virtues were to be found in the Islamic religion *par excellence*. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, he writes that religion (*al-dīn*) is that because of which the worker persists, reaching his utmost.[86] Also, ʿAbduh describes how Islam meant "the awakening of the determinations towards work and leading these on the path of effort" (*inhāḍ al-ʿazāʾim ilā al-ʿaql wa-sawquhā fī sabīl al-saʿy*).[87] Likewise, in his *Refutation*, al-Afghānī especially appreciates Islam's elimination of distinctions between men, contrasted with the Brahman (or Hindu), Catholic and Protestant religions, for leading men to striving, zeal, and competition, and, eventually to civilization.[88]

Specifically, this type of combination of *ʿilm*, *ʿamal,* and perseverance is what is to be invoked in the self for the sake of one's community.[89] Not only a love for one's community should be instilled, residing within the soul and remaining there, but also zeal (*ḥamiyya*), manifest in a deeply felt desire (*raghba*), determination, and corresponding outward deeds for the community. As ʿAbduh explains in his educational reform plan for the Ottoman Empire, loyalty to one's state should be expressed in military action, in the desire to defend it, to actually *do* something for its sake, even though this implies sacrifices.[90] As we have seen in multiple ways, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* imparts a sense of Islamic unity and superiority to the student: the *ʿilm* essential for the eventual *ʿamal* in accordance with it.

An important part of the steadfast activity (*ʿamal*), rooted in proper knowledge (*ʿilm*), should in turn again be directed towards attaining knowledge (*ʿilm*). Again, this attainment of knowledge is framed as being for the sake of one's community. In his 2004 *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, Stephen Sheehi argues that for intellectuals such as Buṭrus al-Bustānī, the desire for knowledge, and a corresponding striving and effort towards it, were the necessary characteristics of the modern Arab self.[91] Sheehi recognizes that the fo-

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graduates of the Syrian Protestant College attended in Cairo. Dupont, "Franc-maçonnerie," para. 13.

86 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:450.

87 ʿAbduh, 3:482.

88 Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 170.

89 Cf. ʿAbduh's lamentation about Islamic scholars not translating their knowledge into practice for the public good in his reply to Hanotaux, which will be further discussed in the next part of this study. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:243.

90 ʿAbduh, 3:75–78, 84.

91 Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 19–25. Sheehi further explains that intellectuals such as the Bustānīs found this desire and striving for knowledge lacking amongst their contemporaries, and therefore, they deemed their contemporaries in dire need of reform to reach success. According to Sheehi, "lack" and "failure" have been central to the paradigm of modern Arab identity, ever since *Nahḍa*-intellectuals laid its foundations.

cus upon knowledge is not alien to Islamic pedagogical traditions. Indeed, Rosenthal describes in his *Knowledge Triumphant* that the necessity of attaining knowledge, the stimulation of the desire (*targhīb*) for it, and the encouragement in the hunt for it form a continuous trope in Islamic educational and *adab* literature, specifically mentioning al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt*, which was edited by ʿAbduh while he was in Beirut as an example.[92] ʿAbduh, too, in his celebratory speech to the *Madrasa al-Sulṭāniyya*, invokes this essential longing for knowledge, as he laments the loss of *ʿilm* as the cause of the East's decline. Fortunately, he says, there remained a lingering striving (*ṭalab*) and desire (*raghba*) for *ʿilm* among Easterners' souls that can now be rekindled, to lead to truth and glory once again.[93]

According to Sheehi, the intended knowledge (*ʿulūm* and *maʿārif*) for an intellectual such as al-Bustānī is unambiguously "positivist, empirical, secular and scientific."[94] Given the predominance of the moral question amongst Beirut's intelligentsia, as described in previous sections, this does not seem entirely probable. In any case, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* encourages its students towards a knowledge which is of a secular-natural as well as a religious nature. While the revelation does not itself convey knowledge about the natural world, ʿAbduh writes, it does encourage its readers to do so.[95] In addition, as discussed above, ʿAbduh also wished to urge Muslims to seek and acquire a knowledge that pertained to the soul, its morals, and inner workings, to be found in religious knowledge. Thus, ʿAbduh's *Risāla* aims at the inculcation of the desire (*targhīb*) for *ʿilm* in both senses.

In summary, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam was an answer to a set of questions shared amongst his interlocutors with whom he was in contact while he was lecturing in theology in the Sulṭāniyya School in Beirut in the 1880s, tying him to globally shared discourses. He reinterpreted Islam in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* as an answer to the question of how to uphold a collectively beneficial morality, rooted in the virtues and according zeal of (a majority of) its individual members, to ensure social cohesion and community spirit. For many of his contemporaries, the answer did not lie in religion, or they preferred another religion, while their answers were also targeted towards a different community.

92 Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 264, 267–268, 279–281. However, Sheehi is right to remark that the need for knowledge was traditionally considered to be limited to the elite, while it was now considered to be essential for the whole society – though probably at varying levels. Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 20.

93 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 1:732.

94 Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 20.

95 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:447.

2 How Do Religions Relate to 'Reason' (*al-ʿAql*)?

After having discussed ʿAbduh and others' answers to the question of morality, the following three sections will explore the religious comparisons in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its context to identify a second question regarding 'religion' and 'the religions,' to which ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam provided an answer: How do 'religion' and 'the religions' relate to the powers of the human intellect, or 'reason'?

In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, there is one section that specifically and more elaborately discusses Islam's relation to other religions (*adyān*).[96] Two types of religions are referred to in this section; on the one hand, the true religions, sent down by God to His prophets, and on the other hand, the corrupted versions of these religions. For both types, the crucial difference is their relation to the human intellect, as will be shown.

First, ʿAbduh writes, despite their messages' essential conformity, even "the true religions" (*al-adyān al-ṣaḥīḥa*) differ in practices of worship, celebrations, and regulations. However, according to ʿAbduh, these differences are intended by God. They reflect the stages of the cognitive growth of mankind, culminating in the ability of reason (*al-ʿaql*) at the final stage, which is how God has created (human) nature.[97]

In its childhood, in its most primitive stage, man could only understand that which he could perceive directly (*mā waqaʿa taḥt ḥissihi*). He could not yet grasp anything that was not palpable or that appealed to an internal sense, his *wijdān*. In this initial stage, the religions (*al-adyān*) came with straight commandments and strict restrictions, clear and easily intelligible, with miracles that appealed to the senses (*mashāʿir*) and worship practices that matched man's intellectual state.[98] After a while, and with increasing experience, man entered a next stage in which he acquired a more delicate perception than purely sensory (*adaqq min al-ḥiss*), a sense or consciousness (*wijdān*) that was more internal. This level of understanding is comparable to that of women or boys. A religion came that mercifully matched this level, ʿAbduh writes, addressing the passions and the heart. It decreed laws that made man renounce this world and his carnal interests and turn to the Hereafter instead, while its rituals were equally befitting.[99]

96 ʿAbduh, 3:472–474.
97 Ibid., 3:472–473.
98 ʿAbduh, 3:473.
99 ʿAbduh, 3:473–474.

When mankind reached the age of maturity (*ashudd*; *rushd*), Islam (*al-Islām*) came and addressed people according to their full-grown intellectual potential. It addressed the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) and appealed to comprehension (*al-fahm*) and intelligence (*al-lubb*, also 'the mind' or 'understanding').[100] Simultaneously, it spoke to the passions (*ʿawāṭif*) and the senses (*iḥsās*).[101] These were faculties that, according to ʿAbduh's scheme, had already been developed in previous stages. For ʿAbduh, it was 'reason,' 'comprehension,' 'intelligence,' 'understanding,' and 'the mind' that set Islam apart from the previous stages in the history of true religion (or the history of true religions).

Moreover, intellectual maturity certainly did not foreclose the possibility of further progress. In an article on "Criticism" ("Al-Intiqād") that ʿAbduh published while staying in Beirut, he explains that the intellect comes with a natural tendency and desire for the better, the higher, and for progress. Criticism, specifically, guards man from stagnation (*waqfa*) and decline (*qahqarā*).[102] In his analysis of ʿAbduh's early work *Risālat al-Wāridāt*, Oliver Scharbrodt argues that ʿAbduh's belief in man's inclination towards perfection, evolution, and progress (as well as that of the created world as a whole) might be rooted in the Islamic "philosophical-cum-mystical cosmologies" with which he became acquainted through al-Afghānī, in addition to responding to the globalizing notions of progress and evolutionism for which Herbert Spencer's thought is exemplary.[103]

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100 While *al-lubb* can also mean 'the heart,' I think ʿAbduh refers here to the more intellectual field of the meanings of the noun *lubb* – especially in view of its combination with *al-fahm* in a sub-clause here.

101 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:475.

102 [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "Al-Intiqād," *Thamarāt al-Funūn* 12, no. 564 (January 18, 1886/13 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1303h): 4. The article is undersigned with ʿAbduh's initials – M and ʿAyn – instead of his full name. In the remainder of this study, ʿImāra's edition of this article in ʿAbduh's complete works is referred to: ʿAbduh, "Al-Intiqād," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:161–65. In addition, the article has also been republished in *al-Manār* in 1901, possibly indicating its continuing relevance: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Intiqād," *Al-Manār* 4, no. 4 (April 20, 1901/Muḥarram 1319h): 121–26. In his chapter on Islam as an ideology, in which he also discusses ʿAbduh's *Risāla,* Tilmann Nagel writes that a crucial difference between the modern European and the traditional Islamic conception of *ʿilm* (which he says that ʿAbduh and others followed) hinged upon if *ʿilm* was conceived as open ended. According to Nagel, Islamic thinkers such as ʿAbduh held that God already revealed all available knowledge to Adam, which means that new knowledge was actually only a rediscovery, while the European notion of science hinged upon the idea of discovery, of new knowledge to acquire. However, since the complete knowledge God revealed to Adam is never fully obtained by mankind, I do not think this conception of *ʿilm* necessarily prevents a belief in the progress of human knowledge, and I am not certain if this distinction between the two conceptions is crucial. Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology*, 258–259, 273.

103 Scharbrodt, "The Salafiyya and Sufism," 102–103.

Still, historian Rotraud Wielandt argues that ʿAbduh's progressive staging (*tadrīj*) of the history of religions in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* is an evolutionary twist that is not familiar to the Islamic tradition of thinking about Islam and other revelations.[104] Similarly, Johann Büssow proposes that in this passage ʿAbduh might have engaged with the ideas of ʿAmr ibn Baḥr al-Jāhiz (ca. 776–869) who claimed, in Büssow's words, "that God had endowed each prophet with precisely that faculty which was most valued in a particular age and among a particular people."[105] However, Büssow continues to explain that ʿAbduh added an evolutionary dimension to it, for which he might have been indebted to Auguste Comte.[106] Furthermore, ʿAbduh's progressive differentiation between religions might be considered quite consistent with Haddad's argument that the Quranic conception of *dīn* refers to "a distinction of quality," which I discussed in the second chapter.[107] In a way, it might be considered a novel and temporal expression of a familiar qualitative differentiation within *dīn* and between *adyān*. At the same time, it might be considered a configuration of global themes through local semantics.

In addition to the progressive differences between the true religions, ʿAbduh also describes a countertendency of human corruption and deviation in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* which introduced a further difference between corrupted religions and those that were faithful to the message revealed to them. Again, the difference specifically pertained to 'reason.' Islam came as a correction to a corrupted religion that led to the religious leaders' decree that religion and reason were not in agreement (*anna lā wifāq bayna al-dīn wa-l-ʿaql*), and religion was science's worst adversary (*anna al-dīn min ashadd aʿdāʾ al-ʿilm*).[108] According to ʿAbduh, Muslims have also fallen victim to this corruptive tendency of antirationalism. ʿAbduh's account of the history of Islamic theology is exemplary in this respect. In the final stages of this history, ʿAbduh writes, Muslims had reached a state of "intellectual confusion" (*fawḍa ʿaqliyya*) in which many falsities were introduced and through which they became distanced from (true) religion (*al-dīn*), from (true) Islam, and from God.[109] Thus, an appeal to full-grown reason is a special and distinctive property of the last religion in its uncorrupted form: Islam in its true form.[110]

104 Wielandt, *Offenbarung und Geschichte*, 31, 37, 58–60.
105 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 286–287.
106 Buessow, 287.
107 Haddad, "The Term Dīn in the Qurʾān," 121.
108 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:474.
109 ʿAbduh, 3:390.
110 Throughout *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, rationality is used to distinguish and contrast true religion from others. See, for example: ʿAbduh, 3:381–382, 453, 488.

2.1 *Converging Conceptualizations of Islam and Protestantism:* Taqlīd *and* Iṣlāḥ

ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam responded to a question about the relation between 'religion' and 'reason' that he shared with his contemporaries. The next paragraph argues that ʿAbduh compared 'the religions' specifically in response to the following question that he shared with his interlocutors: How do 'the religions' – and specifically Islam and Protestantism – relate to 'the autonomy' (*istiqlāl*) of human 'reason' (*al-ʿaql*)? In ʿAbduh's response to this question, there was a convergence between his reinterpretation of Islam and how he and others conceptualized Protestantism. In the process, he contested the Islam of many of his Muslim contemporaries. Furthermore, this similarity between how he conceptualized Islam and Protestantism was confirmed and lauded by some, but ridiculed by others, as we will see.

For ʿAbduh, the maturity of the human intellect implies its independence (*istiqlāl*), its freedom (*ḥurriyya*, but ʿAbduh also uses forms derived from verbs such as *aṭlaqa* and *takhallaṣa*),[111] and its power, reign, or sovereignty (*sulṭān*) – all centred around the autonomy of man and his intellect – free from shackles and chains and unbound. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh ascribes the coming-into-being of the intellect's sovereignty specifically to the arrival of Islam. He writes that "the power of reason was freed" (*fa-aṭlaqa bi-hadhā sulṭān al-ʿaql*) and speaks about "[reason's] return to its kingdom" (*wa-radduhu ilā mamlakatihi*).[112] According to ʿAbduh, this intellectual sovereignty and freedom resulted in the establishment of independence of will (*istiqlāl al-irāda*) and independence of opinion and thought (*istiqlāl al-raʾy wa-l-fikr*), which would lead man to the welfare that God, through his nature, had envisioned and prepared for him. Man's humanity was hereby completed.[113]

ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam as a celebration of the autonomy of reason is a response to an appraisal of intellectual freedom, which he shared with his interlocutors around the world, as ʿAbduh makes quite explicit. Expounding upon the intellectual independence that Islam brought, ʿAbduh describes how a contemporary Western scholar argued that the foundation of European civilization rested upon the people's "acknowledgement of their right to freely

111 In her MA-thesis about ʿAbduh's concept of freedom, both in its metaphysical and its sociological sense, Cilia ter Horst lists all the words ʿAbduh uses to refer to freedom. Cilia ter Horst, "Vrijheid in de islam. Onderzoek naar het begrip vrijheid in Risālat al-Tauhīd van Mohammed ʿAbduh " (Doctoraalscriptie, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2004), 50–52.

112 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469. Similarly, in his article on criticism ("Al-Intiqād"), ʿAbduh states that "the sovereign of [man's] being is the intellect" (*sulṭān wujūdihi al-ʿaql*): ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:161.

113 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469. Cf. ʿAbduh, 3:482.

use their will and their intellect to search for truth" (*an ʿarafa al-ʿadad al-kathīr anfushum anna la-hum ḥaqqan fī taṣrīf ikhtiyārihim wa-fī ṭalab al-ḥaqāʾiq bi-ʿuqūlihim*).[114] Only upon this realization, which took place in the sixteenth century, did the people in Europe begin to undertake research and study, leading to might and civilization.

The Western scholar who ʿAbduh refers to is generally thought to be François Guizot, author of *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*.[115] In explaining the character and success of European civilization, Guizot gives overriding prominence to the development of the freedom of the mind.[116] His collection of lectures was published in French in 1828 and translated into Arabic by a pupil of al-Afghānī in 1877. ʿAbduh himself lectured from this work as a teacher at the newly founded college Dār al-ʿUlūm (The House of Sciences).[117] Guizot argues that an important effect of the intellectual transformation, or liberation, initiated during the Crusades, was felt in the religious domain, although this effect was not immediately observable. It sparked the sixteenth-century Reformation, which in turn decisively freed the human mind, leading to free inquiry – first only in the religious domain, but eventually also in the political domain.[118]

ʿAbduh did not think that the similarity between Islam and Europe regarding intellectual freedom was coincidental. According to ʿAbduh in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, Guizot attributes the European transformation to the historical influence of Islam and the knowledge of learned Muslims.[119] In his section on the rapid spread of Islam, ʿAbduh explains that Europeans only began to yearn for science after they encountered the East during the Crusades, when they learned that "freedom of thought and breadth of knowledge belong to the means of faith, not its enemies" (*ḥurriyyat al-fikr wa-siʿat al-ʿilm wasāʾil al-īmān lā min al-ʿawādī ʿalayhi*).[120] Similarly, ʿAbduh continues, the Westerners learned

114 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469.

115 Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, 16–17.

116 I consulted an English translation of Guizot's work, translated in 1846 by William Hazlitt. Guizot, *History of Civilization*, chap. First Lecture.

117 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 114–115, 132.

118 Guizot, *History of Civilization*, chap. Twelfth Lecture.

119 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469–470.

120 ʿAbduh, 3:491. At other times, too, the Crusades are referred to in order to historically link Europe with Islam. For example, in an article on Islam and Christianity in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, the Crusades are considered to have been pivotal in teaching the European Christians the art of war and the desire for power, conforming to the spirit of Islam. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 69.

from their interaction with intellectuals in Andalusia. This was how they learned to use and claim their full cognitive capacities.[121]

Furthermore, ʿAbduh goes on to explain that the Crusaders found a "freedom in matters of religion" (*ḥurrıyya fī al-dīn*) by which he meant that they rejected the authority of religious leaders. They broke away from following religious authorities unquestioningly (*taqlīd*), inspiring the emergence of a movement of religious reformation (*al-iṣlāḥ*), or restoration, in the sixteenth century.[122] The result of this religious reform project resembled Islam very closely, according to ʿAbduh. In fact, for some who were involved in this Reformation, the only difference between their religion and Islam was the nominal recognition of the prophet Muḥammad and specific ritual practices.[123]

Thus, ʿAbduh conceptualized Islam as a religion as quite similar to his and others' conceptualizations of Protestantism as a religion around the globe. Most notably, he used the same concepts – *taqlīd* and *iṣlāḥ* – to describe Protestantism in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* that were also central to his own reinterpretation of Islam. This shared terminology indicates a strong global convergence in the questions that were asked of 'religion' and 'the religions,' in which the dichotomy between intellectual autonomy and being bound (*taqlīd*) was pivotal to the conflicting answers that were given. Moreover, this dichotomy was widely shared amongst ʿAbduh's interlocutors.

An anonymous member of a Masonic lodge explains how Freemasonry considers its relation with religion (*al-dīn*) in an article titled "al-Dīn wa-l-Māsūniyya" (Religion and Freemasonry), which Shahīn Makāriyyus included in his 1900 book *al-Ādāb al-Māsūnıyya* (Masonic mores). He writes that for Freemasons, religion means the freedom to believe according to one's own intellect and conscience, without the imposition of certain doctrines and without coercion. Accordingly, the lodges were open to all religious people, although it was publicly know that believing in a Grand Architect and the immortality of the soul was an important requirement for all Masons. The article's author explains that the free intellectual exchange between people from various religions was a service to religion, facilitating the spread of its truth.[124]

121 In Guizot's work on European history, the Crusades are indeed specifically appreciated for their liberating effect on the European mind. Guizot does not attribute the full weight of Europe's intellectual turn to the Crusades, however. Most importantly, he does not explicitly consider the Crusades' influence in terms of the influence of Islam. Instead, he locates its worth in the novelty of the experiences and the contact with other civilizations, especially the Muslim civilization, which caused the mind to open up and broaden its scope. Guizot, *History of Civilization*, chap. Eight and Twelfth Lecture.

122 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:491.

123 ʿAbduh, 3:491.

124 Makāriyyūs, *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūnıyya*, 23, 25–27, 29.

The answer Freemasonry gave, however, was contested, to say the least. The abovementioned article "al-Dīn wa-l-Māsūniyya" was explicitly written in response to allegations about Freemasonry as harmful to religion, possibly coming from Jesuit missionaries in Beirut. Jesuits took the lead in vehemently criticizing Freemasonry and warning against it, while Catholic clergy, and Jesuits in particular, were, in turn, criticized by the Freemasons for their clericalism.[125]

Amongst Muslims, ʿAbduh's conceptualization of *taqlīd* and his subsequent radical rejection of it in his interpretation of Islam were also heavily contested. The rejection of *taqlīd* has been a continuous theme in Islamic intellectual history, intimately linked with the appreciation of *ijtihād*, independent reasoning, although this specific terminology is much less prominently used in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. For centuries, these two concepts have given critics of prevailing beliefs and institutions room to advocate change and reform, albeit with great variation in their conceptualizations.[126]

In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh presents the abandonment of *taqlīd* as characteristic of Islam's breach with the existing religions at the time of Islam's arrival. ʿAbduh writes that Islam taught that believers were not enslaved by the beliefs or customs of their predecessors, as mere "precedence in time is not one of the signs of knowledge nor of superiority of intellects over other intellects or of minds over other minds" (*al-sabaq fī al-zamān laysa āya min āyāt al-ʿirfān wa-lā musmiyyan li-ʿuqūl ʿalā ʿuqūl wa-lā li-adhhān ʿalā adhhān*).[127] Similarly, they were not bound to the convictions or wishes of their religious or political authorities. Lastly, they were not to be led by illusionary forces, attributed to graves, stones, trees, or stars. Instead, Islam prescribed the use of one's intellect, demanding inquiry and critical examination based upon logical and empirical proof, as ʿAbduh also explains in his newspaper article on criticism, and as al-Afghānī also confirms in his *Refutation of the Materialists*.[128] Given his full-grown intellect, man no longer needed to be under the command

125 For example, in the second half of 1884, the Jesuit journal *al-Bashīr* (The Herald) published numerous articles warning against Freemasonry. Historian Paul Dumont describes how Masons responded internally to Jesuit slander in 1876 and 1881. Dumont, "Ottoman Freemasonry and Laicity," 159–160.

126 Peters, "Idjtihād and Taqlīd." The great variation in opinions about *taqlīd* and *ijtihād* is, for Ahmad Dallal, reason to question the existence of a specific fundamentalist mode or school of thought (see Chapter 1 of this study). Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives of Islamic Revivalist Thought, 1750–1850."

127 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469. ʿAbduh argues against *taqlīd* by referring here to a progressive conception of time and knowledge.

128 Ibid., 3:452–453, 457, 467–469, 482; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:161–165; Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 171. Cf. Roxanne Euben's summary that "[r]eason for

(*waṣāya*, or instruction) or rule (*wilāya*) of others; therefore, Muḥammad is the last of the prophets.[129] Teachers were merely needed to guide the minds, to direct them to study, not to think for them, ʿAbduh writes.[130] Thus, the abandonment of *taqlīd* is essential to true Islam, according to ʿAbduh, because the following of *taqlīd* may be considered an unlawful innovation (*bidʿa*) that has to be corrected.

Accordingly, *taqlīd* was a central term in the contestations between *ʿulamāʾ* such as al-ʿIlīsh[131] and ʿAbduh. In answering to a global concern with intellectual autonomy, ʿAbduh may have drawn Protestantism closer to Islam conceptually, but he simultaneously contested and conceptually excluded the interpretations of some of the other Islamic authorities (*ʿulamāʾ*) of that time. In her history of the nineteenth-century reforms at the Azhar, historian Indira Falk Gesink describes how ʿAbduh and other critics of *taqlīd* reconceptualized the term, as well as its twin concept *ijtihād*. According to Falk Gesink, reformists such as ʿAbduh, but also al-Afghānī and al-Ṭahṭāwī broadened both of the terms' scope as a legal method and used them to refer to general societal factors: *taqlīd* and *ijtihād* referred to opposing general mind-sets that determined a society's fate.[132] In doing so, they recast *taqlīd* as an obstacle to a society's progress and in opposition to general free inquiry (which *ijtihād* in turn signifies).[133] For ʿAbduh, but also for al-Afghānī, this was what Guizot's analysis of European history demonstrated: the abandoning of *taqlīd* and the establishment of intellectual autonomy led to progress and civilization.[134] In contrast, Falk Gesink describes how the reformers' opponents at the Azhar, such as *shaykh* al-ʿIlīsh, defended the practice of *taqlīd,* as it ensured legal consistency and avoided arbitrariness and corruption. Embodying the rule of law, *taqlīd* strengthened society and ensured its unity, according to al-ʿIlīsh. In addition,

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ʿAbduh thus means the exercise of critical judgment on the basis of logical and empirical proof." Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 108.

129 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:482.

130 ʿAbduh, 3:468.

131 Indira Falk Gesink devotes a footnote to the contested spelling of the name of this scholar, which is also found as al-ʿUlaysh. She writes that al-ʿIlīsh himself noted that his name is spelled with a *kasra* on the *ʿayn* and the *lām*. Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 253, n.1.

132 See also Asad, "Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," 219.

133 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 7, chap. 4 (specifically 59, 66–67, 75, 86), 232–233.

134 Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 171–172; al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn*, 65–66. Al-Afghānī's turn to Guizot's conception of civilization is described and analyzed by: Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 114–115; Margaret Kohn, "Afghani on Empire, Islam, and Civilization," *Political Theory* 37, no. 3 (2009): 398–422.

the practice of *taqlīd* protected the very authority of many of the (other) religious scholars (*'ulamā'*), which the actions and rhetoric of reformists considerably eroded.[135]

The corollary of 'Abduh's rejection of *taqlīd* as a celebration of Islam's conduciveness to intellectual autonomy revolved around the term *iṣlāḥ*; this is usually translated as 'reformation,' but it can also be translated as 'correction' or 'restoration' in view of 'Abduh's use of the term, as we will see.

In stressing that Islam meant that man was no longer bound by *taqlīd* in any way, 'Abduh explains in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* that man was not to submit to anyone *but* God (*al-khuḍū'* (...) *li-llāh waḥdihi*), in keeping with the doctrine of *tawḥīd*.[136] Similarly, according to Cilia ter Horst, 'Abduh's concept of freedom, both metaphysical (*ikhtiyār*) and sociological (*ḥurriyya*), was man's freedom from everything and everyone except God.[137] This does not mean that 'Abduh thought that human free will or human agency was limited by man's submission to God, as I discuss more elaborately in the seventh chapter of this study.[138] For 'Abduh, it meant that Islam lifted any ban placed on the believers' minds to bar them from interpreting and understanding (*fahm*) the revealed books, as religious leaders had ordered. Instead of religious leaders monopolizing the interpretation of the holy books and even questioning the very possibility of understanding them, Islam ordered that every believer know for himself what God ordained in His books: the religion as God had intended it.[139]

Likewise, 'Abduh's friend Jibāra advocates a similar return to God's revelation at the expense of later commentaries and interpretations.[140] For example, having doubts about the scriptural validity of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, he asks the opinion of the Synod of the Syrian Protestant Mission because "[t]he different sects of all Protestants together declare and believe that the only basis of their religions is the Book and nothing else; (...)."[141] However, in contrast to 'Abduh, as we will see in the next chapter, Jibāra's plea "to interpret the Book [by the Book]" implies not only the exclusion of traditions of human exegesis or philosophy, but any human intervention.[142] This may indicate that Jibāra tends towards literalism, desiring a literal interpretation of the

135 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, chap. 5 (specifically 99, 103–105, 108–109).
136 'Abduh, *Al-A'māl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469; cf. ibid., 3:467.
137 Horst, ter, "Vrijheid in de islam," 74–75, 79.
138 'Abduh, *Al-A'māl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:410–414.
139 'Abduh, 3:470–471.
140 Jibara, *Unity in Faiths*, 14.
141 Jibara, 50. As Jibāra did not receive an answer to his question, he included his letter again in his address to the World's Parliament of Religion in 1892.
142 Jibara, 14, 46–47, 50–51 (quote), 52–53.

revealed text. It seems that it was not only the freedom from religious authorities that was advocated by Jibāra, but also the freedom from the corruptive force of human reason. It was not the autonomy of human reason that Jibāra wished to save, it seems, but the autonomy of the revealed text from human reason.

For ʿAbduh, in contrast, the autonomy in religious matters meant first and foremost the freedom from the obligation to follow the authoritative traditions of interpretations (*taqlīd*) by means of turning to the Quran anew. For him, this implied reforming (*iṣlāḥ*) Islam to its original state: a restoration (*iṣlāḥ*). Similarly, according to ʿAbduh, the Islam-inspired Protestant Reformation (*iṣlāḥ*) ushered in a return to its authentic state (*al-rujūʿ bi-l-dīn ilā-sadhājatihi*): a reformation, correction or restoration (*iṣlāḥ*), breaking away from following religious authorities unquestioningly (*taqlīd*) and thus cleaning their religion from the exaggerations and corruptions on the part of the Christian religious leaders.[143] As Johann Büssow notes, it is telling that ʿAbduh simply uses the word *iṣlāḥ* for the (Protestant) Reformation, associating it closely with his own project of reforming, cleansing, and restoring Islam, for which he and other reformists also used the terminology of *iṣlāḥ*.[144]

ʿAbduh was not the only one amongst his interlocutors who conceptualized Islam and Protestantism as similar.[145] In his 1893 *Unity in Faiths and Harmony in Religions,* Jibāra praises both Islam and Protestantism for being free from ecclesiastical government.[146] He writes: "The Protestants base such belief on the doctrines of the inspired books, as the Mussulmans do on those of the Koran, without paying the least attention to the sayings of men. Such an agreement between Protestants and Mussulmans is a tie that tends to bring them together into perfect harmony."[147] However, others thought that ʿAbduh and others conceptualized Islam as Protestantism. Yūsuf al-Nabahānī, *qāḍī* in Beirut, concluded dismissively that reformists such as ʿAbduh borrowed their form of Islam from Protestantism.[148]

The next chapter will come back to ʿAbduh's conceptualization of the similarity between Islam and Protestantism, as part of a further analysis of how

143 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:491.

144 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 293.

145 The analogy between Islamic reformation and Protestant reformation is a common one, both within (Protestant) scholarship of Islam and amongst Muslim reformers (most particularly al-Afghānī). See: Charles Kurzman and Michaelle Browers, "Introduction. Comparing Reformations," in *An Islamic Reformation?* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), 2–9.

146 Jibara, *Unity in Faiths*, 39, 56.

147 Jibara, 39.

148 Seikaly, "Yūsuf al-Nabahānī," 179.

'Abduh reinterpreted the relations between 'the religions' and how this was intricately connected with 'Abduh's and others' answers to questions about the relation between 'religion' and 'reason.' It reflects on 'Abduh's configuration of the relation between Islam, as a religion, and 'reason' as 'religion's other' (for lack of a better label), in contrast with 'the other religions.'

CHAPTER 5

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Comparisons Compared: Reflecting and Producing a Concept of 'Religion'

In his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh defines the Islamic religion by giving a brief overview of its basic tenets, which was initially intended for the students at the Sulṭāniyya School and later for theology students at al-Azhar and for a more general audience of readers in Egypt and beyond. The title of the only published English translation of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, *The Theology of Unity*, conveys that ʿAbduh's *Risāla* was also a work of *kalām*, of Islamic theology particularly well, albeit in addition to the text's educational and edifying functions. *Kalām* has been traditionally associated with scholarly disputation (*mujādala*), in which an argument was built to support one's theological position against another.[1]

The aspect of disputation is most manifest in two sections of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. The first is titled "al-Iʿtirāḍ al-Mashhūr" (A well-known objection), and the second consists of two parts titled "Īrād Sahl al-Īrād" (A ready objection) and "Al-Jawāb" (Reply).[2] In these sections, ʿAbduh formulates objections that he expects will be raised against his exposition on the indispensable nature of the "prophetic mission" (*baʿthat al-rusul*) and "Islam" (*al-Islām*).[3] First, amongst other things, he defends his exposition on the morally and collectively beneficial merits of 'religion' (*al-dīn*, here referring to Islam), especially its contribution to communal unity. He explains that there are conflicts and animosities because 'religion' is no longer taught and practiced according to the prophets' original messages. In the second section, ʿAbduh formulates objections that he expects will be raised against his exposition on Islam, particularly that his account does not correspond with the state of disunity, insincerity, and irrationality that Muslims were in and the fact that many scientifically minded Muslims were leaving their religion. Consequently, ʿAbduh refutes these objections, arguing that he set forth the true character of Islam, its essence

1 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, 154–155.

2 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:448–451, 493–496. "A Well-Known Objection" and "A Ready Objection" are these sections' titles in the English translation: ʿAbduh, *The Theology of Unity*, 104, 151.

3 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:493, 448.

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(*khāṣṣat al-dīn al-Islāmī*) as found in the Quran, which his fellow Muslims had unfortunately abandoned.[4]

In these and other passages, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* evinces a disputation with a number of sides. Historians such as Marwa Elshakry and Sait Özervarli argue that ʿAbduh was among those nineteenth-century Ottoman, Indian, and Egyptian theologians who felt the need to revitalize the discipline of *kalām* in response to critical and new challenges to Islam's truth. Islam's case was to be defended against critiques originating in secular sciences that questioned religions' rationality.[5] Furthermore, Elshakry explains that Islam was to be defended against negative 'outside' conceptions of Islam: Orientalists, European publicists, or colonial officials who represented Islam as irrational, conducive to fatalism, and in many more respects utterly irrelevant for the end of the nineteenth century. ʿAbduh and others – like Ḥusayn al-Jisr – aimed to refute both types of critique, striving to establish the contemporary relevance of religion in general and of Islam as a religion in particular.[6]

Additionally, given the surge of Christian missionary schools of which ʿAbduh warns again and again in his educational memoranda, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* may be considered to have been intended to arm ʿAbduh's teenage pupils against the enticements of missionary Christianity (and the foreign loyalty ʿAbduh thought the missionaries instilled). In his educational memorandum to the Shaykh al-Islām, ʿAbduh proposes that Islam should be taught, in contradistinction with Christianity, in order to protect the pupils from the influence of missionaries.[7] However, ʿAbduh does not explicitly do so in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*.

The aspects described above are intertwined, moreover, as we have seen in the previous chapter. As religions, Islam and Christianity were compared in relation to global questions about the relevance of 'religion' with regard to science, reason, and public benefit. In the process of answering to these comparative challenges, furthermore, ʿAbduh reinterpreted Islam. At the same time, with his reinterpretation, he entered into a disputation with contemporary Islamic practices and beliefs that were authorized by the *ʿulamāʾ*.

4 ʿAbduh, 3:495.

5 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 154–156, 181–182; Özervarli, "Attempts to Revitalize Kalām."

6 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 155, 183–184.

7 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:82. See Christine Schirrmacher's article on a highly influential nineteenth-century defense, or apology, of Islam in India, likewise responding to the direct challenge Christian missionaries posed: Christine Schirrmacher, "The Influence of Higher Bible Criticism on Muslim Apologetics in the Nineteenth Century," in *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also: Christine Schirrmacher, *Mit den Waffen des Gegners: christlich-muslimische Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Schwarz, 1992).

This chapter studies the concepts of 'religion' that are reflected and produced in the comparisons between religions in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in view of the interrelated disputations described above. The first maps the field of ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of 'religion' and the relations between 'the religions' as mirroring a plurality of contestations and relations with his contemporaries. The second part situates ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam as a religion in implicit or explicit comparison with other religions, reflecting his conflicts, agreements, and negotiations with his contemporaries. In doing so, it aims at getting a better sense of the particularity – and at times strategic ambiguity – of ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of religion and reinterpretation of the Islamic religion (*al-dīn al-Islāmī*) within a globally converging field of concepts of 'religion.'

1 'Religion' (*al-Dīn*) and 'the Religions' (*al-Adyān*)

In the comparisons studied in the previous chapter, ʿAbduh and his interlocutors compared religions *as* religions, as sharing some features that make them eligible for the title of religion and comparable as religions. This section will analyze ʿAbduh's conceptualization of 'religion' and 'the religions' as an answer to a global question of how 'the religions' relate *as* religions. It will study the patterns of similarities and differences implied in the conceptualizations of ʿAbduh and his interlocutors, specifically in relation to truth and falsity. It argues that anthropological and theological concepts of 'religion' exist side by side, but also merge and overlap in ʿAbduh's answers to shared questions about the relations between the religions, reinforcing similarity as well as difference.

1.1 Al-Dīn *and Truth*

In a short section of his article, Johann Büssow argues that the word *dīn* has three connotations in ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*.[8] This section discusses the interrelations between the three meanings Büssow identifies, especially in their relations to truth and falsity, and embeds them in a broader context.

First, one of the meanings of *dīn* in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, Johann Büssow writes, refers to religion "as an empirical phenomenon (…) that has various manifestations in time and space."[9] ʿAbduh refers to Manichaeism and Yazidism and concludes by adding "those without religion" (*wa-man lā dīn la-hu*), which

8 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 293–295.

9 Buessow, 293–294. According to Büssow, this meaning tends towards conceptualizing religion "as a neutral overarching category." However, the overarching category of religion is not neutral in many respects, given its roots in a Christian concept of religion as well as its implication in colonial power relations, as authors such as Talal Asad and Timothy Fitzgerald have argued.

seems to suggest that in his eyes, the previous two could indeed be classified as religions.[10] Furthermore, narrating Islam's rapid expansion, ʿAbduh writes that Islam started off with its call (*daʿwa*), "like other religions" (*ka-ghayrihi min al-adyān*).[11] Here, the rarely if ever explicit category of 'religion' (*al-dīn*) seems to be used as a genus or a collective noun. In this sense, it is comprised of 'the religions' as its members, irrespective of ʿAbduh's view on their religious truth(s). It is, in Jonathan Z. Smith's words, an "anthropological" category.[12]

Similarly, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Leitner, al-Afghānī, and the Freemasons refer to the moral merit of 'religion' in general, irrespective of which particular religion is adhered to.[13] Moreover, Leitner uses the conceptual similarity between the religions to argue for very real policy changes. In his article on schools in India, he proposes the introduction of Islamic religious education in British schools in India in order to instil loyalty towards the British in Muslim citizens. Such a policy proposal would counter the British educational policy in India, which Leitner calls "a system of secular education," which, nevertheless, often favored Christian missionary education over other types of religious education.[14]

In his article in *The Daily Telegraph,* Leitner concludes by writing that he expects his recommendations to be met with sympathy by Muslims, which he thinks would be "to the advantage of real religion throughout the world."[15] It remains enigmatic what "real religion" is for Leitner. Particularly in the article's Arabic translation in the journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, this idea of "real" religion carries the connotation of the religion of truth (*dīn al-ḥaqq*).[16] Similarly, the Masonic emphasis on free interaction between adherents of different religions seemed to be ultimately geared towards finding 'truth.'[17]

10 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:386, quoted in Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 294.

11 ʿAbduh, 3:485 quoted in Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 293–294.

12 Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," 269.

13 Leitner, "Islam and Mohammedan Schools;" Al-Afghānī, "The Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 130–74; Makāriyyūs, *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūniyya*, 23; Makāriyyūs, *Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-Māsūniyya*, 125–126.

14 "In my humble opinion, our greatest mistake in that country [India] has been our system of secular education, and our displacement of the indigenous schools which ought to have been developed so as to combine ancient culture with modern requirements"; and, "In my humble opinion we ought to set aside the first hour in Government schools in India to the separate religious teaching of the various denominations frequenting them in their own faiths, the remaining five hours of secular instruction being enjoyed in common by all denominations." Leitner, "Islam and Mohammedan Schools."

15 Leitner, "Islam and Mohammedan Schools."

16 Līthar, "Al-Islām ʿind al-Inkilīz."

17 Makāriyyūs, *Al-Ādāb al-Māsūniyya*, 18–30.

A similar ambivalence with regard to 'religion' and truth is at play in a second meaning of *al-dīn* that resonates in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its context. The empirical existence of 'religion' – as a genus – and its members was considered to be dependent upon 'religion' (or: religiosity) being considered a universal trait of mankind. For Freemasons, as described in Shahīn Makāriyyūs' work, religion is a sensitivity (*iḥsās*) that is deeply rooted in man's natural disposition (*fiṭra*) and in the human soul (*nafs*).[18] This trope of human religiosity also figures in an article on Islam and Christianity in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, which argues that man is naturally inclined towards religion, even when he has renounced his religion; it is the first "color" with which God paints man's soul.[19]

Similarly, Johann Büssow contends that one of the connotations of *dīn* in ʿAbduh's *Risāla* is that it is an "anthropological constant."[20] Complementing the human faculty of reason, ʿAbduh explains, religion, or *al-dīn*, is rooted in human nature: the human faculty of religiosity. It is "a general sense" (*al-dīn huwa iḥsās ʿāmma*), "an instinctive and natural impulse" (*al-dīn ashbah bi-l-bawāʿith al-fiṭriyya al-ilhāmiyya*) with which man is endowed by God.[21] Furthermore, ʿAbduh describes the evolution of the religions as an aspect of the history of mankind (*al-insān*), as we have seen in the previous chapter, thereby suggesting again that religion and religions are a general trait of humanity.[22] As 'an anthropological constant,' 'religion' may well be conceptualized 'anthropologically.'

However, in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, the religion (*al-dīn*) for which human nature is universally programmed and which is praised for its particular moral merit may be a natural category; it is also a theological category. It is the religion of God's prophets, as recognized in the Quran, and this is the third connotation of *dīn* that Büssow lists.[23] It is the religion that God revealed. So, although man's natural disposition (*fiṭra*) may be universal, it is not religiously neutral. Given that it is created by God, only true religion – which Islam ultimately represents – befits man's *fiṭra* (or vice versa: man's *fiṭra* only befits Islam). It is important to note that this is also the 'religion' (*al-dīn*) to which ʿAbduh attributes a unique role in the field of morality in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, defending its contemporary

18 Ibid., 23; Makāriyyūs, *Faḍāʾil al-Māsūniyya*, 125–126. See Chapter 8 for Farīd Wajdī's views on human religiosity (*tadayyun*) as a general trait of human nature.

19 Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 63–64, 71.

20 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 293, 295.

21 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:451, 450 (in order of appearance of quotations).

22 ʿAbduh, 3:473–475.

23 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 294.

relevance.[24] In accordance with the theological content of ʿAbduh's *Risāla*, its concept of *dīn* is predominantly, though not singularly, theological.

Moreover, as "the religion of God" (*dīn Allāh*), ʿAbduh conceptualizes 'religion'(*al-dīn*) as essentially singular. In the section about "al-Dīn al-Islāmī, aw al-Islām" (The Islamic religion, or Islam) in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh describes how, at its inception, Islam (*al-Islām*) found mankind divided in matters of religion (*shiyaʿ fī al-dīn*). As a way to end these harmful disagreements, Islam then taught that there is but one absolute truth (*al-yaqīn*), one essential message of God, and all else is falsely conceived as connected to God. ʿAbduh writes that Islam declared that "the religion of God is one in all times and in the languages of all prophets" ((…) *anna dīn Allāh fī jamīʿ al-azmān wa-ʿalā alsun jamīʿ al-anbiyāʾ wāḥid*) and that this religion, the one from God, coincides with Islam.[25] ʿAbduh explains that the message sent to Muḥammad is essentially the same that God sent to His previous messengers, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Such a notion of *dīn* is not alien to the Islamic tradition, given the Quran's recognition of Ibrāhīm as a *ḥanīf*, the recognition of previous prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus and the special status it attributes to the *Ahl al-Kitāb* ('People of the Book'). ʿAbduh quotes various corresponding Quran verses.[26]

The outer boundaries of this conceptualization of 'religion' are similarly defined by its relation to truth. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* ʿAbduh refers to the conquest of truth (*ḥaqq*) over falsity (*bāṭil*) when he writes about Islam's expansion, classifying the people's existing beliefs as delusions or superstitions (*awhām*).[27] David Chidester describes how missionaries used the category of superstition to discursively exclude the people's beliefs from the category of religion. Chidester writes that the distinction between religion and superstition even provided the basic framework for missionaries' comparative religion.[28] In addition, Talal Asad writes that the relatively new category of 'superstitions' in eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries' evolutionary thought was a terminology rooted first and foremost in reason; it was a rational "unmasking" of the truth of religious beliefs as remnants of irrationality.[29] Given ʿAbduh's conception of true 'religion' as rational, the terminology of 'superstitions' may well be a terminology of reason *and* religious truth.

24 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:414–422, 449.
25 ʿAbduh, 3:471.
26 ʿAbduh quotes Q3:19, Q3:67, Q42:13, Q3:64. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:471.
27 ʿAbduh, 467–468, 485, 490.
28 Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 84–85.
29 Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 35.

In a way, ʿAbduh's conceptualization of *al-dīn* as an uncountable and generalized noun is reminiscent of Glei and Reichmuth's witty characterization of the conceptualization of *religio* by the Christian Church Fathers: "*religio* becomes indeed uncountable because there is only one religion."[30] Similarly, for ʿAbduh, *al-dīn* refers to 'the religion' – the only and singular religion of God, or simply 'religion.'

1.2 Al-Adyān *and Truth*

Despite this conceptual singularity, in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, *al-dīn* is a collective noun in a theological respect, too. As "the religion of God," *al-dīn* comprises the divinely inspired religions (*al-adyān*), based on the messages God sent to previous prophets. The essence of the true religions (*al-adyān al-ṣaḥīḥa*) is one in spite of the variation among their rituals and celebrations.[31] Indeed, for ʿAbduh, God's truth is essentially one. Similarly, in a letter to Isaac Taylor, ʿAbduh writes about the essential unity of truth amongst the three religions (*ahl al-adyān al-thalātha*):

> I was in venerable Jerusalem to visit the holy places which the people of the Three Religions unitedly exalt. The visitor notices in these [places] that it is as if there is one family tree (*dawḥa*), that is, the true religion (*al-dīn al-ḥaqq*), from which numerous twigs branch out[. I]ts unity in type and character and the singularity of its origin are not impaired by the visitor's observations of the variety of [the tree's] leafs or the splitting of its branches[. T]he visitor decides, furthermore, on the similarity of the [tree's] fruit, identical in colour and flavour[. I]t has been concentrated in the Islamic religion, which draws from all [of the tree's] roots and its stems[. T]hus, [the Islamic religion] is its epitome (*fadhlaka*), and the destination (*ghāya*) where its course ended (…).[32]

He adds that Islam's call to the unity and unicity of God is what people must return to in case of too much divergence from it. Thus, ʿAbduh postulates an essential unity of truth between the three religions, in which Islam constituted the central essence. In this sense, the true religions are similar as well as hierarchically differentiated.

This section analyzes the ways in which ʿAbduh conceptualizes similarity and difference between 'the religions' in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its context. It

30 Glei and Reichmuth, "Religion," 250.

31 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:472.

32 Translation mine. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2:359.

analyzes the conceptual roots of the interplay between ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam in competition with other religions as well as his conception of Islam's similarity to other religions, revealing a tension that Johann Büssow already hints at in his article.[33] It argues that, similar to what we have seen with regard to ʿAbduh's conceptualization of 'religion' (*al-dīn*), ʿAbduh also merges theological and non-theological conceptualizations with regard to 'the religions' (or *al-adyān*).

Besides sharing a singular essential truth, the true religions also share a singular temporality in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. Moreover, this singular temporality was the foundation of their differentiation. ʿAbduh integrates the religions into one history, describing the progressive evolution of religion and the religions in tandem with the growth of man's cognitive and intellectual capacities. According to Rotraud Wielandt, this temporal singularity is a break with at least the Quranic conception of other religious communities (pl. *umam*). In contrast to ʿAbduh's temporal unity of religions, the Quranic histories of other religious communities are closed epochs, without historical continuity between them.[34] While the Quran mentions the stories of other religious communities, it does not place them in one grand temporal frame, as ʿAbduh does in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. In contrast with ʿAbduh's evolutionary history, the Quran does not temporally connect the histories of religious communities.

According to historian Reinhart Koselleck, a progressive conception of time is typically modern, rooted in the conceptual changes associated with the onset of modernity, or the *Neuzeit.* It is also indicative of a singular time conception, as progress can only be conceptualized when the past and the future are considered and experienced as unique and singular. This singularity is rooted in a new concept of history, or History, as a collective singular. Through its singularity, furthermore, the concept of history necessarily extends spatially, resulting in world history.[35] Thus, one might say, a progressive conception of

33 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 302.

34 Wielandt, *Offenbarung und Geschichte*, 58.

35 Reinhart Koselleck, "The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity," in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 165; Reinhart Koselleck, "Author's Preface," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 4; Koselleck, "Historia Magistra Vitae. The Dissolution of the Topos Into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process," 34–35; Reinhart Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 267–268. Anthropologist Johannes Fabian argues that the universalization and generalization of time resulted from a process of naturalization, in which time was liberated from events meaningful to mankind. Johannes Fabian,

time unites, gathering multiple histories with multiple religions in one rising History.

Though new, the integration of the true religions in one History was perhaps not so controversial in the Islamic tradition, given the familiarity with the unity of the religion of God across prophecies or revelations (reflected in the special status of the *Ahl al-Kitāb*). In other circles surrounding ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, however, great outrage ensued over similar ideas. In his speech to the Church Congress in Wolverhampton in 1887, published in translation in *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, the English priest Isaac Taylor lectured about new missionary strategies in Africa. He wrote:

> Muslims are already imperfect Christians. Let us try to perfect their religion rather than vainly endeavour to destroy it, and we may possibly transform Islam into Christianity. Thus we may find that in God's scheme, Mahomet has been preparing the way for Christ. (Cheers)[36]

Instead of opposing truth to non-truth, Taylor gives evidence of a belief in higher and lesser forms of Truth in one historical scheme. Taylor was quite sure that this conception of the religions would resonate well with Muslim conceptions of the relations between the revealed religions.[37] Taylor writes provocatively in his *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook*: "An educated Mahommedan, if asked why he does not become a Christian, may not improbably reply that, according to his own interpretation of the New Testament, he is one already"; yet, he was aware that the Muslims he spoke with believed Christians had dissented from the message they were originally given.[38] Missionaries should tap into these beliefs, Taylor argues, aiming at the transformation of Islam rather than conversion. This aroused great controversy in England at the Church Congress, manifest in the many textual interjections like "laughter," "confusion," and "amazement" that were inserted into the text of the lecture as it was published in journals such as *The Times*, as well as the *Pall Mall Gazette*, *St James' Gazette,* and *The Spectator*.[39]

Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 13–17.

36 Taylor, "The Church Congress," *The Times*.

37 Taylor, *Leaves From an Egyptian Notebook*, chap. 13 and 14. These chapters also appeared in adapted form in two articles in the *St James' Gazette* and were consequently translated into Arabic and published in *Thamarāt al-Funūn* in 1888. See note 91 and 92 of chapter 4.

38 Taylor, *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook*, 115.

39 The controversy is well described and analyzed by Thomas Prasch: Prasch, "Which God for Africa." Taylor's position on Islam and civilization was certainly not unique in late-nineteenth-century England. Prasch identifies it as the "Islamicist" position, which Taylor

While progressive time may unite the religions by postulating a universal time, it may also divide, anthropologist Johannes Fabian warns emphatically. History might be singular and universal, but progress was not considered to be distributed in a universally equal manner; between societies, within societies, even between human capacities, considerable differences with regard to the level of progress or development were observed, as Koselleck also notes.[40] This inequality of progress, being a temporal concept, implied the possibility of "(…) the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous, or perhaps, rather, of the nonsimultaneous occurring simultaneously."[41] Or, as Fabian explains, by comparing contemporaneous societies in temporal terms and denying them coevality a spatialization of time could occur.[42] Paradoxically, as Koselleck rightly notes, this spatialization of progressive time, predicated upon singularity, meant a multiplication of times.[43]

With his evolutionary scheme of the true religions, ʿAbduh realizes the divisive effects of a progressive temporality. Even though all true religions originate in God, only one religion – necessarily the last one – corresponds with humanity's last stage. As Islam is the last religion revealed, the other true religions, despite their divine truth, lie in its past. In this sense, ʿAbduh introduces differences within true religion, between true religions, with his progressive history of true religion. According to Rotraud Wielandt, this is a break with the Quranic conception of religion (*dīn*), as truth is no longer one.[44] However, ʿAbduh's conceptual navigation between the singularity of true 'religion' and the plurality of true 'religions' might be considered to match quite well with Haddad's argument about the Quranic conception of *dīn*; there, Jews and Christians were attributed a *dīn* in addition to Muslims, yet, according to Haddad, this did not imply a plurality of 'religions' (*adyān*) but "a distinction of quality" within the concept of *dīn*.[45] However, ʿAbduh's conceptualization also differed from the concept of *dīn* in the Quran, where this qualitative differentiation within *dīn* was not conceptualized in temporal terms and there is no plural of *dīn* – that is, *adyān*.

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shared with people like Richard Burton, Winwood Read, R. Bosworth Smith, Edward Blyden, Wilfrid Blunt (notably a good friend of ʿAbduh), and Joseph Thomson. Prasch, 56–57.

40 Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 266–267.

41 Koselleck, 266.

42 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 15.

43 Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 269.

44 Wielandt, *Offenbarung und Geschichte*, 59, 64.

45 Haddad, "The Term Dīn in the Qur'ān," 121.

As especially Fabian emphasizes again and again, this act of the spatialization of time or the 'contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous' is a political act. Fabian points out how the conceptualization of the temporal difference between the West and the non-West legitimized and continues to legitimize Western intervention in the non-West.[46] Taylor is no exception to this type of reasoning, explicitly affirming British superiority in the introduction to his *Leaves of an Egyptian Notebook*. However, Taylor's relative appreciation of Islam does lead him to very different missionary and colonial strategies, proposing to use Islam to civilize the Africans as well as to reform Islam to civilize the Muslims; however, it is highly questionable if he thought it conceivable that Muslims would ever be able to truly catch up with the Aryan-Christian Britons.[47]

'Abduh turns this type of colonial "chronopolitics" around.[48] He establishes the temporal superiority of Islam over other true religions, invoking communal pride and the desire to act correspondingly in the process. In a way, his evolutionary scheme of the religions functions as a temporal complement to the anti-colonial and pan-Islamic argument that he and al-Afghānī had put forth in the journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* in 1884.

In addition to progressive differences between the religions, another mechanism of differentiation affects the category of true religion. For all true religions, as we have seen, the passage of history carries the risk of degeneration, introducing a cyclical notion of history in addition to the linear one on which the notion of progress is predicated. This theme of decline (*taqahqur*, *qahqarā*, *inḥiṭāṭ*) through corruption (*fasād*) or novelties (sg. *biḍʿa*, pl. *bidaʿ*) is

46 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 144.

47 Taylor, *Leaves From an Egyptian Notebook*, vii. One might characterize Taylor's twofold missionary strategy as the pluralization of the politics of time, predicated on the multiplicity of contemporaneous times – or spatialized times. Taylor did not attribute to Islam any role regarding Christians – as Christianity's past. Yet, at the same time, he attributed to Islam an important role regarding pagans in Africa – as Paganism's future. I am not certain how the factor of 'race' – very evident in Taylor's later book *Origin of the Aryans* (1890) in which he defined race craniometrically and physiognomically but emphatically not linguistically – would translate into Muslims' civilization potential. For Taylor, some of the higher stages of civilization were only reserved for higher races. For example, Prasch quotes Taylor's racist comments on "negroes": for "the true negroes of Nigratia, whose cerebral development is far lower, the creed of Islam would, for the present appear to be the highest form of faith that they can attain and retain." Prasch, "Which God for Africa," 59–60. Similarly, I would surmise that non-Aryan Muslims would not be able to reach the highest form of civilization – although Christianity seems to be within their reach.

48 "In short, *geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*." Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 144.

a common theme in the Islamic history of thinking about Islam in time. It is conceived as a tendency that constantly has to be warded off, historian Samira Haj explains, through reforms aimed at correction and restoration (*iṣlāḥ*).[49] In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh also applies this logic to other religions. ʿAbduh recounts how other religions were also corrupted through the introduction of *bidaʿ*.[50] Somewhat similarly, he occasionally refers to the distortion or forgery (*taḥrīf*) of other scriptures, such as the Old and New Testament, which is a widely known trope in Islamic thinking.[51]

The degeneration of Islam led ʿAbduh to the conclusion that while Islam is the most progressive religion, most of his Muslim contemporaries are not so progressive. They have deviated from Islam's original message, degenerating from its high form of rationality, and in so doing have become temporally distanced from true Islam and true religion (*al-dīn*). These were the harsh temporal-theological politics of Islamic Reform, introducing temporal difference within the Muslim community and legitimizing reform. According to their self-view, reformers such as ʿAbduh guided contemporary Muslims from the past to the present.[52] Paradoxically, making the temporal mechanisms of ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of *dīn* even more complex, this reform meant a restoration of how Islam was truly and originally revealed, for which the Quran and the interpretations of the first generations (the *salaf*) provided a key. In this sense, it was a return to the past in order to progress in the present and future.

ʿAbduh's temporal differentiation also applies to other true religions. Thus, although editor Muḥammad ʿImāra states in footnotes that the religions to which *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* refers as being revealed in the first and second phases

49 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 7–9. Cf. Wielandt, *Offenbarung und Geschichte*, 42.

50 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:474. In an article on Islam and Christianity in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī discuss the corruption of the Islamic and Christian religions. According to them, this process led to the two religions having switched characters. al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 67.

51 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:457; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Taḥrīf," eds. P. Bearman et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition* (Brill Online, 2012), accessed April 9, 2014, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/tahrif-s1M_7317>.

52 Isaac Taylor seems to apply a similar temporal difference. While Christianity may have been at the summit of History for him, he complained about the uncivilized and un-Christian state of present-day English society – and particularly the labouring classes – and of that of Southern Italy. Taylor was not pleased with the drinking and gambling English traders who were supposed to bring civilization to Africa. It seems to be the main reason for Taylor to let Islam do the civilizational work in Africa, with its stricter enforced ban on alcohol and gambling. So, for Taylor, the 'internal other' was even further distanced in time from true Christianity and civilization than the Muslim.

of human rationality are Judaism (*al-diyāna al-mūsawiyya*) and Christianity (*al-masīḥiyya*) respectively, these primal religions should be distinguished from the Christian and Jewish beliefs and practices of later periods.[53] The people who were given Jesus' and Moses' prophetic messages had dissented from them, according to ʿAbduh in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, quoting verse 3:19 from the Quran to corroborate his statement.[54] Thus, while Christianity, in its primeval form, represents a truth, contemporary Christians' beliefs did not because of their dissent.

With regard to the true religions in degenerated form, the theological and non-theological conceptualizations of *dīn* and the *adyān* that ʿAbduh uses in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* merge. A corrupted *dīn* silently slips from the theological category of true religion towards a concept of religion that is more neutral to its truth. Yet, nowhere here does ʿAbduh explicitly and completely exclude the contemporary Christian or Islamic religion from the category of true religion. Indeed, there is always the possibility of restoration (*iṣlāḥ*). ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of *dīn* and *adyān* reflect this ambiguity.

Still, the concept of the unity of the uncorrupted religions could spill over into a plea for tolerance for and harmony with contemporary Christians and Jews; ʿAbduh describes how Islam allows for intermarriage with the People of the Book and eating their food.[55] This would fit with the plea of many of Beirut's intellectuals for communal harmony and transcending sectarianism, and it resonates with the aims of ʿAbduh's Jamʿiyyat li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Taqrīb (Society for Harmony and Conciliation) between the revealed religions. Yet, in no way would this imply that ʿAbduh gave up the superiority of Islam in its true form as the other religions' essence and the highest stage of their shared history.

The various patterns of similarity and difference all reinforce true Islam's superiority over other true religions, over corrupted true religions, or over any other religion regardless of its truth. This is "the play of similarity and difference" regarding 'religion' and 'the religions' that ʿAbduh evinces in his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, malleable to contestations with the colonizer, with fellow Ottoman or Egyptian Christian communities, and with fellow Muslims at the same time.[56] Most pressingly, these contestations revolved around questions concerning the role of religion in communal matters, which hinged upon the

53 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, vol. 3, n. 280, 283.

54 ʿAbduh, 3:471. Verse 3:19 goes as follows, in the English translation of Arthur J. Arberry: "The true religion with God is Islam. Those who were given the Book were not at variance except after the knowledge came to them, being insolent one to another. And whoso disbelieves in God's signs. God is swift at the reckoning."

55 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:475.

56 Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 266.

question of its relation to reason and nature, which I return to in the second part of this chapter.

1.3 *The Special Case of Islam and Protestantism*

ʿAbduh's conceptualization of the relations between Islam and Protestantism – a key comparison in ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its context – may shed light on these patterns of similarity and difference between the religions.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, ʿAbduh argues that the degeneration of true religion was largely brought about by *taqlīd*, or the rigid following of religious authorities and the superstitions (*awhām*) that they introduced. The key to turn this around was a return to the original text, as both true Islam and the Protestant Reformation correctly understood, mirroring the historical connection between the two religions. The text was the anchor of *iṣlāḥ* (Islamic as well as Protestant) in all times and all places.[57] Moreover, as a symbol of a rejection of *taqlīd* and *awhām*, this turn to the revealed text was illustrative of the two religions' compatibility with 'reason.'

Yet, the shared concern for a return to the text leads Protestants and Muslims to consult different revelations. This difference in revelation is a main source of differentiation within these two religions. Protestantism and Islam can never really be identical in truth. First, within the evolutionary scheme of religions, earlier revelations such as the Bible or the Torah might have been true, but they were also directed to mankind in a not yet fully developed form. Only the Quran appealed to man in his full-grown humanity and rationality. Second, as we have seen, ʿAbduh occasionally refers to the notion of *taḥrīf*, the forgery of the revealed texts by Christians and Jews, because of which their books were not in their original states at the arrival of Islam – and still are not. While Muslims have a text to surely return to, as an immutable beacon, Christians – including Protestants – might not, in ʿAbduh's eyes.

In one of his letters to the Anglican priest Isaac Taylor, however, ʿAbduh writes that he and Taylor will surely see how the Old and New Testaments and the Quran "will become mutually agreeing books" (*satuṣbiḥ kutuban mutawāfiqatan*), read by believers and religious leaders of the two communities (i.e. Christian and Muslim) alike, and God's true religion (*dīnuhu al-ḥaqq*) will then triumph over religion as a whole (*al-dīn kullihi*).[58] In this letter to a fellow member of the Society of Harmony and Conciliation, ʿAbduh seems convinced

57 Cf. "(…) wa-baqiya al-Qurʾān qāʾiman ʿalā ṣirāṭihi" (and the Quran remained, preserving its path) in ʿAbduh's description of Islamic history in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*: ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:384.

58 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:358.

that all of the revelations – despite the progressive differences between them and the forged status of Gospel and Torah – are in agreement with true religion, of which the essence is embodied by Islam (and the Quran). This also means that there is a fair possibility of harmony and conciliation (*taqrīb wa-ta'līf*) between the people of the revealed religion, as long as they follow their scriptures. However, given the centrality of Islam in God's religion for ʿAbduh, it seems only logical that such mutual agreement would be shaped by the mould of true Islam, and the Quran would guide readings of the other revelations.

ʿAbduh's friend Jibāra makes this logic explicit in his *Unity in Faiths and Harmony in Religions*, in which he argues for the unification of the true religions based on a joint reading of the revelations. He claims that as God is one, His revelations are one, and so is His truth. He wishes to transcend confessional boundaries that are merely rooted in tradition instead of revelation and in human instead of divine intervention. Instead, he thinks that Islam and Protestantism are in "perfect harmony."[59] Once commentaries are left aside and the revelations are interpreted "as they are" and are interpreted by the revelations instead of by men, the various revelations are in agreement with each other.[60]

However, Jibāra too gives preference to Islam within this process. He states that the Quran is "the best commentator" on the Old and New Testaments and argues that Islam follows its revelation more closely than Protestantism.[61] Similar to ʿAbduh, for Jibāra this amounts to true religion being identical to his interpretation of Islam: "The conclusion is, that the only religion acceptable before God is, as I believe, the religion of Islam, that was embraced by Abraham, Moses, Mohammed, and Jesus (…)."[62] At the same time, however, he is adamant that Muslims should believe in the validity of the Bible. Jibāra deems it highly unlikely that any alteration (*taghyīr*) or forgery (*talfīq*) would have occurred, given the commitment of the early Christians to their religion, or that such alterations would have gone unnoticed to millions of Christians. Furthermore, he claims that the Quran testifies to the Gospel's validity and does not speak of alteration (*taghyīr*) or forgery (*talfīq*; *tazwīr*) on the part of Jews or Muslims, even though it mentions their neglect of some religious observances.[63] His ideas brought Jibāra in conflict with many of his Muslim and Christian

59 Jibara, *Unity in Faiths*, 39.

60 Jibara, 14, 46–47, 50–51 (quote), 52–53.

61 Jibara, 21, 39.

62 Jibara, 22–23.

63 Ibid., 16–19, 25–26; Khrīsṭūfūrus Jibāra, *Wifāq al-Adyān wa-Waḥdat al-Īmān fī al-Tawrāt wa-l-Injīl wa-l-Qur'ān* (Bayrūt: s.n., 1895), 27, 34.

contemporaries, as we have seen in the third chapter of this study. Yet, his contacts with missionaries of the Bahā'i faith in the US and his visit to the World Parliament of Religions there – also recounted in the third chapter – indicate a wider circulation of similar ideas.

As said, ʿAbduh's conceptualization of the singularity of true religion and his letter to Taylor indicate that he also leaned towards such a unity of religions at times. Simultaneously, he was intent upon hierarchically differentiating Islam from other religions such as Protestantism. Moreover, ʿAbduh's conceptualization of the similarities and differences between Islam and Protestantism in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was strategic. On the one hand, ʿAbduh's evolutionary perspective on the religions and their prophecies seems to imply that Protestantism does not address man's full-grown reason like Islam and is therefore inferior. On the other hand, he argues that Islam and Protestantism are similar in their conduciveness to the independence of the human intellect.[64] Moreover, ʿAbduh employs the civilizational success of the independence of mind introduced in Europe at the time of the Reformation (for which he refers to Guizot, as we have seen) to demonstrate Islam's conduciveness to 'reason' and consequently to 'civilization' by attributing the Protestant turn to the influence of Islam. In either case, ʿAbduh's conceptualization of the similarities and differences between Islam and Protestantism with regard to 'reason' reiterates his idea of Islam as conducive to 'reason.' It shows how ʿAbduh interpreted Islam – as a religion – in relation to 'reason,' conceptualizing 'religion' in anthropological and theological terms and as singular as well as plural. The next section returns to discuss this in more detail.

2 Reinterpreting Islam as a Religion

The second part of this chapter probes into ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam in relation to religion's other 'other.' It maps ʿAbduh's answer to global questions about the relation between religion and reason and between religion and its communal relevance and role. We will see that ʿAbduh's answer negotiates the boundaries his contemporaries drew between these. At the same time, his reply – in the form of his reinterpretation of Islam – disputed the ideas about Islam held by many of his Muslim contemporaries.

64 Similarly, in his reply to Faraḥ Anṭūn in 1902, ʿAbduh concludes that Protestantism is as irrational and hostile to science as other forms of Christianity (particularly Catholicism), while he reiterates that Protestantism is admirable in its rejection of clerical authority and its return to the original sources. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:293–295.

2.1 *'Religion'* (al-Dīn) *and 'Reason'* (al-ʿAql)

ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam as a religion confronted the relation between religion and reason in multiple ways. Many scholars have already touched upon aspects of this relation.[65] In the following, this study gratefully makes use of their work, combining the insights of scholars such as Roxanne Euben and Malcolm Kerr with its own observations and analyzes. Specifically, this study situates ʿAbduh's answer to this global question within a broader field of answers that were given by ʿAbduh and his interlocutors. It tracks the contestations and negotiations his answer entailed in relation to those of his contemporaries.

First, in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh attempts to establish the added value of Islam as a religion in relation to reason in multiple ways. He reinterprets Islam and 'religion' (*al-dīn* in a theological sense, referring essentially to Islam) as particularly meritorious in a moral respect, which is analogous to many of his interlocutors' emphasis on (a) religious morality. As we have seen in the previous chapter, ʿAbduh considered 'religion' (again in a theological sense) to be indispensable for mankind in this respect, contrasting it with reason.[66] In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* ʿAbduh explains that the human intellect is in principle able to distinguish good from bad (*al-ḥusn* from *al-qubḥ*).[67] As Malcolm Kerr explains, for ʿAbduh goodness or badness are not 'made' good or bad by a religious commandment but are independent from it and are thus independently deducible.[68] Furthermore, the human intellect may deduce moral laws from history – to which I return in the next chapter – and thus teach specific virtues.[69] However, this does not make human reason sufficient as a moral guide for mankind. On the one hand, as ʿAbduh explains in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* this is because of individual variation in capacities: many people are not intellectually capable of reaching sound moral knowledge this way.[70] On the other hand, it is also because reason cannot give a compelling explanation for why one should bring this ethical knowledge into practice. In contrast, ʿAbduh explains,

65 For example: Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, 111–126; Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 109–118, 123–129; J.W. Livingston, "Muḥammad ʿAbduh on Science," *Muslim World* 85, no. 3–4 (1995): 224–228; Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 106–114; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, 165, 172–175, 177–180.

66 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:414–423, 449.

67 ʿAbduh, 3:415. According to Samira Haj and Zaki Badawi, this was a Muʿtazili position. Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 61–62; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 117.

68 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 127.

69 Kerr, 131.

70 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:414–423, especially 421–422.

'religion' has a far greater and more effective power over the human soul.[71] Malcolm Kerr explains:

> If human faculties need confirmation from revelation in determining what the true ethical norms are, they need still more help in providing man with a decisive impulsion to follow these norms. For this impulsion must be primarily religious, coming from the consideration of the prospects of the afterlife.[72]

Through pointing to the indispensability of 'religion' for upholding people's morality, I argue that ʿAbduh attempted to establish the continued relevance of Islam as a religion in comparison to reason in modern times.

Second, ʿAbduh conceptualizes Islam in relation to 'reason' by describing how Islam encourages man's use of his reason. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, as we have seen in the previous chapters, this applies to the attainment of both scientific knowledge (*ʿilm*) and religio-moral knowledge (*ʿilm*).[73] Regarding the second type of *ʿilm*, Samira Haj notes that the human intellect (*al-ʿaql*) and its capacities were most central to the process of the interiorization of moral knowledge for ʿAbduh, reflecting classical Islamic educational literature. A man's intellect should actively acquire the truth and in so doing internalize its knowledge, engendering virtuous conduct.[74] In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh writes that Islam urges Muslims to study the Quran themselves, without being constrained by later authoritative interpretations, and this is an equal obligation to all who

71 ʿAbduh, 3:449. Cf. Lale Behzadi on ʿAbduh's reference to Bismarck to corroborate the continuing relevance of 'religion' through its extraordinary effect on believers: Lale Behzadi, "Bismarck als Vorbild: Muḥammad ʿAbduhs Versuch einer Rehabilitierung des religiösen Gefühls," in *Vom Nil an die Saale: Festschrift für Arafa Mustafa zum 65. Geburtstag am 28. Februar 2005*, eds. Armenuhi Drost-Abgarjan, Jens Kotjatko-Reeb, and Jürgen Tubach (Halle: Institut für Orientalistik, 2006), 51–64.

72 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 126. Cf. ʿAbduh in his educational memorandum to the Shaykh al-Islām on contemporary *ʿulamāʾ* who do not teach Muslims accountability before God, making Muslims neglect their duties. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:78–79.

73 "'Alā kull ḥālin lā yajūz an yuqām al-dīn ḥājizan bayna al-arwāḥ wa-bayna mā mayyazahā Allāh bi-hi min al-istiʿdād li-l-ʿilm bi-ḥaqāʾiq al-kāʾināt al-mumkina bi-qadri al-imkān." ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:447.

74 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 116–117. See also Cole and Rosenthal on the very close relation between reason and ethical formation in the works of al-Māwardī and Ibn Miskawayh. Their works are considered to be examples of "practical philosophy," an intellectual tradition that was revived by al-Ṭahṭāwī in the nineteenth century. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 253; Cole, "Revival of Practical Philosophy," 42. ʿAbduh taught the handbook on moral edification by Ibn Miskawayh.

have sufficient understanding.[75] ʿAbduh also urges Muslims to use their reasoning in reading the Quran; he rebukes literalists (*al-wāqifīn ʿinda ẓurūfihā*) several times, arguing that the text's wisdom was not retrieved in this manner.[76] ʿAbduh recommends that the reader look beyond the apparent meaning if a passage in the Quran is contradictory to reason. He urges the reader to look for the passage's true meaning by understanding it in reference to other similar passages, or, alternatively, to relegate the matter to God.[77] Besides rather general admonitions such as those above, it is not always clear how ʿAbduh regards the use of reason in terms of obtaining religious knowledge. Roxanne Euben explains: "(…), ʿAbduh most clearly defines reason in terms of what it is not: reason is posited as the opposite of imagination without evidence, tradition without proof, suspension of intellectual reflection, and adherence to unexamined dogma and credulous superstition"; instead, "[r]eason for ʿAbduh means the exercise of critical judgment on the basis of logical and empirical proof."[78] For ʿAbduh, then, a fundamental precondition for Islam's encouragement of the use of reason by man was Islam's liberation of reason by rejecting *taqlīd*, as we have also seen in the previous chapter. Islam does not teach Muslims to follow human religious authorities unquestioningly or to be bound by the consensus of the Muslim (scholarly) community (*ijmāʿ*) or a certain *madhhab* in theology or law.[79] Instead, according to ʿAbduh in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, Islam teaches the independence (*istiqlāl*) or autonomy of man's *ʿaql* in matters of religion.[80]

Third, ʿAbduh's use of *ʿilm* for both religious and scientific knowledge – two types of knowledge that his contemporaries often distinguished from each other – is indicative of a third aspect of his view on the relation between religion and reason. ʿAbduh does not only consider 'religion' to have added moral value over 'reason' or see 'religion' to encourage 'reason.' In addition, he also

75 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:471.

76 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:457, 470. Cf. ʿAbduh in response to Hanotaux about literalist Islamic scholars whom he considered to have deviated from true knowledge: ʿAbduh, 3:242–243. Cf. Yvonne Haddad on ʿAbduh's requirements to Quran exegetes, stressing reason and reflection in interpreting the Quran. Their scholarly exegeses could then be put in practice by ordinary Muslims, who, at their turn, all had the duty to know the Quran. Haddad, "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform," 46–49.

77 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:451. This passage is discussed by many authors, for example by Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 129–130.

78 Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 108.

79 Cf. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 152; Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 114, 144–145; Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 79–86; Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse*, 83–84; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 141–142.

80 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:469. Cf. ʿAbduh, 3:482.

argues that true religious knowledge and true rational knowledge do not conflict.[81] This agreement between the two types of knowledge hinges upon two interlocking claims which we will now consider in more detail: first, Islamic religion is rational; and second, reason is divine in origin.

ʿAbduh's description of religious evolution in tandem with the development of human rationality in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* makes it clear that reason is divine in origin. God gives man his faculties of perception and cognition, culminating in the faculty of reason (*al-ʿaql*).[82] Consequently, ʿAbduh explains, being thankful for God's gift implies using it freely in keeping with how God created man (verb: *faṭara*) and in keeping with man's natural disposition (*fiṭra*).[83] This line of reasoning also appears in a newspaper article that ʿAbduh wrote while in Beirut. It speaks of criticism (*al-intiqād*, also the article's title) as an "infusion of the divine spirit in human chests" (*naftha min al-rūḥ al-ilāhī fī ṣudūr al-bashar*). In it, ʿAbduh calls man a rational being (*kawn ʿaqlī*) and explains that man should live according to his God-given constitution.[84] Thus, a religion appealing to reason is a religion in tune with human nature, which coincides with how God wills it and thus how God created it.[85]

In addition, for ʿAbduh, Islam's appeal to reason implies that it is predominantly rational. Even though there are notable exceptions in religious knowledge that reason cannot grasp, such as the essence of God and His fore-ordainment (*qadar*), and even though the prophets did not teach any detailed scientific knowledge themselves, religious knowledge does not conflict

81 Cf. Livingston, "'Abduh on Science"; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 172. ʿAbduh's use of the term *ʿilm* for both types is not uncommon in the Islamic tradition in which *ʿilm* may refer to religious knowledge as well as to acquired human knowledge. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 29–32. See also: Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 66.

82 Cf. Peter Harrison on the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists' concept of reason: "For the Cambridge Platonists reason was, therefore, never merely a human faculty. It was at least as much a participation in divine Reason as the exercise of a purely natural attribute." This was echoed by, for example, John Toland. Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 31, 164.

83 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:466, 468, 472.

84 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 2:161–162. He quotes Q30:30 to support his point here. The original article appeared in January 1886 in *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, see note 102 of chapter 4.

85 According to Elshakry, one finds a similar reasoning in Ḥusayn al-Jisr's Ḥamīdian treatise. Elshakry explains that al-Jisr's explicit stance on reason being created by God was a response to the materialists' denial of reason's divine origin, which is an argument that erodes the status of man above other creatures as well as man's special relation with God. Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 152.

with rational or scientific knowledge.[86] We have already seen that ʿAbduh considered Islam to match the highest stage of human cognitive faculties in the history of true religions in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, befitting to man's reason and understanding. Furthermore, according to ʿAbduh, unlike other beliefs, true Islam does not teach superstitions (*awhām*).[87] This compatibility with reason manifests itself in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in several more ways, of which only some striking examples will be mentioned here.[88]

ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* asserts the rationality of Islam by referring to the example of rational proof of prophecy. ʿAbduh writes that the inimitability of a revealed book rationally proves the genuineness of a prophet – something for which God especially departs from the regularity of His customs (*sunan*).[89] Once accepted by reason on these grounds, the prophecy does not contain contradictions to reason.[90] Amongst others, ʿAbduh's theology of Islam limits the belief in miracles to the inimitability of the Quran, stressing that there is no obligation to believe in non-prophetic saintly miracles (*karāmāt wakhawāriq al-ʿādāt, min ghayr al-anbiyāʾ, min al-awliyāʾ al-ṣadīqīn*).[91] Instead, he considers God's giving of miraculous signs to belong to a stage of 'religion' that corresponds with an earlier phase of human rationality, arguing that Islam teaches that God's signs are regular and law-like.[92] These remarks contested the veneration of saints of many of his Muslim contemporaries who were associated with Sufism, though certainly not in a head-on way here. In addition, ʿAbduh takes care to logically deduce and thus prove the existence of God as the necessarily existing, modelling parts of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* on the creed of the fifteenth-century scholar al-Sanūsī whose ideas were imbued with a great

86 *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* on the inability of reason to penetrate God's essence: ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:403–405. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* on *qadar* as a mystery to the human mind: ʿAbduh, 3:411. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* on the prophets and science: ʿAbduh, 3:447.

87 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:467–468, 485, 490. Cf. Al-Afghānī, "Truth about the Neicheri Sect," 169–172; Al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ʿalā al-Dahriyyīn*, 61.

88 Because of Islam's rational nature in ʿAbduh's interpretation, Roxanne Euben concludes that, for ʿAbduh, reason was not only allowed as a means to grasp the rational divine message, but is even necessary and obligatory. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*, 108.

89 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:425–426.

90 ʿAbduh, 3:551. Cf. Talal Asad on Islamic modernists' reconceptualization of the Prophet Muḥammad "as a genius capable of great social and political achievements": Talal Asad, "Law, Ethics and Religion in the Story of Egyptian Modernization," in *Religion and Its Other: Secular and Sacral Concepts and Practices in Interaction*, eds. Heike Bock, Jörg Feuchter, and Michi Knecht (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2008), 34–35.

91 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:426, 500.

92 ʿAbduh, 3:473, 477.

interest in Greek philosophy and logic.[93] Similarly, as we have seen, ʿAbduh argues that Islam's morality can also be rationally deduced, which, Haj and Badawi explain, is a Muʿtazili position within Islamic history.[94]

In perhaps a similar attempt to present an Islam that is rational and logical, ʿAbduh also included a passage on the createdness (*khalq*) of the Quran in the first edition of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. He argues that speech was part of God's attributes (and as such is eternal). However, once God's speech was recited (*maqrūʾ*) and heard (*masmūʿ*), it was created; it was produced and ceased to exist again every time it was recited. ʿAbduh continues that a belief in the eternity (*qidam*) of the *spoken* Quran was amongst the greatest unlawful innovations (*bidʿa*) and was not in agreement with either 'religion,' the Sunna, the Prophet or his Companions. According to ʿAbduh, the createdness of the recited Quran does not diminish the Quran's high status, as long as it is clear that God created the spoken Quran, without any human intervention. He also writes that some great scholars in the ninth century, when the issue became very divisive and even made deadly victims, denied the createdness of the spoken Quran. Furthermore, ʿAbduh argues that the denial of its createdness could only be attributed to hesitance or politeness on the part of scholars such as Ibn Ḥanbal because it would make no sense that Ibn Ḥanbal would think otherwise in the face of him reading the Quran every night out loud with his own voice.[95]

As recounted in the third chapter of this study, after the publication of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* ʿAbduh was heavily criticized for its supposed Muʿtazili leanings. It is probably this passage on the createdness of the Quran in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* that was understood by some of his contemporaries as an endorsement of a Muʿtazili understanding of the createdness of the Quran.[96] However, ʿAbduh's exposition does not refer to the Quran's 'heavenly prototype' (*umm*

93 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:779; Watt, *Islamic Creeds*, 10 and 90–97. Fatḥ Allāh, one of ʿAbduh's students in Beirut, writes that ʿAbduh used *Kitāb al-Tahdhīb* to teach logic. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:394. In 1898, ʿAbduh published a commentary on a handbook of logic by Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī to facilitate his students at the *Azhar* in learning the basics of logic. Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwī, *Kitāb al-Baṣāʾir al-Nuṣayriyya fī al-ʿIlm al-Manṭiq*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbduh (Būlāq Miṣr: Maṭbaʿa al-Kubrā al-Amīrkiyya, 1898/1316h). According to Elshakry, al-Jisr also elaborately uses logic in his theology. Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 147–150. Indeed, El-Rouayheb describes a revitalization of logic in the eighteenth and nineteenth century: Khaled el-Rouayheb, "Was There a Revival of Logical Studies in Eighteenth-Century Egypt?," *Die Welt des Islams*, no. 1 (2005): 1–19.

94 Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 61–62; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 117.

95 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:402. This passage can be found in the first edition of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd:* ʿAbduh, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 1897–1898/1315h, 27–28.

96 "Sajāyā al-ʿUlamāʾ," *Al-Manār*, 465; Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 169–170.

al-kitāb, or *lawḥ maḥfūẓ*), on which the ninth-century discussion on the createdness of the Quran focused and in which the Muʿtazila represented one side of the debate.[97] ʿAbduh only refers to the "recited" or "heard" Quran as being created and contingent. Thomas Hildebrandt explains that this position did not contradict the Ashʿarī position on 'recited speech' (*kalām lafẓī*, as opposed to *kalām nafsī*) as being created. In this way, ʿAbduh does not actually touch upon the problem which was central to the historical debate in which the Muʿtazili position was formed.[98]

Nonetheless, by referring to the ninth-century historical debate in his discussion of the createdness of God's speech once it was recited or heard, ʿAbduh himself gives the impression that this passage on the createdness of the recited Quran positions him in the Muʿtazili camp. Furthermore, ʿAbduh is said to have agreed with a befriended scholar, named al-Shanqīṭī, that the doctrine on the createdness of the Quran was not part of the way of the *salaf* (*maslak al-salaf*), which here could very well refer to the early generations of the Ashʿari school. ʿAbduh explained that he included it in his *Risāla* anyway because of its great importance.[99] Most importantly for this study, the controversy around this passage shows how ʿAbduh collided with many of his contemporaries in reinterpreting true Islam as compatible with reason.

Moreover, the agreement between reason and religion was dependent upon ʿAbduh's belief in God as the origin of everything. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, He is the source of the human intellect, whether this is applied to interpret the revelation, to acquire moral knowledge independently, or to deduce scientific or religious knowledge from the natural world, which in itself is also created by God.[100] True knowledge (*ʿilm*), being an attribute of God, cannot contradict itself.[101] There can be but one Truth to know because there is only one origin of all truths. For ʿAbduh, this applies to the relation between the true religions as well as to the relation between reason and religion.

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97 Richard C. Martin, "Createdness of the Qurʾān," ed. Jane D. McAuliffe, *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* (Washington: Brill Online, 2015), accessed June 24, 2015, <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/createdness-of-the-quran-EQCOM_00044>.

98 Hildebrandt, "Neo-Muʿtaziliten?," 254. Cf. Michel and Abdel Razik's analysis of the passage: Michel and Abdel Razik, "Introduction," lviii–lix.

99 "Sajāyā al-ʿUlamāʾ," *Al-Manār*, 466.

100 The deduction of scientific knowledge from the natural world could well be considered a theophysical argument, which was not strongly present in ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* but was among the many proponents of natural theology among his contemporaries, such as Fransīs Marrāsh and Ḥusayn al-Jisr. See: Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, chap. 4: Theologies of Nature.

101 Cf. Elshakry, 172–173.

However, ʿAbduh's appropriation of a Truth that he and many of his contemporaries thought could only be singular (reflecting the singularity of its source: God) implied a dichotomy with the truth of many other religions that he thought were corrupted in time or not divine in origin. Moreover, it implied a full frontal attack on the truth claims of many other Muslims, as defended by other *ʿulamāʾ* and upheld by the practice of *taqlīd*.[102] It meant the rejection of other Muslims' truth claims as both irrational (as *awhām*) *and* not in agreement with God's message (as not *ṣaḥīḥ*), theologically dividing the Muslim community. At the same time, as we have seen, he was intent upon establishing Muslim unity through the community-oriented virtues he taught in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (in order to strengthen the community), and he strove to stay away from theological disagreement for this purpose, as we have seen.

In other words, in seeking to develop Muslim unity in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh at times refrains from defining Islam theologically in order to avoid dissension. At other times, he tries to engender uniformity and standardization in a theological respect in order to sustain Muslim unity. In this last aspect, as a catechism to convey his idea of Islam's essentials to ordinary Muslims, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* is an essentializing move, excluding other Muslims' Islam from this essence in the process.[103] It is an attempt to reform the Islam of many of his Muslim contemporaries, for which he needed to persuade them to accept the authority of his interpretation of Islam; perhaps this was inevitably at the expense of the established authority of other interpretations (epitomized in the practice of *taqlīd*). ʿAbduh needed his contemporaries to accept his interpretation of Islam as true, and, perhaps accordingly, he presented his interpretation as the only true one. In short, for ʿAbduh, 'liberating' Muslims from authoritative 'tradition' and emphasizing intellectual autonomy in religious matters did not mean that he relativized truth or conceptualized truth as plural.

Moreover, through demonstrating the rationality of Islam and specifically its compatibility with the autonomy of the intellect, ʿAbduh wished to provide his own version of Islam with a role in the history of civilization, which, according to François Guizot, hinged on intellectual autonomy, as we have seen

102 According to Haddad, ʿAbduh's *Taʿlīqāt* testifies to an inclusive idea of salvation in his interpretation of the "saved group" even though he still believes that truth is one. Haddad, "Essai de critique," 174–175; Haddad, "Relire Muhammad Abduh," 74. See also section "A battle over Islamic orthodoxy" in the first chapter of this study.

103 Jung also describes a global convergence in modern images of Islam in terms of its essentialism: Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere: A Genealogy of the Modern Essentialist Image of Islam*. Historian Bayly describes standardization as one of the features of nineteenth-century "empires of religion." Joachim Langner's analyzes ʿAbduh's reply to Faraḥ Anṭūn through this lens in a short article: Langner, "Religion in Motion."

in the previous chapter. Conversely, in opposing this 'other' Islam against reason and more specifically the autonomy of the human intellect, he excluded this Islam (and the authorities who upheld this interpretation) from a beneficial role in the history of civilization. The next section will take a closer look at how ʿAbduh conceptualizes the role of 'religion' in collective matters and whom he excludes in the process.

2.2 Tahdhīb *and* Maṣlaḥa*. Negotiating a Role for Islam in Communal Matters*

ʿAbduh reinterpreted Islam in response to widely shared questions and concerns about how to uphold a collectively beneficial morality, as we have seen. This study argues that in doing so, ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam also reconfigures Islam's role 'as a religion' in communal matters: it is an answer to globally shared questions about if 'religion' should have a 'public' role (that is, a role in collective matters) and what this role should be.

In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* as we have seen, ʿAbduh argues that as a religion, Islam is particularly conducive to the morality of its believers. Moreover, he claims that true religion was indispensable for edifying people and making them turn to virtuous conduct. Furthermore, as we have seen in the previous section, this is a role that he did not believe that human reason could take on. Additionally, according to ʿAbduh, Islam is particularly conducive to teaching virtues of collective benefit (*maṣlaḥa*), such as a propensity for unity and rationality and a determination to act on these community-oriented and collectively beneficial dispositions. Thus, ʿAbduh's emphasis on Islam's moral merit is a way to establish Islam's relevance in communal matters.

ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* does not testify to the complete isolation of Islam – as a religion – in the private realm; it does not render 'religion' as an exclusively private affair, entirely irrelevant to communal matters. For ʿAbduh, Islam is imperative for getting people to act in agreement with the benefit of the collective, even though his use of collective often remains ambiguous. In *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, and more implicitly in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh uses Islam to urge Muslims to act in agreement with their collective benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) and to resist foreign domination. Similarly, as we have seen in his educational memoranda, ʿAbduh suggests that a ruler or government should actually use Islam for the benefit of the state, which is a position that he shared with G.W. Leitner. This is the reason why he urges public authorities such as the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām and the Ottoman governor of Syria to concern themselves with the teaching of Islam. Specifically, he advises these Ottoman government officials to use Islam to defend the interests of the Ottoman state against the intermeddling of foreign states with Ottoman

subjects. In this way, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam renders Islam highly relevant to communal matters, even at the level of politics. For ʿAbduh, Islam was a political instrument that should not be shunned.[104]

The following two sections analyze ʿAbduh's conceptualization of Islam's public role in more detail. It sheds light on the particularities of the public role he envisioned for Islam (as a religion) through his emphasis on its moral merit. We will see how these particularities were shaped by the questions he shared with his contemporaries around the world as well as by the semantics and contexts in which he formulated answers to these questions. More precisely, his interpretation of Islam's moral communal relevance reflects a negotiation with the ideas of his contemporaries and the specific historical context in which he wrote. The first section below analyzes how his reinterpretation of Islam as a collectively beneficial morality challenged the boundaries between 'religion' and other domains such as law. The second section demonstrates how this reinterpretation of Islam also implied a challenge to some of the other religious authorities (*ʿulamāʾ*) of that time.

2.3 *Religion, Morality and Law*

Johann Büssow suggests that *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* ties into a globalizing "Protestant template" of religion, as described by Reinhard Schulze.[105] Schulze argues that one of the aspects of the globalizing Protestant template of religion was a "practical ethic." He writes that this aspect was intricately connected to the prioritization of interiority (*Innerlichkeit*), conscience and faith (*Glauben*) over exteriority and ritual in matters of religion.[106] The meaning of such an ethical interpretation of religion seems to be best grasped in contrast with a legalistic interpretation of religion: according to Schulze, the Protestant template of religion implies a devaluation of statuary law in religion; it implies that religion became less 'law-like' or less 'institution-like' in this respect.[107] Dietrich Jung identifies many examples of a tendency towards an ethical, non-legalistic definition of religion amongst European scholars, whom he considers to be forma-

104 Cf. Tayob's analysis of 'Abduh and others' emphasis on the political and social functions of Islam, oriented mainly towards solving political and social problems: Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 59–64.

105 Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam," 295.

106 Schulze, "Protestantisierung der Religionen," 149–156. Cf. Asad and King on the emphasis on faith over practice in modern conceptions of religion: Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 39; King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 37–39.

107 Schulze, "Protestantisierung der Religionen," 157.

tive to the emerging understanding of religion in the global public sphere, beginning in the nineteenth century.[108]

This section turns to ʿAbduh's reconfiguration of Islam in relation to morality and law. It asks if his emphasis on Islam's moral merit implies a reinterpretation of Islam as an ethical instead of a legalistic religion. It also questions how this configuration negotiates the separation between religion and law.

In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh is much more concerned with instilling the right belief, translated into right conduct, than with clear ritual or social regulations, although it should be noted that ʿAbduh's *Risāla* is not a work of law but one of theology. He writes that untruths, or delusions (pl. *awhām*), necessarily translate into bad character traits (sg. *malaka*), while Islam's truth logically introduced sound characteristics at its advent, echoing the close relation between *ʿilm* and *ʿamal* in his view of morality, which was explicated in the previous chapter.[109]

Conversely, in matters of worship, ʿAbduh prioritizes sincerity, heart, and soul over outer form.[110] In his memorandum on Ottoman educational reform, he complains about the insincere execution of rites and ritual utterances, which he saw as one of the main deficiencies of the system of religious education at that time.[111] Furthermore, in assessing the unity of the revealed religions in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh considers their shared faith in *tawḥīd* to be crucial, regardless of the differences in these religions' worship practices (*ʿibādāt*), celebrations (*iḥtifālāt*), and regulations (*aḥkām*).[112] Similarly, his prioritization of interiority reflects in his evolutionary history of the true religions. ʿAbduh considers the expansion of man's cognitive abilities inwards (*adkhal fī al-wijdān*) to be a sign of man's progressive rationality, in contradis-

108 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 131–132, 138. Jung refers to scholars such as William Robertson Smith and a Protestant theologian such as Albrecht Ritschl for examples of such a tendency towards an ethical definition of religion. The reverse image of an ethical religion was an externalist and legalistic religion. Islam was often characterized as such. Jung, 149–153, 157–213.

109 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:467, 482.

110 ʿAbduh, 467, 475, 482; cf. Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 114. Cf. ʿAbduh's emphasis on *niyya* (intention) in assessing Muslims' actions in, for example, his Transvaal fatwa: Charles Adams, "Muhammad ʿAbduh and the Transvaal Fatwa," in *The Macdonald Presentation Volume* (New York, 1933), 19. ʿAbduh's lack of care for ritual externalities might be illustrated by him praying with his shoes on, as recounted by Sedgwick in his biography. Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*, 101, 114.

111 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:77.

112 ʿAbduh, 3:472.

tinction with the first religion whose straight commandments matched the believers' cognitive ability, which was limited to the (outer) senses.[113]

In addition, ʿAbduh writes in his *Risāla* that prophets provide general restrictions (*ḥudūd ʿāmma*), acting as guidelines for believers in their practice, and instil virtuous dispositions (*al-malakāt al-fāḍila*) such as truthfulness (*al-ṣidq*) and compassion for the weak (*al-raḥma li-l-ḍuʿafāʾ*).[114] The guidelines and virtues that ʿAbduh seems intent to convey with *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* are of a similar general nature, as we have seen in the previous chapter: a propensity for unity and harmony, an orientation towards the community, and a disposition towards rationality and scientific inquiry. In short, ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam's edifying potential does not seem very 'law-like.'

Yet, in his memorandum to the Shaykh al-Islām, ʿAbduh proposes the teaching of compendia of what is right (*ḥalāl*) and what is wrong (*ḥarām*), in addition to the teaching of Islam's doctrines and religious history. He adds that the wisdom (*ḥikma*), or rationale, behind them should always be explained (at least at the second level of education, meant for students who are trained in order to work in the service of the government).[115] In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* ʿAbduh writes that every believer should care to know what God decreed in the field of law (*sharʿ*).[116]

Furthermore, in her analysis of ʿAbduh's conception of the Muslim moral self, Samira Haj argues that the Islamic tradition of interiorized ethics did not preclude a reference to the body of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as an integral part of religion. Through his engagement with the work of al-Ghazālī and Ibn Miskawayh, ʿAbduh was familiar with this long-standing history of the ideas of interiorized religion.[117] Haj argues that for ʿAbduh, following al-Ghazālī and reflecting Sufi understandings of ethics and knowledge, the inner self is to acquire and integrate the truth, cultivating virtues (pl. *faḍāʾil*) to inhabit its soul.[118] The internalized truths, the embodied virtues, are reflected on the outside through corresponding conduct, but the moral self is ultimately to be judged according to its inside.[119] This emphasis on interiority, however, does not necessarily imply a rejection of 'law-like' religion. Haj writes that for al-Ghazālī,

113 ʿAbduh, 3:473.

114 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:446.

115 ʿAbduh, 3:82–84.

116 ʿAbduh, 3:471.

117 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 109–117.

118 Talal Asad refers to ʿAbduh's Sufi understanding of ethics and spiritual education, alongside his vehement critique of certain Sufi practices, as a reminder of the complexity of ʿAbduh's relation to Sufism and the inadequacy of binaries related to Sufism and orthodox Islam. Asad, "Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," 224.

119 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 109–119.

and ʿAbduh in his wake, the essence of Islamic positive law is located within the self. The interiorized ethics are the necessary breeding ground for complying with the rules of *fiqh*. Conversely, in realizing his moral self, the subject is accountable to the law for (a good part of) his external conduct, referring to the *muʿāmalāt*.[120] Similarly, Talal Asad writes that *fiqh* is critical to the formation of the Muslim moral self, "not as a set of rules to be obeyed but as the condition that enables the development of virtues."[121] According to Haj, this indicates that for ʿAbduh ("as a Muslim"), the Muslim moral self could only be realized "in community," in contrast with the autonomous liberal subject.[122] To reinforce her point about law and ethics being intricately connected for ʿAbduh, Haj points out ʿAbduh's involvement in the reform of Egypt's *sharīʿa* courts when he was appointed Grand Mufti, and his fatwas. She argues that for ʿAbduh, Islamic law was an important means of instilling the right virtues in Egypt's Muslims.[123]

Yet, as Haj also incidentally remarks, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islamic law as an integral part of Islamic morality was also shaped by the Egyptian context of that time – besides being rooted in local semantics. At that time, Islamic law (*sharīʿa*) was largely confined to matters of the family and religious endowments (*waqf*s) in colonial Egypt. According to Talal Asad, this limitation represented "a place in which 'religion' [was] allowed to make its public appearance through state law," rendering it "the law of personal status."[124] Similarly, Samira Haj argues that the family became one of the key places for teaching and enforcing ʿAbduh's family-oriented interpretation of Islamic morality through Islamic law – in agreement with the family as the quintessential place to acquire ethics in a secular state.[125] In the period in which ʿAbduh con-

120 Haj, 111, 118. Asad describes the traditional Islamic balance between morality and law as follows: "Morality is a dimension of all accountable behavior (including justiciable acts) in the sense that while every such act is the responsibility of a free agent, it is also subject to assessments that have practical consequences for the way one lives in this world *and* the next." Talal Asad, *Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt*, ISIM Papers (Leiden: ISIM, 2001), 11.

121 Asad, "Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," 250.

122 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 118.

123 Haj, 137–139. In ʿAbduh's reply to Faraḥ Anṭūn, moreover, ʿAbduh writes that Islam is "*dīn wa-shar*" and that the aspect of law had to be enforced by a state (logically the caliph). ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:309.

124 Asad, "Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," 230–231, 248. See also: Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of the Dār Al-Iftā* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 60–63.

125 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 127–136; cf. Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 19, 196–197; Cf. Asad, "Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," 248. Elshakry attributes this line of thought especially to Herbert Spencer.

ceived of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, furthermore, ʿAbduh considered schools to be the key means for instilling Islamic morality, as we have seen, where the character formation that had begun within the family continued, functioning as a bridge between family, society, and the state.

Thus, the channels through which ʿAbduh provided Islam with a role in communal matters through emphasizing its collectively beneficial moral potential seemed to have been confined to education and family law, whether this was by necessity or by conviction. Although ʿAbduh prioritized interiority and focused on general guidelines, he did not do so at the complete expense of the teaching of specific rules and their legal enforcement. In this sense, his interpretation of Islam combined 'ethical' and 'legalistic' aspects, which was the result of ʿAbduh's navigation between the logic of the state in colonial Egypt, local semantics, and global conceptualizations of religion.

2.4 *Religion and Public Authority*

ʿAbduh's acts of negotiation in his reinterpretation of Islam reappear when we consider his reinterpretation of the relation between religion and collective 'authority.' The public role he provides for religion, navigating through a field of questions about religion and morality as well as religion and reason, comes at a cost for some of the other religious authorities of that time. In addition, his reconfiguration of Islam's role in communal matters raises questions about whether he exposes religion to the authority of the state or, vice versa, the state to the authority of religion.

First, ʿAbduh's efforts to provide Islam as a religion with a role in collective matters implies a specific conceptualization of what this 'religion' is in the sense that it is considered worthy of such public relevance. In response to global questions about religion and reason, as we have seen, ʿAbduh reinterprets Islam as a religion that – similar to Protestantism – favors an individual believer's rationality and intellectual autonomy vis-à-vis religious authorities. Vice versa, for ʿAbduh, what he thought was the Islam of that time, upheld by many of the religious scholars of that time, represents an irrational message as well as a system (i.e. *taqlīd*) that bounds man's reason. In doing so, ʿAbduh theologically excludes many established Islamic authorities from the Islam that he wants to provide with relevance in collective matters.

Similarly, ʿAbduh explicitly denies that contemporary interpretations of Islam and their gatekeepers were morally meritorious for the sake of the community. Similarly, he thinks that the *ʿulamāʾ* who defended these other interpretations were unsuitable for a role in the people's collectively beneficial moral education. In his educational memorandum to the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām, ʿAbduh complains about *ʿulamāʾ* who are only interested in self-gain

(instead of public benefit or *maṣlaḥa*). Furthermore, teachers at Islamic schools were only knowledgeable about ritualistic prescriptions, ʿAbduh writes, which is unfitting to ʿAbduh's idea of morality, in which interiority is prioritized over exteriority.[126] Lastly, ʿAbduh's introductory chapter on the history of theology in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* reveals that for ʿAbduh, Islamic theologians and jurists have not been very beneficial to the Muslim community. The many scholastic disputes over theological details have actually impaired Islamic unity.[127] It becomes clear that ʿAbduh's plea to give Islam a public role certainly did not equate with giving a public role to most of the *ʿulamāʾ* of that time.[128]

Instead, only the reform of Islam (*iṣlāḥ*) to its original and true state would benefit the welfare of the community (*maṣlaḥa*). ʿAbduh's recommendations for Ottoman educational reforms reveal that he first and foremost proposes a turn towards Islam's revelation as a source for religious knowledge rather than advocating a turn towards the interpretations of the *ʿulamāʾ* of that time for this purpose. He also points to Islam's legacy of religious scholarship on *ʿaqīda* and compendia of Islam's moral commandments.[129] However, besides advocating such a turn to the Quran and adding that the book should not be read traditionally or literally but instead rationally and in correspondence with how it was authentically understood by the first generations, he did not give much concern to methodological specifics. Similarly, ʿAbduh's partial turn away from 'law-like' religion – despite being ambiguous, as we have just seen – and his focus on general guidelines, created room for interpretation. It might be that ʿAbduh's faith in the singularity of truth, whether rational or revealed, led him not to worry about not clearly restraining subjectivity in interpreting the Quran and convinced him of the truth of his own interpretations. However, it

126 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:77.

127 ʿAbduh, 3:390. Cf. ʿAbduh's complaints about the egoism of the adherents of *taqlīd* (*muqallidūn*) in his reply to Hanotaux, the subject of the next part of this study: ʿAbduh, 3:243.

128 In other words, for ʿAbduh, true 'religion' was not found at the hands of the Islamic authorities of his time. In this sense, ʿAbduh's views on Islamic morality may be considered to reply to contemporary 'liberal' calls for individual freedom in the fields of ethics and religion, while at the same time contesting the 'liberal' containment of religion in the private sphere. Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 8; Asad, "Law, Ethics and Religion," 23. Cf. Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*.

129 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:73–91. ʿAbduh's preference of text over contemporary beliefs and practices might reflect a textualist conceptualization of religion along which religions and their believers around the world were measured, as Richard King describes for India's religious traditions. Yet, it also very much fits into classical Islamic discussions about the need for *iṣlāḥ*, or restoration, to counter degeneration, by turning anew to the Quran. King, *Orientalism and Religion*, 38, 64–72.

is in this sense that ʿAbduh stood at the root of a void in religious authority in Islam and the "proliferation of interpretations" in the twentieth century.[130]

In another sense, paradoxically, ʿAbduh might also be considered to stand at the root of a tendency towards essentialization and standardization in Islam, as we have seen in the section "'Religion' (*al-dīn*) and 'reason' (*al-ʿaql*)" in this chapter, in spite of his reluctance to theologically pinpoint doctrines such as *qadar* (in order to maintain Muslim unity by not provoking theological disagreement).[131] In wriggling Islam away from most of the *ʿulamāʾ* of his time, he seemed to present his reinterpretation of Islam as the singular Truth, rooted in a conception of reason and revelation as compatible and even one and singular, mirroring their shared origin in God and His singularity, as we have seen too in the abovementioned section in this chapter.

Moreover, ʿAbduh at times turned to the state for backing his interpretation of Islam. This is evident in him seeking the support of the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām and the governor of the Ottoman province of Syria for his education reforms, with which he wished to guide Muslims centrally and uniformly towards what he considered to be the right form of (Sunni) Islam that would unite them all. Similarly, he cooperated with the British in his plans to codify Islamic Law (by a committee of reformist scholars) or to centrally reform the curriculum at *al-Azhar*.[132]

ʿAbduh's cooperation with the state in religious matters raises questions about what his reinterpretation of Islam's role in communal matters implies for his conceptualization of the relation between state and religion. Would he favor a religion-state settlement in which Islam – as a religion – is not protected from the public authority of the state and in which the state is not religiously neutral in matters 'internal' to Islam? Furthermore, one might wonder what ʿAbduh's turn to the state in religious matters might mean for his views about the state's position towards other religions, especially as he is ambiguous as to which community benefits from religion's moral merit, as we have seen in the previous chapter. These were questions to which ʿAbduh did not give clear answers and to which his successors have given a great variety of answers.

130 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 7.

131 Cf. Jung, *Global Public Sphere*; Langner, "Religion in Motion."

132 On the reform of education at the Azhar: Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*. Indira Falk Gesink argues that the opposition to state encroachment upon the autonomy of the *ʿulamāʾ* was what drove many of ʿAbduh's conservative adversaries at the Azhar to oppose ʿAbduh's type of educational reforms. On ʿAbduh's ideas about the reform of the Islamic legal system in Egypt: Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 136–143. See also: Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State*.

In conclusion, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam was an answer to a global question of whether 'religion' should have a role in communal matters and what this role should be. He contested the containment of the relevance of religion to the private sphere by emphasizing Islam's collectively beneficial morality. In doing so, he reconfigured the boundaries between 'religion,' 'law,' and 'the state,' reflecting global and local semantics and socio-political contexts. Similarly, ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam was a negotiation with other religions: Christianity and particularly Protestantism. ʿAbduh strategically used both the similarities between Islam and Protestantism – as religions – and the differences between them to defend the rationality and moral merit of his reinterpretation of Islam in comparison with Christianity and particularly Protestantism. In the process of this negotiation, finally, ʿAbduh contested the structures of authority in the Muslim community.

PART 3

Muḥammad ʿAbduh's Reply to Hanotaux in Context

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CHAPTER 6

Hanotaux and ʿAbduh: A Layered Context of Discussion

Leafing through the day's newspapers on a train back home from work in mid-April 1900 in Cairo, Muḥammad ʿAbduh became greatly agitated by an article on Islam by Gabriel Hanotaux, the former minister of Foreign Affairs of France, which appeared in translation in the Egyptian newspaper *al-Muʾayyad* (The endorsed). ʿAbduh wrote a response that same night.[1] ʿAbduh was not the only one triggered by Hanotaux's statements about Islam. For weeks, even months, in a row, the front pages of Egyptian newspapers such as *al-Muʾayyad, al-Ahrām* (The pyramids), and *al-Liwāʾ* (The banner) were filled with articles responding or referring to Hanotaux's articles and ʿAbduh's response to them, some siding with Hanotaux, some with ʿAbduh, and others formulating their own responses to Hanotaux or the controversy around him. Furthermore, Hanotaux and ʿAbduh themselves made additional contributions, further stirring up the debate.

ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux was part of an elaborate and varied discussion. It involved a plurality of voices that engaged in discussions at multiple levels, simultaneously drawing in global and local contexts. Furthermore, the many levels of interaction invariably impacted upon each other. Importantly, (colonial) politics contributed in bringing these global and local levels together and making them interact in this discussion. The global rivalry between France and Great Britain's colonial aspirations was reflected and localized in how the polemic between Hanotaux and ʿAbduh was discussed in the Egyptian newspapers. Likewise, the global contestations about Islam in a colonial world were translated into local debates about the relation between Islam and Egyptian patriotism. The polemic between ʿAbduh and Hanotaux and the multifaceted discussions around it represented a wide range of positions concerning the comparison between Christianity and Islam (as religions) and the conceptualization of Islam (as a religion). While the next two chapters focus on the questions around which these diverging positions were grouped together, this chapter maps the discussion in all of its plurality on a global scale.

ʿAbduh's polemical response to Hanotaux is described in several studies of ʿAbduh's ideas. However, it rarely receives elaborate or specific attention, which

1 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, vol. 2 "Munshaʾāt" (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1925/1344h), 400.

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is particularly striking in view of the number and frequency of editions that have been produced in the twentieth century.[2] The text is featured in articles and books that target ʿAbduh's ideas in particular, and it is also discussed in studies in which ʿAbduh's ideas are situated within a broader history of thinking about Islam.[3] Nevertheless, ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux has not yet been studied in relation to the broader discussions surrounding his polemic with Hanotaux in which it was embedded – not even specifically in relation to the article by Hanotaux that ʿAbduh directly responded to with his text.[4] Instead, the ideas ʿAbduh elaborated in this polemical response are discussed in relation to ʿAbduh's other texts or the ideas of other Islamic reformers, contemporary or not, who were not directly involved in this discussion.

While these studies are unequivocally valuable in their own right, detailed attention to the immediate context in which the text was used yields the opportunity to historically and empirically trace the text's particular move within the arguments and conversations of which it was a part. In the following two chapters, the comparisons between Islam and Christianity in ʿAbduh's text and its context will be studied to give insight into the underlying questions of these comparisons and the particularity of ʿAbduh's answer amongst the other answers given. But first, this chapter will give an overview of the discussion and the plurality of the global historical context in which it took place.

1 Editions and Sources

There are several editions of ʿAbduh's polemical response to Hanotaux, often printed alongside Hanotaux's contributions to the debate. The number of these re-editions and re-prints may be interpreted as an indication of its continuing popularity in the Arabic world. Dated as early as May 1900, only a

2 Adams' discussion of ʿAbduh's response is I think one of the most elaborate in this respect: Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 86–89; Farīda Jādd al-Ḥaqq, "Al-Ḥiwārāt al-Fikriyya al-Kubrā li-l-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh: Namūdhaj 'al-Radd ʿalā Hānūtū,' in *Muḥammad ʿAbduh. Miʾat ʿĀmm ʿalā Raḥīlihi (1905–2005). Aʿmāl wa-Munāqashāt al-Nadwa al-Fikriyya allatī Naẓẓamathā Maktabat al-Iskandariyya*, eds. Ibrāhīm al- Bayūmī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Jawharī (Al-Qāhira / Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī / Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 2009), 281–96.

3 For example, in relation to broader currents of thinking about Islam: Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 25–27; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 92–95; Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 60–64 and 79–82; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*, 183–184. The specifics of these interpretations will be discussed in the seventh and eighth chapters of this study when they become relevant to the argument.

4 For example: Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 60–64 and 79–82.

month after its first publication, the first part of ʿAbduh's response to Hanotaux was published by ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm Ṣāliḥ in a collection together with two other texts concerning the relation between Muslims and Christians.[5] A few years later, in 1905, the French versions of both ʿAbduh and Hanotaux's contributions to the debate were collectively published in Cairo under the title *L'Europe et l'Islam*, with an introduction by Muḥammad Ṭalʿat Ḥarb Bey.[6] Four years later, in 1909, the Arabic versions of all of ʿAbduh's articles as well as Hanotaux's contributions to the discussion were collected as *al-Islām wa-l-Radd ʿalā Muntaqidīhi* (Islam and the response to its critics).[7] Likewise, Riḍā included the exchange between ʿAbduh and Hanotaux in the second volume of his biography of ʿAbduh, in which he collected many of ʿAbduh's works.[8] The polemic then attracted renewed attention in 1964, when Ṭāhir al-Ṭannāḥī published a collection of articles by ʿAbduh under the title *al-Islām Dīn al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya* (Islam is the religion of science and civilization), including both ʿAbduh and Hanotaux's contributions to the discussion.[9] In its introduction, al-Ṭannāḥī wrote that this collection intended to cater to the changed needs of the time since Riḍā's edition.[10] With slight modifications, additions, and quite some sloppiness, this collection of ʿAbduh's texts is still often re-published and widely available in the Arabic world.[11] In addition, ʿAbduh's polemic response

5 ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm Ṣāliḥ al-Azharī, ed., *Al-Islām: Risāla fī al-Radd ʿalā Musyū Hānūtū Wazīr Khārijiyya Faransā Sābiqan li-ʿAẓīm min ʿUẓamāʾ al-Islām al-Imām min Aʾimmat al-Aʿlām; Risālat al-Nabī Ṣallā Allāh ʿAlayhi wa-Sallam ilā Rahbān Dayr al-Qadīsa Kātrīnā; Maqālat al-Musyū Klāfal al-Faransāwī* (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿUmūmiyya, 1900/1318h). This book is dated on 2 Muḥarram 1318h, which corresponds to 2 May 1900 – only two weeks after ʿAbduh's response to Hanotaux. The speed at which this book would have been published raises questions about the accuracy of the date. Furthermore, its publisher and editor, ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm Ṣāliḥ, also published the 1902 edition of ʿAbduh's Arabic translation of al-Afghānī's *The Refutation of the Materialists*.

6 G. Hanotaux and Mohammed Abdou, *L'Europe et l'islam*, ed. Mohammed Talaat Harb Bey (Le Caire: Jean Politis, 1905).

7 This collection also included sections of ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, articles by al-Afghānī and Farīd Wajdī, and contributions to the Islamic Educational Congress in Calcutta in 1899. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām wa-l-Radd ʿalā Muntaqidīhi* (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1909). According to an elaborate bibliography of ʿAbduh's work, compiled by the National Library of Egypt (Dār al-Kutub), a re-edition of *al-Islām wa-l-Radd ʿalā Muntaqidīhi* was published in the late 1920s. *Bibliyyūgrāfiyya*.

8 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 2:400–468.

9 ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām Dīn al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya*, 1964, 17–93.

10 ʿAbduh, 4.

11 I have found copies of the following editions in general bookstores in Cairo, Beirut, and Tunis. Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām bayna al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya* (Al-Qāhira: Dār al-Shurūq, 2011); Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām Dīn al-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya*, ed. ʿĀṭif al-ʿIrāqī (Al-Qāhira: Dār Miṣr al-Maḥrūsa, 2008).

is included in ʿImāra's edition of ʿAbduh's complete works, which he first published in the early 1970s and which have seen numerous reprints and a second edition.[12] Besides some variation in paragraphing and sectioning, there is not much difference between ʿImāra's edition of ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux and the original articles in *al-Muʾayyad*.[13] While Riḍā and al-Ṭannāḥī both added Hanotaux's contributions to the polemic in their editions of ʿAbduh's reply, ʿImāra did not.

Yet, the discussion was much broader than the contributions of Hanotaux and ʿAbduh, as I will show in the following sections. It included over fifty articles in the following Arabic- and French-language newspapers and journals: *Le Journal, al-Muʾayyad, al-Ahrām, al-Liwāʾ, Miṣbāḥ al-Sharq* (Lantern of the East), *Ḥimārat Munyatī* (Donkey of my desire), *al-Manār, Ṭarābulus* (Tripoli), *Les Pyramides*, *Journal du Caire,* and *Al Moayad*.[14] These other responses and discussions have remained largely uncollected, except for the response of the journalist Farīd Wajdī, which was published around 1910 alongside Hanotaux and ʿAbduh's contributions and an article in Riḍā's journal *al-Manār* (The

12 ʿAbduh, "Al-Radd ʿalā Hānūtū. Al-Islām wa-l-Muslimūn wa-l-Istiʿmār," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:215–222 (article 1), 222–227 (article 2), 227–235 (article 3), 235–239 (article 4), 239–250 (article 5), 250–256 (article 6). In the remainder of this study, this is the edition that will be referred to.

13 Besides differences in paragraphing and sectioning within the six articles, the most obvious difference is that in *al-Muʾayyad* the comparatively long fifth article is cut in two and distributed over two of its issues (with the last half printed alongside the sixth article). ʿImāra does not adopt this arrangement in his edition.

14 Despite the listing of the journal *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharq* in its periodicals catalogue (Dawriyyāt 443, 1194 and Jarāʾid Taymūr 19 and Zakiyya 8988–8998), I have been unable to find the issues concerned at the Egyptian National Library (Dār al-Kutub). Furthermore, I have not been able to retrieve copies of the articles that were published in the Egyptian French-language press (*Les Pyramides, Al Moayad, Journal du Caire*). Luthi lists the National Library of Egypt, or Dār al-Kutub, as the holding location of some of the French-language newspapers involved in the discussion in 1900, particularly *Les Pyramides* (Dawriyyāt 173–174) and *Le Journal du Caire* (Dawriyyāt 185–186). However, I have not been able to find these there during my visits. In spite of my lack of success, I do not think it improbable that the two newspapers are held by Dār al-Kutub after all. Luthi also lists the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF) as a holder of both journals. However, in both cases, the year 1900 is not part of the holdings of the BNF. Jean-Jacques Luthi, *Lire la presse d'expression française en Égypte, 1798–2008*, Comprendre le Moyen-Orient (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 94 and 97 (in footnotes 54 and 57 respectively). Additionally, the research project La Presse Francophone d'Égypte (PFE), under the Centre d'Études Alexandrines (CEAlex), compiled a rather comprehensive list of Egypt's French-language press. However, its online database does not hold copies of the French newspapers that are relevant to this discussion (yet). "La Presse Francophone d'Égypte numerisée," accessed December 3, 2014, <http://www.cealex.org/pfe/>. Finally, as a result of my search, I would surmise that the French edition of *al-Muʾayya*d, called *Al Moayad*, no longer exists.

lighthouse), which Riḍā also included in a description of the episode in his biography of ʿAbduh.[15] The exclusion of this broader discussion (and at times of Hanotaux's contributions) in the existing editions of ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux perhaps contributed to the disregard for this broader context in scholarly analyses of this text of ʿAbduh's, as we have observed in the introduction to this chapter.

The remainder of this chapter will map the landscape in which these discussions were conducted over great distances and in specific localities. The content of specific contributions will be discussed and analyzed in the next chapter.

2 Hanotaux and ʿAbduh: A Global Discussion Branching Out Locally

The former French Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabriel Hanotaux published two articles, a week apart on March 21 and 28, both simply titled "L'islam," in the newspaper *Le Journal* in 1900.[16] Hanotaux had been the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France intermittently from 1894 until 1898, after which he became the editor-in-chief of political affairs of *Le Journal*, one of the major Parisian dailies of that time.[17] Hanotaux's message in these two articles seems to be somewhat muddled and ambivalent, as he interweaves three related, but at times contradictory, arguments.

First, Hanotaux wishes to instill in his French readers the moral task of bringing a French type of civilization to the Muslims.[18] Due to their religion and race, Semitic Muslims cannot reach this degree of civilization on their

15 Hānūtū, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, *Al-Islām. Risāla bi-Qalam Musyū Hānūtū* (*Wazīr Khārijiyya Faransā al-Sābiq*). *Wa-Radd ʿalayhā* (*Faqīd al-Islām wa-Imām Aʾimmat al-Aʿlām al-Marḥūm al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh Muftī al-Diyār al-Miṣriyya Taghammadahu Allāh bi-Raḥmatihi*). *Wa-Naẓra fīhā* (*bi-Qalam Ḥaḍrat al-Fāḍil Muḥammad Afandī Farīd Wajdī*) (*Muḥarrir Majallat al-Ḥayāt al-Gharrāʾ*), 2nd ed. (Al-Qāhira: ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Makkāwī al-Kutubī, n.d.); Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:802–804. The collection featuring Wajdī's response to Hanotaux is held at the library of the American University of Beirut and was probably published at the beginning of the twentieth century (ca. 1910).

16 Gabriel Hanotaux, "L'islam," *Le Journal* 9, no. 2730 (March 21, 1900): 1; Gabriel Hanotaux, "L'islam. II," *Le Journal* 9, no. 2737 (March 28, 1900): 1. In the remainder of this study, Mohammed Talaat Harb Bey's edition of these two articles is referred to: Hanotaux, "L'islam," in *L'Europe et l'islam*, 19–27 (article 1), 28–38 (article 2).

17 Claude Bellanger et al., eds., *Histoire générale de la presse française*, vol. 3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972), 314–315.

18 "(…), à cette population islamique et sémitique, ce peuple aryen, chrétien et républicain [i.e. the French people, AK], doit apporter, maintenant, le pain et le sel de la vie et de la civilisation!" Hanotaux, "L'islam," in *L'Europe et l'islam*, 21.

own – unlike Aryan Christians. Second, Hanotaux argues that it is important for France, as a colonial power in North Africa, to have extensive and accurate knowledge of Islam; a Muslim's religious loyalty also dictates their political loyalty, and Hanotaux considers this to be a major problem that the French confront when colonizing Muslim areas.[19] Third, he points to the governance model that the French implemented in Tunisia as a solution to the problem that Muslims' confusion of political and religious allegiances poses to France as a colonial power. In Tunisia, Hanotaux writes, French rule was superimposed over local political institutions, of which a large portion was a continuation of previously existing institutions.

Within France, Hanotaux's public impact may have been very limited. His position as a minister was weak within the cabinets in which he served, and, after his political career, his political analyses in France's newspapers did not carry much influence, according to the evaluation of historian Wesseling.[20] However, in 1900 in Egypt, Hanotaux was taken very seriously; his views on Islam were seen as possibly representative of future French policies towards the Muslim world, causing great disturbance among many Egyptian Muslims.[21] His articles on Islam prompted numerous responses and analyses, triggering a debate that kept branching out.

On April 2 and 15 1900, Hanotaux's two articles on Islam were published by the Cairo-based newspaper *al-Muʾayyad* in Arabic translation.[22] ʿAbduh was the first to respond to Hanotaux's articles on April 17, 18, and 19 in the same newspaper, though not under his own name.[23] The articles were ascribed to a great and distinguished imam. In an article on the Hanotaux-episode in the satirical journal *Ḥimārat Munyatī* at the end of May 1900, a couple of weeks later, it is mentioned that ʿAbduh is said to be the author of the reply to Hano-

19 "Leur patrie, à eux, c'est l'Islam. Le pouvoir vient de Dieu: il ne peut donc appartenir qu'à un homme qui partage leur croyance." Hanotaux and Abdou, 36.

20 H.L. Wesseling, *Gabriel Hanotaux: historicus in de politiek* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1995), 17.

21 "Al-Ḥujja al-Bāligha fī al-Radd ʿalā Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3042 (April 22, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 22, 1317h): 1; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3057 (May 10, 1900/Muḥarram 11, 1318h): 1.

22 Jābrīyal Hānūtū, "Al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3029 (April 2, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 2, 1317h): 1–2; Hānūtū, "Al-Islām. 2," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3036 (April 15, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 15, 1317h): 1–2.

23 [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "Al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3038 (April 17, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 17, 1317h): 1–2; [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "2. Al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3039 (April 18, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 18, 1317h): 1–2; [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "3. Al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3040 (April 19, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 19, 1317h): 1–2. These articles were not undersigned by Muḥammad ʿAbduh but attributed to *ʿaẓīm min al-ʿuẓamāʾ al-Islām wa-imām min aʾimmat al-aʿlām* (one of the great within Islam, one of the most distinguished imams).

taux.[24] According to Riḍā, in his biography of ʿAbduh, everyone in Egypt immediately knew that ʿAbduh was the author of the article.[25]

ʿAbduh mainly responded to the first part of Hanotaux's argument, in which Hanotaux questioned the Semitic Muslims' ability to reach up-to-date civilization while affirming the civilizational aptitude of the French Christians with Aryan roots. In his first article, ʿAbduh objects to Hanotaux's conclusion by questioning the exclusively Aryan-Christian genealogy of civilization that is evoked by Hanotaux. In the two following articles, ʿAbduh also rebuts Hanotaux's assessment that the Islamic conception of God's transcendence and omnipotence stifles human action, which Hanotaux used in an attempt to prove that Muslims were incapable of independently achieving the superior French type of civilization.

In the following days, the Hanotaux-affaire continually occupied the front pages of *al-Muʾayyad*, led by ʿAlī Yūsuf (1863–1913). Only two days after ʿAbduh's rebuttal, *al-Muʾayyad* printed a second series of replies to Hanotaux, though less prominently, by the young journalist Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī (1878–1954).[26] In addition, articles in *al-Muʾayyad* lauded the response by ʿAbduh.[27] Meanwhile, the newspaper *al-Liwāʾ*, led by Muṣṭafā Kāmil, had joined the discussion. The newspaper was particularly intent upon refuting the ideas of Daniel Kimon, to whom Hanotaux had referred in his second article. Kimon, the author of *La pathologie de l'islam et les moyens de le détruire* (1897), argued that Islam was a mental illness, and it would be better to exterminate this religion and many of its believers along with it.[28]

Then, however, the newspaper *al-Ahrām*, edited by Bishāra Taqlā, interfered in the emerging discussion to defend Hanotaux' good intentions. According to *al-Ahrām*, both *al-Muʾayyad*'s translator and ʿAbduh had misunderstood and misrepresented Hanotaux's original articles. It particularly emphasized that Hanotaux did not concur with Kimon, despite his reference to him. In several

24 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Ḥimārat Munyatī* 3, no. 9 (May 25, 1900/Muḥarram 26, 1318h): 158.

25 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:800.

26 Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3041 (April 21, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 21, 1317h): 1–2; Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3042 (April 22, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 22, 1317h): 2–3; Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3043 (April 24, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 24, 1317h): 3–4. In the remainder of this study, Wajdī's response will be referred to as it was published in: Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām,* 43–49 (article 1), 49–54 (article 2), 55–61 (article 3).

27 "Al-Ḥujja al-Bāligha," *Al-Muʾayyad*; "Mawʿiẓat al-Islām al-Ḥaqqa," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3043 (April 24, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 24, 1317h): 1.

28 "Al-Islām wa-l-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Liwāʾ* 1, no. 110 (April 27, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 27, 1317h): 2; "Kīmūn wa-l-Islām," *Al-Liwāʾ* 1, no. 113 (April 30, 1900/Muḥarram 1, 1318h): 1.

articles, *al-Ahrām* accused *al-Muʾayyad* of deliberately distorting the meaning of Hanotaux's message and inciting conflict within Egypt.[29] *Al-Muʾayyad* defended itself and inverted many of *al-Ahrām*'s arguments, while *al-Liwāʾ*, itself a newcomer to the journalistic field, publicly sided with *al-Muʾayyad* in the conflict between two of the largest newspapers of Egypt at that time.[30] The discussion had split the Egyptian press into two camps, with Hanotaux and Bishāra Taqlā's *al-Ahrām* on one side, and ʿAbduh, ʿAlī Yūsuf's *al-Muʾayyad,* and Muṣṭafā Kāmil's *al-Liwāʾ* on the other.

Hanotaux responded to the controversy that his articles had engendered in *Le Journal* on May 14, in an article titled "Encore l'islam," which appeared in Arabic translation on May 22 in both *al-Ahrām* and *al-Muʾayyad*.[31] He stressed the misunderstandings, especially regarding his position on Kimon, for which he listed an inadequate translation by *al-Muʾayyad* as a reason. He did not discuss or answer the objections ʿAbduh formulated against his arguments. Despite the translation of ʿAbduh's articles on May 6 and 13 in the French edition of *al-Muʾayyad,* titled *Al Moayad*, Hanotaux seemed to have relied solely on the rendition of the discussion by *al-Ahrām*'s Taqlā.[32] He stated that *al-Ahrām*'s

29 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6716 (April 26, 1900/Dhū al-Ḥijja 26, 1317h): 1; "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6729 (May 11, 1900/Muḥarram 12, 1318h): 2; "Murāwighat Al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6731 (May 14, 1900/ Muḥarram 14, 1318h): 2; Maḥfūẓ, "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6734 (May 17, 1900/Muḥarram 18, 1318h): 1; "Ākhir Kalima Maʿa al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6737 (May 21, 1900/Muḥarram 22, 1318h): 2.

30 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām (wa-l-Muʾayyad wa-l-Ahrām)," *Al-Liwāʾ* 1, no. 128 (May 15, 1900/ Muḥarram 16, 1318h): 3; Muḥammad Masʿūd, "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3062 (May 16, 1900/Muḥarram 18, 1318h): 1–2; "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3062 (May 16, 1900/Muḥarram 18, 1318h): 5; "Istiyāʿ al-Ahrām," *Al-Liwāʾ* 1, no. 133 (May 20, 1900/Muḥarram 21, 1318h): 3.

31 Gabriel Hanotaux, "Encore l'islam," *Le Journal* 9, no. 2784 (May 14, 1900): 1. For the Arabic translations in the Egyptian press: Jabriyal Hānūtū, "Al-Islām Ayḍan. Maqāl li-musyū Hānūtū. Radd ʿalā al-Muʾayyad wa-ghayrihi," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3066 (May 21, 1900/ Muḥarram 22, 1318h): 1–2; Hānūtū, "ʿAwd ilā al-Islām. Li-l-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6738 (May 22, 1900/Muḥarram 23, 1318h): 1–2. In addition, *al-Ahrām* published a letter from Hanotaux in which Hanotaux thanked Bishāra Taqlā for helping him to clarify the misunderstandings: Bishāra Taqlā, "Min Hānūtū ilā al-Ahrām," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6742 (May 26, 1900/Muḥarram 27, 1318h): 1.

32 The French edition of *al-Muʾayyad*, titled *Al Moayad*, does not seem to exist anymore (see note 14 of chapter 6). However, the French-language collection of the Hanotaux-ʿAbduh controversy mentions the issues of *Al Moayad* on Sunday May 6 and Sunday May 13 as the sources of its French translation of ʿAbduh's articles, so these particular articles from *Al Moayad* seem to have survived in this collection. Mohammed Abdou, "L'Islam. Réponse d'une personnalité musulmane à M. Hanotaux," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 39–47 (article 1), 47–52 (article 2), 52–61 (article 3). This French translation is at times rather loose in comparison with the Arabic original. Hanotaux's sole reliance on *al-Ahrām*'s presentation of the controversy, instead of relying upon the translation of ʿAbduh's response, is also noted

response on his behalf sufficed and called for reasonableness, thereby affirming 's claim in representing Hanotaux's positions correctly.

Still, the discussion was stirred up even further in the wake of Hanotaux's latest article. A fierce discussion reportedly emerged in the French-language press in Egypt between *Les Pyramides* and *Journal du Caire*. Muṣṭafā Kāmil and Bishāra Taqlā insulted each other back and forth, resulting in Taqlā requesting a showdown (*mubāraza*)[33] between Kāmil and a French employee of *Les Pyramides* because Taqlā claimed that Kāmil had insulted this employee. Kāmil found this a comical move, while the satirical journal *Ḥimārat Munyatī* condemned Taqlā's challenge for its blatant indecency.[34] Subsequently, towards the end of May and June, the discussion had somewhat settled; this was in spite of the fact that *al-Muʾayyad* had printed yet another series of articles by one of its employees at the time, journalist Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ, on the context in which one should understand Hanotaux and others' attacks on Islam.[35]

At that point the news had spread towards Beirut and Tripoli, expanding the scope of the discussion and drawing in yet another local context. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī, editor of Beirut's newspaper *Thamarāt al-Funūn* (Yields of the liberal arts), asked a Christian author from Syria living in Cairo, Jād Afandī ʿĪd, to evaluate the quarrel between the newspapers, particularly with regard to the translation issue. The Egyptian journal *al-Manār* then published ʿĪd's

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by *al-Muʾayyad*. Hānūtū, "Al-Islām Ayḍan," *Al-Muʾayyad*; "Musyū Hānūtū wa-Maqāluhu fī al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3067 (May 22, 1900/Muḥarram 23, 1318h): 1–2. Finally, the fact that Hanotaux did not read the French translation of ʿAbduh's article in *Al Moayad* is quite ironic in view of Rashīd Riḍā's hope that European-language newspapers like *Al Moayad* could function as a bridge between Europeans and Muslims in overcoming misunderstandings about Islam by solving the problem that Europeans could not read what Muslims wrote about Islam in Arabic. "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār* 3, no. 15 (July 28, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1, 1318h): 345.

33 I am not certain whether the Arabic word *'mubāraza'* here refers to an intellectual or an armed showdown – i.e. a debate or a duel. Juan Ricardo Cole translates it as "debate" in his rendering of an article by Jād Afandī ʿĪd (see note 36 of this chapter), but I think that it might just as well be that it was a duel that *Les Pyramides* challenged *al-Liwā'* to. Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpāyigānī, *Miracles and Metaphors*, trans. Juan Ricardo Cole (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1981), 93.

34 "Shahāmat Ṣāḥib al-Ahrām. Faṣl Muḍḥik," *Al-Liwā'* 1, no. 137 (May 24, 1900/Muḥarram 25, 1318h): 3; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Ḥimārat Munyatī,* May 25, 1900.

35 Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ, "Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3064 (May 19, 1900/Muḥarram 20, 1318h): 1–2; Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ, "2. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3068 (May 23, 1900/Muḥarram 24, 1318h): 1–2; Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ, "3. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3076 (June 2, 1900/Ṣafar 4, 1318h): 2–3; Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3089 (June 17, 1900/Ṣafar 19, 1318h): 2; Arthur Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 27.

response.[36] In addition, al-Qabbānī directly contacted Hanotaux to inquire about the controversy, indicating that he took the matter very seriously.[37] Around that same time in Tripoli, the Islamic reformer Ḥusayn al-Jisr responded to Hanotaux, in three articles in his journal *Ṭarābulus*, which comprised part of a regular feature in which he countered allegations that Islam led to the decline of Muslim power.[38]

In July, the controversy flared up again. The editor of *al-Ahrām*, Bishāra Taqlā, travelled to Paris where he interviewed Gabriel Hanotaux on the issue. The interview filled the front page of *al-Ahrām* for three days in a row.[39] Hanotaux repeated that he did not concur with Kimon's assessment. Further, he emphasized that Muslims and Easterners in general should separate the religious from the political in order to progress, like Europe had done. In response, ʿAbduh wrote three articles in *al-Muʾayyad*.[40] He warned that Hanotaux's as-

36 Jād Afandī ʿĪd, "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Manār* 3, no. 11 (June 19, 1900/Ṣafar 21, 1318h): 250–53. In the remainder of this study, Riḍā's edition of this article in his biography of ʿAbduh is referred to: Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:802–804. This article by ʿĪd is elaborately praised by Mīrzā Abū-l-Faḍl for its fairness, especially in interreligious dialogue, in a book that was intended to help spread the Bahāʾi faith in Egypt. The book was published in 1900 and included the full article by ʿĪd. See, for its English translation, by Juan Cole: Gulpāyigānī, *Miracles and Metaphors*, 88–96. Gulpāyigānī was also full of praise for the eloquence of ʿAbduh's response to Hanotaux.

37 "Ṣadā al-Islām. ʿAwd ilā Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3127 (August 2, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Thānī 6, 1318): 2.

38 Ḥusayn al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū wa-lā Malām ʿalā al-Dīn al-Islāmī al-Mubīn," *Ṭarābulus*, no. 363 (June 28, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1, 1318h): 66–69; Ḥusayn al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū wa-lā Malām ʿalā al-Dīn al-Islāmī al-Mubīn," *Ṭarābulus*, no. 366 (July 12, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 15, 1318h): 70–79; Ḥusayn al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū wa-lā Malām ʿalā al-Dīn al-Islāmī al-Mubīn," *Ṭarābulus*, no. 368 (July 19, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 22, 1318h): 80–87; Johannes Ebert, *Religion und Reform in der arabischen Provinz: Ḥusayn al-Ğisr aṭ-Ṭarâbulusî (1845–1909)*, 18 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1991), 118–122.

39 Bishāra Taqlā, "Bārīs fī 7 al-Jārī. Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6785 (July 16, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1318h): 1; Bishāra Taqlā, "Bārīs fī 7 al-Jārī. Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6786 (July 17, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 20, 1318h): 1; Bishāra Taqlā, "Bārīs fī 7 al-Jārī. Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām*, no. 6788 (July 19, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 22, 1318h): 1.

40 [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "1. Hānūtū wa-l-Islām. Radd ʿalā Ḥadīthihi al-Akhīr," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3120 (July 25, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 28, 1318h): 1; [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "2. Hānūtū wa-l-Islām. Radd ʿalā Ḥadīthihi al-Akhīr," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3121 (July 26, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 29, 1318h): 1–2; [Muḥammad] [ʿAbduh], "3. Hānūtū wa-l-Islām. Radd ʿalā Ḥadīthihi al-Akhīr," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3122 (July 28, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Thānī 28, 1318h): 1–2. These articles were not undersigned by Muḥammad ʿAbduh,but were attributed to *ʿālim min ʿulamāʾ al-Islām wa-ʿaẓīm min aʿāẓim al-kuttāb al-ʿārifīn bi-l-dā al-dafīn li-l-Muslimīn wa-l-dawāʾ alladhī bi-hi najātuhum min al-khaṭar al-mubīn* (one of the scholars of Islam and one of the great writers who know the Muslims' hidden illness and the remedy with which to escape from this clear danger).

sessment was ultimately geared towards France's colonial interests, and that, instead, Muslims could regain strength by uniting in religious reform under the Ottoman Sultan.[41] By now, the discussion between Hanotaux and ʿAbduh had come to an end.[42] Nevertheless, this was only after it had thoroughly stirred up Egypt's press – with *al-Ahrām* and *al-Muʾayyad* taking opposite sides – to an extent that it even drew in journalists in Beirut and Tripoli.

3 An Interplay of Global and Local Contexts

The discussions surrounding Hanotaux's initial articles on Islam present an example of how an argument spanned a great distance, through translations, back and forth, into Arabic and French. At the same time, they show how an argument was interpreted and reconfigured in multiple ways in various local contexts, by a plurality of contributors around the world who diverged in origin, confession, and profession. The remainder of this chapter describes how the discussions surrounding Hanotaux and ʿAbduh relate to three aspects of the broader political and journalistic context in which the discussions took place.

3.1 *The Question of Islam and Global Rivalries Localized*

In the 1909 edition of the discussion between Hanotaux and ʿAbduh in Arabic, Hanotaux's first article was given the title "Qad Aṣbaḥnā al-Yawm izāʾa al-Islām wa-l-Masʾala al-Islāmiyya" (which Adams translates as "Face to Face with Islam and the Muslim Question").[43] Even though this was not the original title, which was simply "L'islam" ("Al-Islām"), it conveys something essential about Hanotaux's contribution. For Hanotaux, Islam was conceived as a major problem and a threat to France as a colonizer. This was especially with respect to its political, anti-imperialist potential, which Hanotaux primarily located in some Sufi networks but also identified among all Muslims.[44] 'The ghost of pan-Islamism' haunted Hanotaux as well as many other colonial administrators in and outside France and similarly occupied the general public in the colonizing

41 Hanotaux's colonial intentions were also noted by Farīd Wajdī in his reply: Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 44.

42 Occassionally, *al-Manār* and *al-Muʾayyad* published articles which referred to the interview with Hanotaux, such as: "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār* (July 28, 1900); "Ṣadā al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad* (August 2, 1900).

43 ʿAbduh, *Al-Islām wa-l-Radd ʿalā Muntaqidīhi*, 1; Adams, *Islam and Modernism*, 86.

44 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 23–27.

countries.[45] A problem asks for a solution, moreover, and Islam had to be understood in order to be able to master its adherents. This was also one of the backgrounds against which the academic discipline of Islamic Studies came into being.[46] It is in this light that, in his two articles on Islam, Hanotaux negatively evaluated Islam's essentials in comparison to Christianity. Similarly, he pleaded for an elaborate research project into Islam as the solid foundation for France's colonial policies and suggested that the Tunisian model of the protectorate was the optimal way for France to govern Muslims.

For Daniel Kimon, who Hanotaux cited in his second article, the solution to the problem of Islam seemed to be a final and radical one, as the title of his 1897 book *La pathologie de l'islam et les moyens de le détruire* suggests. In this book, Kimon compares Muslims to beasts that have to be killed or forced into labor and Islam to a mental sickness that has to be extinguished. This could be accomplished through the destruction of the Kaaba in Mecca and the removal of the tomb of the prophet Muḥammad in Medina to the Louvre, where it would be exhibited as Islam's grave.[47] Hanotaux does not agree with Kimon in his article, but he echoes Kimon's phraseology in describing Muslims as being entranced by Mecca, bordering onto madness.[48] On the other hand, Hanotaux notes that there are others, for example Hyacinthe Loyson, who do not see harm in Islam but rather an aid to civilization.

Islam was thus a central subject in the public debate in colonizing countries such as France. Hanotaux's article, moreover, seems to have been primarily intended for a French audience. Yet, in translation, the questions that Hanotaux raised were also answered by intellectuals in colonized Egypt, the location of a global rivalry between the French and the British colonial projects.

First, Hanotaux's article and its negative assessment of Islam triggered responses in defence of Islam in Egypt. ʿAbduh wrote that he could not pass on Hanotaux's attack (*wathba*; *ṭaʿn*) of the foundations of the Islamic religion.[49]

45 Aydin, "Globalizing the Intellectual History," 168. Hanotaux readily admits that an Islamic union in a political sense would greatly scare Europeans. Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900. Similarly, ʿAbduh recognizes in his reply to Hanotaux that the fear for pan-Islamism is a major issue for European politicians: ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:239.

46 Jung, *Global Public Sphere*, 206–207.

47 Daniel Kimon, *La pathologie de l'islam et les moyens de le détruire. Étude psychologique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1897).

48 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 24. Similarly, ʿAbduh too echoes this language of Muslims' madness and folly in representing Hanotaux's standpoints about Islam: ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:227.

49 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:217–218, 227, 233, 235, 255.

Others, in Egypt and beyond, surely agreed with ʿAbduh on this and supported his defence of Islamic doctrines, or put forward their own defences.[50]

As Taqlā pointed out, ʿAbduh made it seem that Hanotaux concurred with Kimon's final solution – i.e. the annihilation (*ibāda*)[51] of Islam – in a passing remark in his reply to Hanotaux.[52] ʿAbduh might have misunderstood the translation of Hanotaux's article, but this might also have been a rhetorical trick to add to the initial indignation over Hanotaux's own assessment of Islam. Whatever the case, in his reply, ʿAbduh also writes that he considers Kimon's assessment of Islam too ridiculous to merit an elaborate answer.[53] Kimon's words led others to rise to the defence of Islam, while there remained confusion about whether Hanotaux agrees with these or not.[54] Especially *al-Liwāʾ* took on this task, explaining and refuting Kimon's complete argument and exhorting its readers to defend religion (*al-dīn*), here taken to mean Islam.[55]

Al-Ahrām, on the other hand, argued that there actually was no need to defend Islam; Hanotaux did not attack Islam. First, Hanotaux did not agree with Kimon but merely cited him; any confusion about this was caused by a faulty translation and ʿAbduh's rendition of Hanotaux's words, according *al-Ahrām*.[56] Furthermore, Hanotaux himself was no religious scholar but a politician, interested only in the best for his fatherland. Therefore, his opinions on the Islamic religion should be weighed as such – something with which *al-Muʾayyad* agreed but which should not have prevented a religious scholar like ʿAbduh to

50 For example: Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*; Masʿūd, "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* June 28, 1900; "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār*; Al-Azharī, *Al-Islām*, 30–32.

51 In summarizing Hanotaux's arguments, ʿAbduh conjugates a form IV verb from the root b-y-d: *abāda*, to destroy/to exterminate (here: them [the Muslims]). ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:217. Taqlā uses the verbal noun (*maṣdar*) of this form IV verb to refer to ʿAbduh's rendition of Hanotaux's position: *ibāda.* "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām,* May 11, 1900.

52 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:217 and 234.

53 Ibid., 3:233–234; cf. Masʿūd, "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad,* 2.

54 "Mawʿiẓat al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*; "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār*, 340. Also, al-Jisr critically remarks in his reply that Hanotaux only seems to have practical objections to Kimon's radical solution. Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 19, 1900, 87.

55 "Kīmūn wa-l-Islām," *Al-Liwāʾ*. In another article in *al-Liwāʾ*, a woman of a women's society finds in Kimon's words occasion to exhort women to raise children who love their religion and wish to defend it. "Al-Islām wa-l-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Liwāʾ*.

56 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900; "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900.

set things right, according to *al-Muʾayyad*.[57] Lastly, as a politician, Hanotaux had always aimed for agreement with the Muslim lands, as his friendly relations with the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan and his recognition of Muslim civilizational potential exemplified, which Hanotaux reiterated in his replies to the Egyptian outrage over his articles.[58]

All Egyptian contributors to the discussion affirmed publicly that Islam was something to be treasured and that foreign commentators should not be allowed to tell untruths (*awhām*) about Islam. However, as we have seen, they disagreed on whether Hanotaux's articles were an attack on Islam or not. Their positions within this discussion can only be properly understood in relation to their respective attitudes towards the French and the British and their scramble for Egypt.

The newspapers involved in the controversy around Hanotaux, *al-Muʾayyad*, *al-Ahrām,* and *al-Liwāʾ*, were all increasingly critical of British interference in Egypt.[59] Their discontent was mirrored and encouraged by the attempts at independence of Egypt's official sovereign the Khedive ʿAbbās Ḥilmī II (r. 1892–1914), and even more so when these attempts by the Khedive were smothered by Egypt's British consul-general Lord Cromer.[60] Reflecting the global rivalry between the French and the British, the Egyptian journalists who were critical of British occupation took a special interest in France's global politics. An article by a French former Minister of Foreign Affairs on Islam and Muslim lands was therefore likely to attract press coverage.

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57 Ibid.; "Hānūtū wa-l-Ahrām," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3055 (May 8, 1900/Muḥarram 9, 1318h): 1–2; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*, May 10, 1900. Cf. ʿAwaḍ on Hanotaux's approval of the extermination of Muslims (as proposed by Kimon), which ʿAwaḍ thought was not driven by religious interests, but only by political/colonial and personal interests. ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

58 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900; Hanotaux, "Encore l'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 63–70; Taqlā, "Min Hānūtū ilā al-Ahrām," *Al-Ahrām.* In a letter to the editor of the Beirut-based journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn*, printed in *al-Muʾayyad*, Hanotaux again restates that intentions of agreement and harmony have always laid behind his position regarding Islam and Muslims. "Ṣadā al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

59 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 55–58; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 204; Abbas Kelidar, "Shaykh ʿAli Yusuf: Egyptian Journalist and Islamic Nationalist," in *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890–1939*, ed. Marwan R. Buheiry (Beirut: American University of Beirut, Center for Arab and Middle East Studies, 1981), 11–13; Leon Zolondek, "Al-Ahram and Westernization: Socio-Political Thought of Bisharah Taqla (1853–1901)," *Die Welt des Islams* 12, no. 4 (1969): 186.

60 Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer: A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations* (London: John Murray, 1968), 98–136 and 137–154. For example, in his dispute with *al-Muʾayyad*, Taqlā takes pride in reminding his audience that he shares his opposition to the British with the khedive. "Ākhir Kalima Maʿa al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām.*

First as a politician and subsequently as an active participant in the French public debate, Hanotaux emphasized that it was France's duty to act as a colonial power, particularly on the Southern shore of the Mediterranean. He conceived of France's colonial mission as that of a mother's towards her overseas children, which suggests how close the colonial project lay to his heart. The centrality he attached to France's role as a colonial power also shows in his policies as a minister. Hanotaux was involved in preparing a military plan with which France intended to secure control over Sudan, to challenge British power on the African continent, and, more specifically, to re-open the question of British rule over Egypt. The plan, however, proved to be a political miscalculation and failed, ending in an encounter between the British and French armies at Fashoda in Sudan in 1898, where the French were forced to retreat and acknowledge British control over the Nile Valley.[61]

The Fashoda-incident changed the global power relations and, accordingly, significantly changed the perceived potential that many Egyptian intellectuals and politicians attributed to France in Egypt. The editors of *al-Muʾayyad* and *al-Liwāʾ*, ʿAlī Yūsuf and Muṣṭafā Kāmil now lost hope for French support in ousting the British, as did the Khedive.[62] The editor of *al-Ahrām*, Bishāra Taqlā, did not lose his sympathies towards the French, however. He and his newspaper enjoyed personal protection from the French.[63]

The newspapers' positions in the discussions surrounding Hanotaux in 1900 reflected these changing attitudes towards France. In contrast with *al-Muʾayyad* and *al-Liwāʾ*, *al-Ahrām*'s Taqlā passionately defended Hanotaux and France. He accused the others of working against France and celebrated his own position as a sign of his opposition towards the British, whom he considered to be much worse than the French, and whom he thought could only be evicted from Egypt with foreign (French) support.[64] However, *al-Muʾayyad* retorted that one could easily be critical of both the English and the French.[65] In addition, questions were raised in *al-Muʾayyad*, *al-Liwāʾ,* and *Journal du Caire* on the benefits of Taqlā's approach for the French, as he estranged many Egyptians by

61 Wesseling, *Gabriel Hanotaux*, 14.

62 Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, 2–3, 101–102, 230–231; Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 204; Kelidar, "Shaykh ʿAli Yusuf," 11–13; Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer*, 133–134.

63 Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, 207; Zolondek, "Al-Ahram and Westernization," 188.

64 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900; "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; "Ākhir Kalima Maʿa al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*; Taqlā, "Min Hānūtū ilā al-Ahrām," *Al-Ahrām.* In contrast, Taqlā was sceptical of the sincerity of intentions of the British with regard to their support of reform in Egypt: Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 19, 1900.

65 "Hānūtū wa-l-Ahrām," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

defending Hanotaux so vehemently instead of containing the damage and advising France and Hanotaux accordingly.[66]

Conversely, *al-Muʾayyad* was criticized in the Egyptian press for having changed its positions regarding France, presumably since the Fashoda-incident, and particularly regarding Hanotaux personally.[67] As a minister and afterwards, Hanotaux had always strongly believed in the need for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire in order not to upset the delicate political balance in Europe.[68] So, despite his grand ambitions for France as a Mediterranean colonial power, Hanotaux was convinced that France should not intervene in the internal matters of the Ottoman Empire. This was most apparent in Hanotaux's position of non-intervention during the so-called Ḥamīdian massacres of Armenians from 1894–1896.[69] In Egypt, his support for the Ottoman Empire and Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd II was well-known and appreciated, which is why *al-Ahrām*, and also Hanotaux himself, claim that the former minister deserved more credit in this discussion.[70] *Al-Muʾayyad*, in defence, writes that Hanotaux's articles about Islam were so surprising and shocking because they were so unexpected from someone with Hanotaux's track record.[71]

Lastly, even though *al-Muʾayyad* proudly printed ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh took up quite a different position towards the British administration in Egypt than *al-Muʾayyad*, *al-Liwāʾ,* the Khedive, or even *al-Ahrām*.[72] While Muḥammad ʿAbduh had been very critical of the British occupation of Egypt during and in the aftermath of the ʿUrābī-revolt, especially in the journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā,* he adopted a more conciliatory and pragmatic approach upon his return to Egypt. Referring to ʿAbduh's visit to Tunisia in 1903, historian Oliver Scharbrodt suggests that ʿAbduh may have thought that foreign occupation was undesirable in itself, but that resistance was not recommended, and that, in the meantime, colonial rule should be put to use for the reformation of Egypt, especially in the field of education.[73] According to Hourani, ʿAbduh still

66 "Shahāmat Ṣāḥib al-Ahrām. Faṣl Muḍḥik," *Al-Liwāʿ*; "Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām (wa-l-Muʾayyad wa-l-Ahrām)," *Al-Liwāʿ*; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 77.

67 "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Ḥimārat Munyatī,* May 25, 1900.

68 Wesseling, *Gabriel Hanotaux*, 9–14.

69 Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1995), 77–79.

70 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900; Taqlā, "Min Hānūtū ilā al-Ahrām," *Al-Ahrām.* Hanotaux's support was also noticed by *Al-Muʾayyad*: "Al-Ḥujja al-Bāligha," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

71 "Al-Ḥujja al-Bāligha," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

72 On the relations between ʿAbduh and Kāmil, see: Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 160.

73 Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*, 103.

thought it too early for Egyptian self-rule.[74] However, Zaki Badawi thought these recommendations by ʿAbduh to be naïve, or, even worse, insincere, as ʿAbduh must have known the repressive nature of colonial rule.[75] In view of ʿAbduh's own career and position, his acquiescence to and cooperation with the British might have been pragmatic.[76] The British consul-general Lord Cromer had supported ʿAbduh's return to Egypt after his banishment. In addition, Cromer backed ʿAbduh's appointment as Grand Mufti of Egypt in 1899 and made sure he kept this position until his death in 1905, while ʿAbduh was repeatedly under heavy public attack.[77] Finally, it seems that ʿAbduh was on very good personal terms with Lord Cromer, who referred to ʿAbduh as "my friend" in his book *Modern Egypt* and whose leadership ʿAbduh seemed to respect.[78]

Hanotaux's articles may have provided ʿAbduh with an opportunity to criticize some aspects of colonialism, without directly criticizing the British and their occupation of Egypt. For example, in his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh is critical of France's treatment of its colonial subjects, which, according to him, was not based on justice or upholding the rights of believers, despite the lip service Hanotaux and other French politicians paid to these values.[79] He also urges the Muslims to regain strength by studying the foundations for Europe's strength, ultimately in order to resist Europe and survive in the struggle for existence.[80] The defence of Islam carried out by ʿAbduh and others in the Egyptian press in 1900 was embedded in a global context in multiple ways, as was Hanotaux's attack and Taqlā's defence of Hanotaux.

3.2 *Defending Islam for the Sake of the Fatherland?*

In Egypt, the different opinions about France and Hanotaux's potential benefit for Egypt were also reflected in how the journalists involved presented each other's contributions to the debate about Hanotaux's articles on Islam. In this way, the global 'question' of Islam – originally introduced by Hanotaux in a French context – branched out even further in the local political context of Egypt and was reconfigured in yet other ways in the process.

74 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 160.

75 Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 46.

76 Badawi, 36–37, 39. In *The Reformers of Egypt,* Zaki Badawi portrays ʿAbduh's acquiescence to and cooperation with the British a reprehensible position that is one of collaboration.

77 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 172, 195; Blunt, *My Diaries*, 1920, 2:80, 83, 87. For more on the office of Grand Mufti of Egypt, see: Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State*, chap. 4.

78 Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer*, 150–151; Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2:180.

79 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:234–235.

80 ʿAbduh, 3:235 and 236–238.

First, Taqlā, Yūsuf, and Kāmil contested each other's contributions to the discussion in terms of how they either benefitted or harmed Islam. *Al-Muʾayyad* doubted if Taqlā had the best at heart for Islam, given his defense of Hanotaux.[81] In turn, *al-Ahrām* stressed that it always acted with Islam's best interests in mind, evident in its support for the Ottoman Sultan.[82] *Al-Ahrām*'s allegiance to Islam was perhaps not as evident as *al-Muʾayyad*'s for the Egyptian public, because its editor Bishāra Taqlā was a Christian émigré from what is now Lebanon, making him a so-called "*khawāja*," or a Christian foreigner, while *al-Muʾayyad*'s editor was an Egyptian Muslim.[83] This might explain why, in several articles, *al-Ahrām* mentioned that there were also Muslims – and particularly from the Azhar – who were at its side.[84]

Moreover, Taqlā raised doubts about whether ʿAbduh and *al-Muʾayyad*'s efforts were actually in the best interest of Islam, observing that *al-Muʾayyad* had been banned from Algeria, colonized by the French, and was therefore unable to reach Muslims there; furthermore, ʿAbduh should have written his response in French if he wanted to actually correct Hanotaux's image of Islam.[85] Additionally, in a letter published in *al-Ahrām,* a Muslim reader asked if *al-Muʾayyad* was even really interested in serving Islam at all, as it would have printed Hanotaux and Kimon's words without any proper response, if ʿAbduh had not come to Islam's rescue.[86] In *al-Manār*, in contrast, Rashīd Riḍā praised *al-Muʾayyad*'s printing of the articles of Hanotaux and the reference to Kimon, as Riḍā considered proper knowledge of European opinion about Islam imperative to successfully correcting this image.[87]

Second, the two camps of Egyptian journalists contested the patriotism of each other's contributions in this discussion around Hanotaux, embedding the global discussion even more firmly in their domestic context. *Al-Ahrām*

81 "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*, May 16, 1900. Cf. Taqlā's summary of *al-Muʾayyad*'s allegations: "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; Taqlā, "Min Hānūtū ilā al-Ahrām," *Al-Ahrām.*

82 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 14, 1900; Taqlā, "Min Hānūtū ilā al-Ahrām," *Al-Ahrām.* Cf. *Al-Muʾayyad* on Taqlā's response to its allegations: "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*, May 16, 1900.

83 The journal *Ḥimārat Munyatī* refers to Taqlā as a "*khawāja:*" "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Ḥimārat Munyatī,* May 25, 1900.

84 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 14, 1900; "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām.*

85 "Murāwighat Al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 14, 1900. Similarly, in his biography of ʿAbduh, Riḍā raises doubts whether Islam actually benefited from it being supported by *al-Muʾayyad* and *al-Liwāʾ* in this discussion. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:803–804.

86 "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām.*

87 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 338.

expressed its concerns about the effects of *al-Muʾayyad*'s alleged defence of Islam on the unity of the community (*umma*) or the fatherland (*waṭan*). Taqlā warned that *al-Muʾayyad*'s religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub*) instead of patriotism (*waṭaniyya*) would lead to divisions within the fatherland – probably referring to Egypt or the Ottoman Empire – and even amongst Muslims themselves.[88] As an example of such division, he pointed to the disagreement among the scholars of al-Azhar. Referring to a report in the journal *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharq,* Taqlā wrote that al-Azhar issued a statement in which ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux was not to be discussed and taught at al-Azhar, and that the Azhar library did not want to include it, despite ʿAbduh being the Grand Mufti of Egypt and a member of al-Azhar's Administrative Council.[89]

In reply, the *al-Muʾayyad* camp rejected the accusations that it incited fanaticism and divided the fatherland.[90] In a 1900 collection of texts on the relations between Muslims and Christians, ʿAbduh's reply is even included as an example of how to respond properly to Christian attacks on Islam and Muslims.[91] Also, an article in *al-Manār* emphasizes that there was also Christian praise for ʿAbduh's reply.[92] Moreover, the camp around *al-Muʾayyad* claimed patriotism for themselves. For example, a reader's contribution to *al-Muʾayyad* corrected Taqlā and stated that, for a Muslim, the interests of religion (*al-dīn*, referring here to the Islamic religion in particular) and fatherland (*al-waṭan*) were one, while *al-Liwāʾ* referred to its agreement with *al-Muʾayyad* as an expression of their patriotic bond.[93] The next chapter will elaborate on how the relation between Islam and the fatherland figured in this discussion.

Lastly, with his cunning reference to the disagreements between ʿAbduh and the Azhar, Taqlā touches upon an example of the contestations ʿAbduh was involved in within Egypt and amongst Egyptian Muslims in particular. The banning of ʿAbduh's text from the teachings of the Azhar may well have been indicative of the growing opposition to ʿAbduh's ideas about Islam at the Azhar

88 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900. See Zolondek on Taqlā's allegiance for Egypt and the Ottoman Empire at the same time – in addition to a broader and less political allegiance to 'the East' (*al-Sharq*): Zolondek, "Al-Ahram and Westernization," 185–187.

89 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900.

90 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām (wa-l-Muʾayyad wa-l-Ahrām)," *Al-Liwāʾ*; "Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad.* Similarly, in his biography of ʿAbduh, Riḍā accused *al-Ahrām* of being fanatical. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:801.

91 Al-Azharī, *Al-Islām*. This volume also includes an article by Eugène Clavel on European attacks on Islam. Clavel was a jurist involved with the Islamic French-language journal *al-Ittiḥād al-Islāmī*. Luthi, *La presse d'expression française en Égypte*, 168.

92 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:803.

93 "Hānūtū wa-l-Ahrām," *Al-Muʾayyad*; "Istiyāʿ al-Ahrām," *Al-Liwāʾ*.

as well as in the press, both backed by the Khedive. In 1899, the Khedive made sure that ʿAbduh's appointment as Grand Mufti did not also result in him getting the position of the highest religious authority of the Azhar, by separating the two functions from each other for the first time.[94] In doing so, the Khedive indirectly thwarted British influence at the Azhar and prevented ʿAbduh from implementing the educational reforms at the Azhar that many Azhari *ʿulamāʾ* vehemently opposed.[95] Once appointed as Grand Mufti, ʿAbduh, in turn, refused a request by the Khedive to use the *waqf* council for his personal financial interest, while the Khedive began to oppose ʿAbduh in many ways and secretly started exhorting the press to slander ʿAbduh and his proposals and opinions as a Grand Mufti.[96] In 1901, a year after ʿAbduh's replies to Hanotaux, the journal *Ḥimārat Munyatī* heavily criticized ʿAbduh's ideas about the Islamic doctrine of *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* (God's decree and fore-ordainment), which he had summarized in a speech at a secondary school of a charitable society that he presided over, and which he had previously put forth in his response to Hanotaux.[97] This turned out to be one of the many articles in *Ḥimārat Munyatī*, *Miṣbāḥ al-Sharq,* and other journals that targeted and delegitimized ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam.[98]

94 ʿUmar, "Al-Wathāʾiq al-Rasmiyya li-l-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh," 13–14. On the decisions related to ʿAbduh's appointment as Grand Mufti, see archival unit Majlis al-Nuẓẓār wa-l-Wuzarāʾ (0075-) and archival code 011160, dated on June 7, 1899/Muḥarram 24, 1317h in the Egyptian National Archives (Dār al-Wathāʾiq).

95 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 199; Haddad, "Muhammad Abduh: Pioneer of Islamic Reform," 62, n. 59.

96 Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer*, 150; Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:571–572; Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 175–194. According to Badawi, "[ʿAbduh's] reputed courage in standing up to Khedive ʿAbbās' is illusory, because ʿAbduh was protected by Lord Cromer. Furthermore, ʿAbduh's action was a personal grudge against the Khedive, based upon his experiences during and in the aftermath of the ʿUrābī revolt." Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, 47.

97 "Wa-hadhā al-Ustādh al-ʿAllāma al-Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh Muftī al-Diyār al-Miṣriyya," *Ḥimārat Munyatī* 4, no. 9 (July 8, 1901/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 21, 1319h): 142–44. This episode is recounted by Indira Falk Gesink: Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 177. The speech that *Ḥimārat Munyatī* mocked was printed by *al-Muʾayyad* a few weeks before: "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar. Mulakhkhaṣ Khuṭba li-Ḥaḍrat Ṣāḥib al-Faḍīla Muftī al-Diyār al-Miṣriyya," *Al-Muʾayyad* 12, no. 3397 (July 2, 1901/Rabīʿ al-Thānī 5, 1318h): 1.

98 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 175–195; Ziad Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians: Creating the Modern Nation Through Popular Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 85–87. Even though *al-Muʾayyad* was considered the mouthpiece of the Khedive, at least until 1904, the newspaper steered a rather independent course regarding ʿAbduh (and others such as al-Kawākibī) despite ʿAbduh's criticism of the Khedive's corruption and authoritarianism. Kelidar, "Shaykh ʿAli Yusuf," 13, 16.

3.3 *Professional Rivalries over the Art* (Fann) *of Journalism and Translation*

The discussion surrounding Hanotaux in the Egyptian press reflected the interplay of global and local politics. At the same time, it was also a discussion about the rules of journalism in Egypt, a relatively new field that was still establishing its legitimacy.[99] The dailies most prominently involved in the discussion, *al-Ahrām* (since 1876), *al-Muʾayyad* (since 1889), and newcomer *al-Liwāʾ* (since 1900), seemed to all have had quite substantial distribution, but press historian Ami Ayalon describes *al-Muʾayyad* around 1900 as the most widely circulating newspaper, with 6,000 copies.[100]

First, *al-Ahrām* centred its criticisms on a quality that it clearly considered to be key in the art of journalism: the command of French and, accordingly, the accuracy of a translation with respect to the French original. Taqlā cast serious doubt on the quality of the translation of Hanotaux's French article into Arabic with regard to Hanotaux's approval of Kimon's words. *Al-Ahrām* suggested that the translator hired by *al-Muʾayyad* did not have a sufficient command of the French language.[101] Later on, *al-Ahrām* introduced the translation of Hanotaux's reply "Encore l'islam" with the snide remark that it had to print its own translation since it clearly could not leave this to newcomers in journalism.[102] *Al-Liwāʾ* backed *al-Muʾayyad* on the issue of translation and stated that the translation was correct.[103]

The translator, Muḥammad Masʿūd, responded to *al-Ahrām*'s allegations, explaining that he felt that he was accused of something that touched the essence of his profession: the faithfulness of his translations to the original meaning (*amāna fī al-naql bi-l-ḥirṣ ʿalā al-maʿnā al-maqṣūd*).[104] In an elaborate article that includes relevant passages in both Arabic and French, he explains that Hanotaux's referral to Kimon was followed by an ironic comment that resembled an agreement but actually ridiculed Kimon's statements.[105] According

99 Cf. Dyala Hamzah, "From ʿIlm to Ṣiḥāfa or the Politics of the Public Interest (Maṣlaḥa). Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and his Journal Al-Manār (1898–1935)," in *The Making of the Arab Intellectual,* 90–127; Dyala Hamzah, "Muhammad Rashid Rida or: The Importance of Being (a) Journalist," in *Religion and Its Other: Secular and Sacral Concepts and Practices in Interaction*, eds. Heike Bock, Jörg Feuchter, and Michi Knecht (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2008), 40–63.

100 Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East*, 57.

101 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900.

102 Hānūtū, "'Awd ilā-l-Islām. Li-l-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām.*

103 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām (wa-l-Muʾayyad wa-l-Ahrām)," *Al-Liwāʾ.*

104 Masʿūd, "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

105 The original sentence in French is "La solution est radicale… N'est ce pas? et simple et humaine," which Masʿūd translated as "Wa-huwa ḥall basīṭ wa-fīhi maṣlaḥa li-l-jins al-

to him, *al-Ahrām* proposed to deprive Hanotaux's words of any potentially confusing irony or ambivalence, which Masʿūd considers to be incorrect. Further, Masʿūd concludes that ʿAbduh's response was not invalidated by this passage, even though he might have misunderstood Hanotaux's position regarding Kimon, as ʿAbduh did not devote many words to Kimon and mainly targeted Hanotaux's assessment of Islam's fundamentals.[106] When a fellow journalist from Beirut, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī, asked a fellow Syrian residing in Cairo for his evaluation of the translation issue, he concluded that the translation was correct from the beginning but that many readers misinterpreted it.[107]

Secondly, al-Qabbānī's request for an outsider's perspective on the matter also suggests that the professional reputations of the newspapers and journalists involved were at stake. *Al-Muʾayyad, al-Liwāʾ,* and *Ḥimārat Munyatī* all claimed that *al-Ahrām*'s actions were improper and lacked decency (*shahāma*). The newspaper was not even interested in the truth, *al-Muʾayyad* claimed, but only wished to raise its falling sales, according to *Ḥimārat Munyatī* and *al-Manār*'s editor Riḍā in his biography of ʿAbduh.[108] In addition, in his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh attacked Taqlā's professional sincerity. He suggested that Taqlā's remark to Hanotaux on Muslim hatred against Ottoman Christians only reflected Taqlā's personal resentment towards some Muslims, presumably referring to Taqlā's aversion towards *al-Muʾayyad*'s editor ʿAlī Yūsuf. However, as ʿAbduh gently reminded Taqlā, the Ottoman Sultan, caliph of the Muslims, had recently awarded Taqlā, an Ottoman Christian, a medal for his merit.[109] Conversely, in a reader's letter in *al-Ahrām, al-Muʾayyad* was accused of only working for its own commercial interest.[110]

This last aspect of the historical context of the discussion between France and Egypt draws attention, yet again, to its diversity. The discussions of which ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux were part cannot be reduced to colonial and do-

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basharī… A laysa ka-dhalika?" As a more literal translation, Masʿūd suggests "Hadhā al-ḥall aṣlī (ay qiyāsī) … A laysa ka-dhalika? … wa-basīṭ wa-basharī." Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:802. In my opinion, these contestations over translation, intricately connected to political and professional rivalries, show the great (potential) worth of the study of translations during the *Nahḍa* within a broader field of translation studies that is not so much focused on whether a translation is faithful to its original but on the 'discursive engagement' this implied. See for example the work of Marwa Elshakry, Shaden Tageldin, and Samah Selim.

108 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām (wa-l-Muʾayyad wa-l-Ahrām)," *Al-Liwāʾ*; "Tarjamat Maqāl Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*, May 16, 1900; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Ḥimārat Munyatī,* May 25, 1900; Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:801.

109 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:252, 253, 255.

110 "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām.*

mestic politics alone; professional and often personal relations also played significant roles. The next chapter turns to the questions that were shared within this diverse debate across a great distance and to which ʿAbduh and his interlocutors gave diverging answers.

CHAPTER 7

Comparing Islam and Christianity in Reply to Hanotaux

Gabriel Hanotaux's articles in a Parisian newspaper triggered, probably unintentionally, a variety of polemical responses in the Egyptian newspapers *al-Muʾayyad, al-Liwāʾ,* and the Lebanese journal *Ṭarābulus*. Backed by *al-Ahrām*'s editor Bishāra Taqlā, Hanotaux engaged in discussions with his Egyptian interlocutors, most prominently with Muḥammad ʿAbduh. At the same time, the responses in Egypt engendered a discussion within Egypt, creating an internal dynamic in which *al-Ahrām* and *al-Muʾayyad* took opposing sides.

This chapter analyzes the shared questions and diverging answers that underwrite this discussion as well as the comparisons between Islam and Christianity within it: Can 'religion' or specific 'religions' contribute to a community's progress (*taqaddum*) by playing a role in its reform (*iṣlāḥ*)? This broad underlying question is addressed in two questions. First: Can 'religion' or specific 'religions' engender the active attitude that Hanotaux and his interlocutors thought indispensable for progress? And, second: Can 'religion' or specific 'religions' benefit the fatherland (*maṣlaḥat al-waṭan*) and play a role in its reform?

It was a discussion that brought together politicians, journalists, and intellectuals over a large distance, through their replies to the questions that Hanotaux's article raised and the contestations between their answers. And, even though it could be said that Hanotaux set the agenda initially, the answers varied greatly, reflecting the interlocutors' variety in their relation to global political contexts, as well as to local and personal contexts and local semantics. The particularity of ʿAbduh's answer is discussed by situating it amongst and in relation to this variety of responses given by Hanotaux and the others involved in this expansive discussion.

1 God, Man, and Action

"Dans toute religion, les questions capitales sont celles de la prédestination, de la grâce, de la justification," Hanotaux asserts confidently at the opening of his second article.[1] As he explains, the configuration of these issues reflects

1 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 28. In my translation: "In every religion, the principal issues are those of predestination, grace and justification."

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a religion's perspective on the relation between God and man; specifically it refers to the assessment of God's omnipotence in relation to man's free will and the consequences of this relation for man's industriousness. Hanotaux writes that the issue has occupied man's mind since antiquity as both a religious question and a philosophical one. Two positions have emerged, with Buddhism and the human-like gods of the ancient Greeks on either side of the spectrum. The first emphasizes the endless power of God and as such cripples man and his powers in front of the almighty God, rendering man passive and fatalistic. The other, on the contrary, elevates the human being and his powers, even at the expense of God, urging him towards action and striving.[2]

Hanotaux then proceeds to compare Islam and Christianity's answers to a set of questions: What is the relation between God's power and man's will? What does this imply for man's activity? According to Hanotaux, Christianity, heir to the ancient Aryans and having breached with its Semitic origins, lessens the distance between God and man. Islam, on the other hand, is still under the Semitic spell. As Islam debases mankind and infinitely elevates God, with the distance between the two getting almost absolute, it is firmly placed in the opposite category. Hanotaux subsequently connects this difference to the two religions' differing views of God's essence. For Christians, he explains, God is a trinity – with God being the Father, Jesus being both man and God ("un homme-Dieu"), and the Holy Spirit uniting the two. On the contrary, Muslims believe that there is only one God and that God is one. The figure and status of Jesus represent Christianity's elevation of man and its endorsement of his free will, Hanotaux writes, while Islam's absolute transcendence represents a complete lack of human will and agency.[3]

Hanotaux concludes that Christianity's elevation of mankind and celebration of man's willpower pushes man towards action, effort, and struggle. In contrast, Islam's idea of God's absolute will and power deprives man of the capacity to affect his fate except through praying and surrendering to God – the meaning of the word *Islām*, according to Hanotaux.[4] In his interview with Taqlā, furthermore, Hanotaux explains that there is no use in piety and virtue for material progress. God does not reward piety; otherwise, the deeply

2 Hanotaux and Abdou, *L'Europe et l'islam*, 28–29.

3 Hanotaux and Abdou, 29.

4 "Mais la conception chrétienne, plus douce et plus réconfortante pour l'homme, porte l'homme, par une pente insensible, vers l'action qui peut l'approcher de Dieu puisque, si je puis dire, les ponts ne sont pas coupés; tandis que le Dieu farouche de Mahomet laissa sa créature rouler dans l'espace selon la ligne inflexible d'une loi une fois dictée, sans autre ressource que la prière et l'invocation résignée du nom unique qui est la seule espérance : aussi le mot « Islam » veut dire « abandon aux volontés [sic] de Dieu »." Hanotaux and Abdou, 30.

religious East would not be facing its current predicament. Accordingly, Hanotaux attributes the East's decline vis-à-vis Europe and America to the Easterners' fatalistic attitude, surrendering to despair, while he explains that the progress of Europe and America is due to their effort (*ijtihād*), activity (*nashāṭ*), and audacity (*iqdām*). Moreover, as there was no activity or movement (*ḥarāk*) in the East, Europe took over and colonized the Eastern lands.[5] Similarly, at a later point in the interview, he explains that for the East, the only way out of its predicament lies in copying Europe in its effort and courage, as Japan had already successfully done.[6] In Hanotaux's analysis, theological discussions on the relation between God and man are clearly not only significant for the Hereafter.

As his article was translated into Arabic in a newspaper in Cairo, the questions Hanotaux posed with regard to 'the religions' were adopted and reconfigured by his Egyptian interlocutors: What is the relation between man and God in a particular religion? How does this relation translate into a believer's activity or passivity? How, then, does this religion relate to progress? ʿAbduh and others set out to refute Hanotaux's answers by providing their own answers. They did not contest the questions or the logic represented by these questions, however, and it is in this sense that this study considers them to have *shared* these questions. ʿAbduh and others in the Arabic press agreed with Hanotaux on the pivotal importance of a package of virtues such as effort, work, longing, determination, and courage – as opposed to laziness (*kasal*), surrender (for which ʿAbduh used the word *taslīm*, not *islām* as Hanotaux wrote), and despair (*ya's*) – in order to procure progress (*taqaddum*) and reach a higher and more complete stage of civilization. They also agreed on the crucial role that religions played in this process. This was illustrated in the fourth chapter of this study, which concluded that ʿAbduh considered religious morality pivotal in instilling individuals with a propensity for communally beneficial action and reinterpreted Islam accordingly.

Yet, ʿAbduh and others fundamentally disagreed with Hanotaux's comparison of the doctrinal make-up of Christian and Islamic doctrine with regard to these virtues. They challenged Hanotaux's conception of the unfortunate fate of Muslims on three fronts: first, regarding the Islamic belief in God's absolute unity, unicity, and transcendence (*al-tawḥīd* and *al-tanzīh*); second, regarding the Islamic belief in God's omnipotence, omniscience, and the corresponding meaning of predestination (*al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*, or, briefly, *al-qadar*); and, third, regarding the genealogy of both the Aryan-Christian and the Semitic-

5 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900.
6 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

Islamic civilization. In the process, they turned Hanotaux's comparative assessment of Islam and Christianity upside down.

1.1 *The Distance between Man and God*

ʿAbduh and others translated Hanotaux's characterization of Jesus as "un homme-Dieu" into concepts familiar to Islamic theology: those of *tashbīh* (anthropomorphization)[7] and *tajsīd* or *tajsīm* (corporealization), in opposition to *tanzīh* (transcendentalization) which was considered to be a logical and essential component of a belief in *tawḥīd* (the affirmation of God's unicity).[8] Using this Islamic theological terminology, they questioned Hanotaux's comparison between Islam and Christianity's doctrinal suitability for progress and civilization rooted in their believers' activity and courage and replied with their own comparative assessments.

First, in their replies to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh and Ḥusayn al-Jisr compare *tanzīh* with *tashbīh* in terms of their rationality. According to ʿAbduh, the doctrine of *tanzīh* reflects a higher and more comprehensive stage in man's rational evolution than *tashbīh*. With a more fully developed intellect, man had observed nature and logically induced that there was one necessarily existent (*wujūd wāḥid wājib*), which is a theophysical argument that Ḥusayn al-Jisr and Farīd Wajdī also refer to in their replies to Hanotaux.[9] According to ʿAbduh, this necessarily existent cannot be material or corporeal because materiality compromises God's infinity and binds Him – a reasoning with which al-Jisr concurs.[10] ʿAbduh finds confirmation of his analysis in the Muslims' early turn to the sciences as well as among some of his Protestant contemporaries who,

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7 Hanotaux himself uses "anthropomorphique" to describe the religion of the ancient Greeks. He deems the ancient Greeks' conception of the narrow relation between God and man to be exemplary of a category in which he also includes Christianity, that of the celebration of man's willpower. Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 29.

8 ʿAbduh even writes "*al-tawḥīd, aw al-tanzīh*" (the act of declaring that God is one and unique, that is, the act of declaring that God is transcendent – perhaps more poignantly translated as 'monotheism, that is, transcendentalism'). ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222. This close theological association between *tawḥīd* and *tanzīh* was introduced first by the Muʿtazila. After the demise of the Muʿtazila, this idea was not discarded, however, as unrestricted anthropomorphism remained to be considered deeply problematic in view of *tawḥīd.* J. van Ess, "Taṣḥbīh wa-Tanzīh," eds. P. Bearman et al., *Encyclopaedia of Islam. Second Edition* (Brill Online, 2012), <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/tashbih-wa-tanzihCOM_1190?s.num=4&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.cluster.Encyclopaedia+of+Islam&s.q=tashbih>.

9 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:227. See also: Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 19, 1900, 85; Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 49–50.

10 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:227–228. See also: Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 19, 1900, 83.

according to ʿAbduh, renounced the Trinity as irrational and reinterpreted Jesus' sonship as him being selected by God as a prophet.[11] Given the lesser form of rationality *tashbīh* represents in his opinion, furthermore, ʿAbduh does not think that *tashbīh* marks a step upwards on the moral ladder (*sullam al-faḍā'il*), while *tanzīh* does.[12]

Journalist Farīd Wajdī expresses a similar idea of *tashbīh, tanzīh,* and a progressive human rationality in his reply to Hanotaux.[13] According to him, *tanzīh* reflects the latest scholarly insights of that time. He points to scientists such as the French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842–1925), who was also drawn to Spiritism and the study of supernatural phenomena.[14] According to Wajdī, Flammarion claims that man should refrain from trying to grasp the nature of God's existence because this type of knowledge is necessarily historically relative, as the truth in this respect transcends man's abilities. Wajdī concludes that man should limit himself to a belief in the existence of God – as he thought to be empirically proven – and should not attempt to understand God further.[15] For Wajdī, this amounts to a confirmation of the position of *tanzīh* and a refutation of that of *tashbīh*.

Second, in addition to comparing *tashbīh* with *tanzīh* for their respective rationalities, ʿAbduh and al-Jisr reversed Hanotaux's comparisons of Islam and Christianity with regard to the two religions' inducement of striving and activity. In their replies, they question the idea that conceiving of Jesus as both human and divine – which they consider a position of corporealization (*tajsīm*) – instills in believers the idea that they can approach God, resulting in their activity, audacity, and eventually progress. Both ʿAbduh and al-Jisr doubt if there are Christians who actually think it is possible to physically become God.[16] Instead, al-Jisr explains, Christians believe in a spiritual rapprochement (*taqarrub rūḥānī* or *qurb maʿnawī*) between God and man.[17]

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11 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:231 and 232. It seems probable that ʿAbduh refers to nineteenth-century Unitarianism here; a Christian (Protestant) movement that denies the Trinity and affirms that God is one.

12 ʿAbduh, 3:231 and 234.

13 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 47.

14 John Warne Monroe, *Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism, and Occultism in Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 125–127. Following Egil Asprem's analysis, Flammarion might be considered an example of the *tertium quid* of the thesis of disenchantment. Flammarion's ideas on science and the supernatural fell 'in-between' the ideal types of 'religion' and 'science' presupposed by Weber's disenchantment thesis. Asprem, *Problem of Disenchantment*, 40–46.

15 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 55.

16 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:231; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 78.

17 Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 19, 1900, 84.

Moreover, Islam – and the Islamic doctrine of *tanzīh* in particular – certainly and even particularly allows for this type of nearness to God. Al-Jisr explains that a Muslim can accomplish spiritual nearness to God through belief (*al-īmān*) and through good deeds (*al-ṣāliḥāt*) that are in agreement with man's God-inspired ethical dispositions, or *akhlāq*.[18] Furthermore, according to ʿAbduh and al-Jisr, God created man with a natural disposition to strive higher yet excluded the possibility of man actually becoming God or reaching the rank of a prophet.[19] Moreover, they argue that the mere idea of God being infinitely elevated and superior (*tanzīh*) encourages progress (*taqaddum*) in its own right.[20] ʿAbduh explains that Islam prepared man to rise on the steps of human completion (*marātib al-kamāl*).

In addition, ʿAbduh and Wajdī argue that a belief in *tanzīh* does not imply a greater distance between God and man than the doctrine of *tashbīh*. According to ʿAbduh, the belief in God's absolute transcendence (or *tanzīh*) as an essential component of *tawḥīd* means the rejection of a belief in any intermediaries (pl. *wusaṭāʾ*) between God and His believer, which ʿAbduh considers to be an expression of *tashbīh*, alongside pantheistic and polytheistic beliefs. ʿAbduh writes that the belief that God is the only authority for man and that an individual believer is thus solely responsible for making his deeds agree with divine law renders the individual believer in the direct – that is to say, unmediated – vicinity of God.[21] Similarly, Wajdī also considers the absence of intermediaries a sign that the Islamic doctrine of God's transcendence does not presuppose a wide rift between God and man.[22]

In contrast, ʿAbduh writes, the belief in and surrender to intermediaries (as a form of *tashbīh*) robs man of his rationality, will, and determination. It renders people slaves to their leaders and their illusions. This had precisely been the sorry state from which Islam had come to liberate man, including the Christians and Jews, at its inception.[23] With their will and effort held captive by others, those believers who revert to intermediaries are not prone to striving, progress, and civilization, according to ʿAbduh.

18 Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 78; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 19, 1900, 86.

19 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:233; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 76–78. Cf. ʿAbduh on reason and progress in: ʿAbduh, "Al-Intiqād," 2006, 161.

20 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:233; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 78.

21 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:228.

22 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 58.

23 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:228–230 and 232.

Yet ʿAbduh's comparison between *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* cannot be translated one-to-one as a comparison between Islam and Christianity. According to him, Christians had departed from the foundations (*uṣūl*) of their religions with their anthropomorphism and their belief in Trinity and intermediaries. In its foundation (*qiwām*; *aṣl*), however, their religion had been a religion of *tanzīh* and the worship of God alone, in agreement with the religion of God (*dīn Allāh*). Similarly, ʿAbduh recounts that, at its arrival, Islam called anthropomorphizing Christians towards the original foundation of their religion. Thus, ʿAbduh claims, his exposé should not be considered an attack (*ṭaʿn*) on Christian foundations, but an attack on those who should have upheld these foundations but departed from them instead.[24] In short, ʿAbduh conceives of the foundations of true Christianity – cleansed of later innovations and in agreement with the message of its prophet – as the religion of God, which is one of *tanzīh* and of which the foundations coincide with true Islam. This was not the Christianity that most Christians of his time adhered to, however.

1.2 *God's Omnipotence and Omniscience*

In answering these shared questions, ʿAbduh reinterpreted Islam and challenged existing modes of interpretation. Hanotaux did not set forth his view of the Islamic notion of predestination (or *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*) in any detail. He only mentioned it as part of the constellation of questions determining a religion's view of the relation between God and man. However, ʿAbduh and al-Jisr both elaborately responded to this aspect of Hanotaux' comparison; it was central to their contestation of Hanotaux's assessment of Islam's relation to industriousness and progress. Moreover, this was not the first or last time ʿAbduh and al-Jisr responded to allegations such as those implied by Hanotaux with regard to the doctrine of predestination in Islam. Al-Jisr's reply to Hanotaux was published as part of a series of articles in which he demonstrated that Islam was not responsible for the Muslims' decline, despite (Western Orientalist) allegations to the contrary.[25] According to Johannes Ebert, the article preceding al-Jisr's reply to Hanotaux specifically focused on predestination.[26]

Furthermore, ʿAbduh, in close cooperation with his teacher Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, had already addressed the issue in the journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā,* in 1884.[27] This article was reprinted in the journal *al-Manār* and the newspaper

24 Ibid., 3:231–233.

25 Ebert, *Religion und Reform*, 119–120.

26 Ḥusayn al-Jisr, "Lā Malām ʿalā al-Dīn al-Islāmī al-Mubīn," *Ṭarābulus*, no. 362 (June 14, 1900/ Ṣafar 16, 1318h): 58–66.

27 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar," in *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 102–17.

al-Muʾayyad in the early summer of 1900, at a time when the heated discussion surrounding Hanotaux was still raging on.[28] In addition, a year later, in 1901, ʿAbduh explained the Islamic conception of predestination in a speech to the students of a school founded by a charitable society over which he presided.[29] The issue resurfaced, yet again, in ʿAbduh's commentary on the Quran, specifically with regard to Sura 3, verse 156–158, which admonishes not to be like those who say that people would have escaped death by not going to war or on a journey.[30]

In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh rephrases Hanotaux' two extremes in the understanding of God's *qadar*: the first is a belief in man being directly controlled by God, leaving man no will in his deeds; the second is a belief in man acting independently according to his God-given free will, rendering his what he acquired.[31] In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh concedes that there had been Muslims who tended towards the first position. The Jabriyya reasoned that God predetermined man's deeds: they believed God's *qadar* to be compulsory (*jabr* translates as compulsion) and impossible for man to escape.[32] Following Hanotaux's analysis, its believers would then consider themselves crippled in their powers and would lack in courage, confidence, and an inclination to activity. However, the Jabriyya was quite insignificant and did not survive, as al-Jisr also notes.[33]

In comparison, ʿAbduh writes that within Christianity, those who are convinced that man is inevitably determined in his deeds, such as the Thomists

28 [Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī] and [Muḥammad ʿAbduh], "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar," *Al-Manār* 3, no. 12 (June 28, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1, 1318h): 265–76; [Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī] and [Muḥammad ʿAbduh], "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar," *Al-Muʾayyad* 11, no. 3104 (July 5, 1900/Rabīʿ al-Awwal 8, 1318h): 2–4.

29 "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar," *Al-Muʾayyad*, July 2, 1901. In the remainder of this study, ʿImāra's edition of this speech in ʿAbduh's complete works is referred to: ʿAbduh, "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar," in *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:507–9.

30 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:131–133. Interestingly, in his commentary on Q3:156–158, ʿAbduh reminds the reader that he already set forth his ideas on predestination in response to a non-Muslim. This could very well refer to ʿAbduh's response to Hanotaux. In the translation of Arthur J. Arberry, verse Q3:156 reads as follows: "O believers, be not as the unbelievers who say to their brothers, when they journey in the land, or are upon expeditions, 'If they had been with us, they would not have died and not been slain' -- that God may make that an anguish in their hearts. For God gives life, and He makes to die; and God sees the things you do (156). If you are slain or die in God's way, forgiveness and mercy from God are a better thing than that you amass (157); surely if you die or are slain, it is unto God you shall be mustered (158)."

31 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222.

32 ʿAbduh, 3:226.

33 ʿAbduh, 3:226. See also: Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 75.

and the Dominicans, still exist alongside those such as the Jesuits, who believe in man's ability to freely choose.[34] Moreover, ʿAbduh explains that Christianity teaches a withdrawal (*inqiṭāʿ* or *insilākh*) from this world, a disinterest with regard to worldly matters, also reflected in the Bible's command "to render to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's" (Mark 12:17). Evidently, ʿAbduh writes, the contemporary European civilization with its focus upon wealth and power does not heed this Christian command.[35] ʿAbduh's analysis of this Christian teaching implies that he thought that Christianity was not conducive to progress and should not be considered an element of Europe's secret to success.

In contrast, ʿAbduh writes that the Quran affirms in circa 64 verses that God endows man with free choice by which man can act independently, acquiring the deeds he wishes, rendering his acts his and making himself accountable for them.[36] Therefore, he explains, Islam does not consider man to be crippled by God's power, without any choice in his own deeds, a belief supposedly resulting in lethargy and fatalism among its believers. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, as we have seen in the fourth chapter of this book, ʿAbduh considered the independence of the will (*istiqlāl al-irāda*) to be one of the foundations of European civilization since the Reformation, together with the independence of opinion and thought. Furthermore, he associated these two types of freedom with the Reformations' rejection of unquestioningly following religious leaders (i.e. *taqlīd*), in which it had been influenced by Islam's teachings.

ʿAbduh's affirmation of man's free will does not seem to compromise God's omnipotence or omniscience for him. However, he does not methodically set forth his theological position. He does not explain in detail how his idea of

34 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:223.

35 ʿAbduh, 3:220–221.

36 This is my representation of ʿAbduh's second article's somewhat scattered general argument on *qadar*. Paradoxically, the summary of ʿAbduh's argument on *qadar* is best (but not completely) captured in ʿAbduh's quite loose, or strategic, reproduction of one of the two main positions that Hanotaux distinguished regarding the issue of predestination (or *qadar*): "*khāliq* [*al-ʿabd*] *wahabahu ikhtiyāran yataṣarraf bi-hi, fa-la-hu mā kasaba wa-ʿalayhi mā iktasaba*" (man's creator endowed him with free choice by which he can act independently, so what he acquired is his and what he acquired is upon him). ʿAbduh, 3:222. I take the last part [*wa-ʿalayhi mā iktasaba*] to indicate man's accountability for his actions. Man's accountability for his actions has been an important aspect of the Islamic discussion about man's free choice; otherwise God would perhaps be unjust in punishing or rewarding someone. Also, such a reading fits with an article on *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* by ʿAbduh and his teacher al-Afghānī in their journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* in which it is mentioned in passing that the doctrine of *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* is considered to be the source of God's recompensation and sanction by Muslims. Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 106.

God's *qadar* relates to the doctrine of God's omniscience (*al-iʿtiqād bi-iḥāṭat ʿilm Allāh bi-kull shay'*, the belief in God's knowledge encompassing everything) and that of His omnipotence ([*al-iʿtiqād bi-*]*shumūl qadratihi li-kull mumkin*, the belief in God's power comprising everything possible).[37] Such a scholastic enterprise only leads to internal divisions and factionalism, as ʿAbduh explains in his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* while it is ultimately impossible for a human being to get to the essence of God's *qadar*.[38] In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh therefore only offers a glimpse of how he seems to solve the equation. In addition, ʿAbduh's other, abovementioned accounts of the doctrine of *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar* might be illuminating in this respect.

First, as ʿAbduh explains in his response to Hanotaux, God may not predetermine man's deeds, but "He determines general divine principles, also known as the laws of nature" (*taqrīr al-sunan al-ilāhiyya al-ʿāmma, al-maʿrūfa bi-nawāmīs al-kawn*).[39] One does not have to believe in God to acknowledge that there are natural regularities, for example in the workings of human communities, affecting individuals and their choices.[40]

Christian van Nispen tot Sevenear studied the concept of the *sunan* in the Quran commentaries with which ʿAbduh commenced in his public lectures at the Azhar at the turn of the century, and which his pupil Rashīd Riḍā published in the journal *al-Manār*. After ʿAbduh's death, Riḍā continued the enterprise and collectively published their commentaries, which became known as the *Tafsīr al-Manār* (Quran commentary of *al-Manār*). Van Nispen tot Sevenaer explains that ʿAbduh and Riḍā's interpretation of *qadar* is consistent with translating *qadar* as "measure." God consistently implemented a "measure" in His creation, resulting in a regularly ordered world. This makes it emphatically not a world of instantaneity and chance, but one of God-willed causality, regularity and customs (*sunan*).[41] Accordingly, but in reverse, ʿAbduh defines the

37 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:223.

38 In his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, ʿAbduh concludes that there will always be a mystery to *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar*, which cannot and should not be tried to solve. ʿAbduh, 3:411.

39 Ibid., 3:224. While *sunan* is commonly translated as God's *customs*, the expression used here by ʿAbduh seems to imply a more active role on the part of God, because of which I decided to translate *sunan* here as God's 'principles'. It is exactly in these issues of translation that one can see the semantic field in which ʿAbduh formulates his ideas on God's *sunan* in the created world, ranging from God's customs to principles to regularities to laws.

40 Ibid. See also: Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā,* 108.

41 Christian van Nispen tot Sevenaer, *Activité humaine et agir de Dieu: le concept de "sunan de Dieu" dans le commentaire coranique du Manār* (Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq Sarl Éditeurs, 1996), 255–306, in particular 268, 279–281 and 303–304. See also: Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 109.

adherents of *jabr* in his reply to Hanotaux as people who adhere to chance and coincidence.[42]

These regularities originating in God's customs do not deny individual choice, according to ʿAbduh. The *sunan* represent a system in which individual choice is only one cog in the regularly ordered system, one link within a chain of causes and effects, as ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī explain in their article in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*.[43] Moreover, it should be remembered that man's free choice is itself God-given. As ʿAbduh wrote in his response to Hanotaux: "*khāliq al-ʿabd wahaba-hu ikhtiyāran*" (man's Creator endowed him with free choice). Man's choice is a tiny part of how God created His system.[44] In short, God's power is comprehensive and omnipresent *as a system,* and that does not comprise the freedom of man's will as a part of God's system.

Second, God's omniscience is left undiscussed in ʿAbduh's response to Hanotaux. But Van Nispen tot Sevenaer points to ʿAbduh's commentary to the Quranic verse 3:156 and his theological work *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* in which he explains that God's foreknowledge does not imply any restriction on man's free will. Instead, ʿAbduh states very concisely (and enigmatically) that *al-qaḍāʾ* and *al-qadar* express a relation between reality and God's knowledge in which God's knowledge uncovers a reality and necessarily corresponds with it, but that this does not imply any compulsion.[45]

Understood as such, *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* refutes compulsion and celebrates human free will. In addition, it endorses an understanding of the natural world in terms of laws, regularity and causality, which was considered to be an important building block for a scientific outlook and, consequently, for civilization. In his reply to Hanotaux, but also in his speech to students in 1901, his interpretation of Q:156–158, and his article in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* on *qadar*,

42 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:224. Similarly, in his commentary on Q:156–158, ʿAbduh refers to a misunderstanding of *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* as denying causality. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:131.

43 Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 107.

44 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:322. See also: Van Nispen tot Sevenaer, *Activité humaine et agir de Dieu*, 303; Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 107.

45 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:131; Van Nispen tot Sevenaer, *Activité humaine et agir de Dieu*, 290–292. ʿAbduh says the following about the doctrine of *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* and God's omniscience: "*al-qaḍāʾ ʿibāra ʿan taʿalluq al-ʿilm al-ilāhī bi-l-shayʾ, wa-l-ʿilm inkishāf lā yufīd al-ilzām*" and "*al-qadar wuqūʿ al-shayʾ ʿalā ḥasab al-ʿilm, wa-l-ʿilm lā yakūn illā muṭābiqan li-l-wāqiʿ*." Van Nispen Sevenaer paraphrases this with: "[ʿAbduh] a expliqué cela en indiquant que le décret (qada') signifie le rapport de la science divine avec la chose; or la science est un dévoilement qui n'implique pas de contrainte (al-ilzam); et la détermination (qadar) est le fait que la chose advient selon la science; et la science ne fait que correspondre à la réalité, (…)." Nispen tot Sevenaer, 291.

ʿAbduh describes the psychological effects that such an understanding of *qadar* has on its believers. The Islamic doctrine of *qadar*, in ʿAbduh's explanation, leads the believer to act confidently and courageously. Using his God-given powers and the various aspects of his natural or innate disposition (*fiṭra*), among which is his free will, a believer strives to act in accordance with what God ordained and, in doing so, relies upon the backing of God's order (*maʿūnat al-qadar*).[46] According to ʿAbduh, this mental assurance encourages work (*ʿamal*), persistence (*thabāt*), determination (*ḥazm*), and boldness (*iqdām*, *shajāʿa*) instead of implying a passive surrender to fate (*taslīm li-l-qadar*).[47]

Similarly, Ḥusayn al-Jisr writes that man's will to do good deeds, to act in accordance with God's law, is actually strengthened by a conception of God as infinitely elevated and powerful. Man is encouraged to put effort into his actions, to be determined and persistent, as he trusts upon God in doing so. Accordingly, al-Jisr, too, defends Islam's endorsement of man's free will in his deeds, whether these are directed to the Hereafter or worldly gain.[48] He explains that since theologian Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's (874–936) doctrine of man's acquisition (*kasb*) of his acts, the Sunnis have struck a middle chord between man being absolutely bound (*majbūr ṣarafan*) and having absolute free choice (*mukhtār ṣarafan*), the positions of the Jabriyya and the Muʿtazila respectively.[49]

Al-Jisr explicitly refers to the Sunni theological position regarding *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*. In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh also occasionally seems to refer to al-Ashʿarī's famous theological compromise revolving around *kasb*, or acquisition, but only implicitly and casually.[50] As such, he gives the suggestion that the Sunni compromise (*madhhab al-tawassuṭ* or, in al-Jisr's words, *al-madhhab al-ʿadl al-mutawassiṭ*) is similar to what he presents as the Islamic doctrine of *qadar*, without explicitly situating his position within the Islamic tradition of thought on the issue of predestination.[51] This conforms to ʿAbduh's general

46 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:226 and 508; Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 109; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:131. See also: Van Nispen tot Sevenaer, *Activité humaine et agir de Dieu*, 294 and 297–298.

47 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:226–227, 228, 508; Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 109.

48 Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 76; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 19, 1900, 87.

49 Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 75.

50 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222. Cf. Ebert's analysis that this difference in discussing *kasb* is one of the aspects that distinguish al-Jisr's reply to Hanotaux from that of ʿAbduh: Ebert, *Religion und Reform*, 122.

51 Christian van Nispen tot Sevenaer does make such an effort at times and concludes that ʿAbduh's position on *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* in view of God's omniscience amounts to a

attitude towards the Islamic theological and judicial tradition; he is not concerned with adhering to a specific school or engaging with the Islamic body of thought in the traditional scholarly manner of trained religious scholars, or *ʿulamāʾ*. He wants to circumvent theological discussion in order to maintain unity within the Muslim community.

Yet, in all of his writings on *qadar*, ʿAbduh also makes clear that the present understanding of *qadar* among Muslims is not in agreement with original, or true, religion (*al-dīn al-ṣaḥīḥ*). It was a product of the Islamic religion's corruption, due to the introduction of unlawful innovations (pl. *bidaʿ*) and delusions (pl. *wasāwis*). He writes that his Muslim contemporaries confused the reliance upon God (*tawakkul*) with being bound by God, thinking that they have no role in determining their fate themselves and thus have become passive and lazy – a natural tendency for man.[52] In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh writes that this passivity and fatalism was mirrored in the Muslims' attitude of over-obedience towards their rulers and their disinterest for the public good.[53] Misery and the loss of civilization was God's punishment for this, only to be reversed if the Muslims restore their original religion – a restoration (*taqwīm*, *taṣḥīḥ*) for which the past century's reformers have called throughout the Islamic world.[54]

At the end of June 1901, ʿAbduh reiterated his analysis of the frequent misunderstanding of *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* among Muslims; he did so in a speech for students of a school that was founded by the charitable society (named al-Jamʿiyya al-Khayriyya al-Islāmiyya, or the Islamic Benevolent Society) that he had established in 1892 and which he had presided over since 1900.[55] A summary of ʿAbduh's speech was printed in the newspaper *al-Muʾayyad* in early July.[56] ʿAbduh explains that he was set off by a student using phrases such as "*al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar,*" "*al-ittikāl ʿalā Allāh fī nayl al-arzāq*" (trust upon God for

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combination of the Māturīdi and Ashʿari positions in this respect. Van Nispen tot Sevenaer, *Activité humaine et agir de Dieu*, 292.

52 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:225–226, 244–245, 507; Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 114–115; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:131.

53 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:244–245.

54 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:246–247. For many Islamic reformists, this logic was considered to be represented by the Quranic verse 13:11: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves," which is also quoted in an article in *al-Muʾayyad,* which was part of the discussion surrounding Hanotaux. "Ṣadā al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*; Katharina A. Ivanyi, "God's Custom Concerning the Rise and Fall of Nations: The Tafsîr Al-Manâr on Q 8:53 and Q 13:11," *The Maghreb Review* 32, no. 1 (2007): 91–103.

55 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:507–509. For more on ʿAbduh's role in charitable societies: Majdī Saʿīd, *Al-ʿAmal al-Ahlī. Ḥayāt al-Umma. Tajribat al-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh* (s.l.: s.n., 2009/1430h).

56 "Al-Qaḍāʾ wa-l-Qadar," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

the obtainment of livelihood), and "*inna al-ḥīla fī tarak al-ḥīla wa-l-tadbīr fī tarak al-tadbīr*" (truly, the [true] legal strategy is to give up on the legal strategy and the [true] making of arrangements is to give up on the making of arrangements), which he explains were common for encouraging laziness among Muslims, leading to their decline.[57] He then proceeds to explain the correct interpretation of *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar* and relying upon God, which I have discussed above.

In the beginning of July 1901, the satirical journal *Ḥimārat Munyatī*, edited by Muḥammad Tawfīq, harshly criticized ʿAbduh for his views. It suggests that the phrases the student used are found in the *ḥadīth*-collection of al-Bukhārī and that the prophetic traditions do not imply laziness through a reliance upon God.[58] It exhorts ʿAbduh to teach Islam in full, including the prophetic traditions. Furthermore, the author of the article warns that ʿAbduh's passing over the *ḥadīth*-collections might even be a forerunner to ʿAbduh subsequently giving up on the Quran and, as such, on Islam.[59]

ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam in response to questions that he shared with his spatially dispersed interlocutors brought him into conflict with many of his Muslim contemporaries in Egypt. By invoking the authority of the *ḥadīth*-collections as a key element of Islam, *Ḥimārat Munyatī* contested ʿAbduh's prioritization of the Quran over the Traditions (*ḥadīth*s) in his reinterpretation of Islam since ʿAbduh only accepted a few of the Traditions as trustworthy.[60] For ʿAbduh, in turn, his position towards the *ḥadīth*-corpus could be considered a means of challenging the authoritative interpretations of Islam of that time.[61] It is perhaps ironic that ʿAbduh explicitly wished to circumvent internal dissension by not probing too deeply into theological matters such as *al-qadar* in order to establish Muslim unity. This wish, however, did not prevent him from clashing with his fellow Egyptian Muslims over this particular theological doctrine.

57 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:507.

58 I have only found a reference to "*tarak al-ḥiyal*" (giving up on (legal) strategies or tricks) in *Kitāb al-Ḥiyal* (Book of Legal Devices) of al-Bukhārī's *ḥadīth*-collection *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: *ḥadīth* number 6953 (of the whole) and *ḥadīth* number 85 of volume 9, book 86. As far as I can conclude, however, the tradition in which it is referred to does not seem to reflect the issue at hand here.

59 "Muḥammad ʿAbduh," *Ḥimārat Munyatī,* 142–143. Indira Falk Gesink situates this article by *Ḥimārat Munyatī* within an ongoing conflict about the Europeanness of ʿAbduh and how this reflects upon the validity of his interpretation of Islam. Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 177. Ziad Fahmy's analysis reiterates this and adds the accusation of "collaboration": Fahmy, *Ordinary Egyptians*, 85.

60 ʿAbduh on the corpus of *ḥadīth* in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*: ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:496. Cf. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 37.

61 Cf. Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 133–134.

Lastly, the conflict between ʿAbduh and *Ḥimārat Munyatī* reflected the struggles within Egypt's domestic politics and the role of the British therein. Journals such as *Ḥimārat Munyatī* were very critical of colonial intervention and considerd ʿAbduh to be a collaborator. As mentioned in the previous chapter, *Ḥimārat Munyatī*, furthermore, was backed up by the Khedive ʿAbbās II Ḥilmī (r. 1892–1914) who was increasingly critical of ʿAbduh and held a personal grudge against him. Hindering Cromer's protégé ʿAbduh through *Ḥimārat Munyatī* probably offered the Khedive a way to covertly oppose the British colonizer and assert his independence as the official sovereign of Egypt.

1.3 *Proof in History*

ʿAbduh's theological defense of *tanzīh* over *tashbīh* and the right interpretation of the Islamic concept of *qadar* are interspersed with references to history – as are the contributions of others to the debate. He points out historical examples of great activity and courage in Islamic history, describing how these resulted in might and civilization, as further proof of these particular Islamic doctrines' conduciveness to this-worldly success. Similarly, he tracks the histories of Islam and Christianity as well as those of the Aryan and Semitic races to prove his point that Islam, in its true version, is conducive to progress and civilization. As Johannes Ebert notes, Ḥusayn al-Jisr's reply does not offer such a cultural-historical perspective on the truth of the doctrines discussed.[62]

According to ʿAbduh, the study of history reveals that *tashbīh* in the form of polytheism, the belief in saints or intermediaries, is connected to misfortune. This does not only hold true for Islamic history, but is also evident from European history; Christians had been in a deplorable state as long as *tashbīh* reigned, that is, throughout the Middle Ages, until the Reformation.[63] Conversely, a proper belief in God's omnipotence and omniscience encouraged the Prophet and the early Muslims to acquire great power.[64] In fact, in their journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī claim to prove the success of the proper understanding of *al-qaḍā' wa-l-qadar* by pointing to great rulers, Muslim or not, who believed in God's *qadar* in such a way, listing the Persian emperor Cyrus, Alexander the Great, Djenghiz Khan, and Napoleon.[65]

More generally, ʿAbduh compares the histories of Christianity and Islam in order to reveal the two religions' roles in the history of civilization and, conse-

62 Ebert, *Religion und Reform*, 122.

63 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:230–231.

64 ʿAbduh, 3:225. Cf. Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 112.

65 Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 113.

quently, the two religions' 'civilizational potential.'[66] For ʿAbduh, the early Islamic conquests prove that true, original Islam is compatible with and conducive to success and civilization, an observation that is also emphasized by the journalist Farīd Wajdī, who, as we have seen, also wrote a reply to Hanotaux in *al-Muʾayyad*.[67] The flip side of this story of early success is the misery that the Muslims were confronting at the time, brought about by corruptive innovations (pl. *bidaʿ*) such as in the case of the understanding of *qadar*. Historian Malcolm Kerr summarizes this historical logic of ʿAbduh as an empirical check on the correctness of beliefs: "If history has not rewarded the Muslims, somehow in their beliefs they must have gone astray."[68] Conversely, in his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh can only attribute the Christians' progress to Muslim influence, in spite of the impeding efforts on behalf of Christian leaders.[69] For example, ʿAbduh writes that Christian theologians, such as the Catholic Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), learned the proper notion of predestination from the Muslims.[70] Others who contributed to this discussion similarly understood Islam's role in the general history of progress and civilization as central.[71]

Finally, ʿAbduh turns to history to ridicule European Christians' indebtedness to the Aryans – a racial classification that Hanotaux introduces as a source of pride.[72] On the one hand, ʿAbduh is critical of the sharp boundaries Hanotaux seems to draw between races, which I return to more elaborately in the next chapter. He points to the absurdity of this racial categorization in the face of a history full of inter-crossings between Islam and Christianity, indicating that he did not think that racial differences had much explanatory value in history. On the other hand, he also strategically adopts the Aryan and Semitic classification to discredit the Aryan Christians. First, he claims that the cradle of the Aryans was in India where polytheism still reigns, and there is no civilization in sight. While Europeans descended from Aryan barbarians, the

66 Cf. Two articles in *al-Liwāʾ* comparing Islam and Christianity's role in the history of civilization in response to Kimon's allegations: "Al-Islām wa-l-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Liwāʾ*; "Kīmūn wa-l-Islām," *Al-Liwāʾ*, 1.

67 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:225. See also: Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 58.

68 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 115.

69 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:219–220 and 232.

70 ʿAbduh, 3:226.

71 "Kīmūn wa-l-Islām," *Al-Liwāʾ*; Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 59–60. Cf. ʿAbduh's account of history in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, discussed in the previous part of this study.

72 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 19, 21, 29.

Semites stood aloof from these barbarians.[73] Then, he asserts and suggests that the Aryans rather than the Semites were the source of a belief in *jabr*, as is reflected in the continuing presence of large groups of Christians, the Thomists and the Dominicans, believing in predetermination.[74] In contrast, ʿAbduh continues, historical Semitic peoples such as the Jews, Aramaeans, and Phoenicians are never considered to have been idle. On top of that, and perhaps conveying a hint of irony, ʿAbduh writes that what he considers one of the most corrupting influences upon Islam – Sufism (*al-mutaṣawwifa*) – was actually developed among Aryans.[75] With this genealogical assessment, ʿAbduh echoes and turns around the latest European scholarly claims of that time that Sufism was the most precious, profound, and Christianity-like religious knowledge in Islam, but introduced to it through Persian, Indian, and Greek – that is, Aryan – influences.[76] Thus, ʿAbduh's historical examples demonstrate that the Semitic genealogy of Muslims does not hinder their historical potential for civilization – as opposed to the Aryan Christians of Europe.

Given the prominence and frequency of the historical arguments that ʿAbduh used to refute Hanotaux's analysis, it seems fitting that he, like Wajdī, criticizes Hanotaux's professional competence as a historian and claims that Hanotaux's historical knowledge is not up-to-date.[77] Furthermore, the newspaper *al-Muʾayyad* printed an article that employed ʿAbduh's ability to historically refute Hanotaux's claims about Islam in order to demonstrate the need to teach history and geography at the Azhar – part of a discussion on the expansion of the Azhar's curriculum that had been continuing for decades.[78] It is clear that history was a hugely important discipline (*fann*) with rules that were contested across the globe.[79] It is also evident that, in this discussion, history was most important for its consequences for the future. In ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux, his historical references intended to show that a return to Islam, in its true form, would yield might and success and bring Muslims on par with the Europeans, contrary to Hanotaux's analysis.[80]

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73 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:218–219.

74 ʿAbduh, 3:223–225.

75 ʿAbduh, 3:226.

76 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 197–211. These pages correspond to the fourth paragraph of Masuzawa's sixth chapter, titled "4. Sufism, an Aryan Islam: Otto Pfeiderer."

77 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222; Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 43, 58.

78 "Mawʿiẓat al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*. For more on the Egyptian discussion on educational reform, see: Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism.*

79 Cf. Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh on the fundamental importance of the art of history in 1884: Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 108.

80 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:226, 234, 235, 237.

2 "Leur patrie, à eux, c'est l'islam"

In his first set of articles in *Le Journal* and again in the interview *al-Ahrām*'s editor Bishāra Taqlā held with him in July, Gabriel Hanotaux prominently addresses questions about the relation between the religious and the political ("*le problème religieux et le problème politique*").[81] ʿAbduh only really took up the issue in his second set of articles, with which he replied to Taqlā's interview with Hanotaux. In addition, the questions Hanotaux introduced were central to the discussion in the Egyptian newspapers between, on the one side, *al-Muʾayyad* and *al-Liwā*ʾ and, on the other side, *al-Ahrām*. ʿAbduh and other Egyptian intellectuals and journalists compared 'the religions' in response to the questions they shared regarding the relation between 'religion' and 'politics,' reinterpreting Islam in the process.

2.1 *'Religion'* (Dīn) *or 'the Interest of the Fatherland'* (Maṣlaḥat al-Waṭan)

In his second article in *Le Journal*, Hanotaux asserts confidently: "Leur patrie, à eux, c'est l'islam."[82] According to Hanotaux, Islam's intimate union between religion and politics ("l'étroite union de la religion et de la politique") constitutes a great source of anti-colonial resistance among France's Muslim colonial subjects.[83] In comparison, Hanotaux explains in the interview with Taqlā that Europe has separated the religious authority (*al-sulṭa al-dīniyya*) from the civil authority (*al-sulṭa al-madaniyya*) and subordinated the former to the latter, which he considered to be in agreement with the aforementioned Biblical command "to render to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's" (Mark 12:17).[84]

Hanotaux, Taqlā, and others mainly discuss the separation of the religious and the political in terms of an opposition between religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī*) and *maṣlaḥat al-waṭan*, both in international and national politics. For ʿAbduh and others in this discussion, the concepts of *taʿaṣṣub, maṣlaḥa,* and *waṭan* proved similarly pivotal, as we will see in the next section. I argue that this shared terminology indicates that they shared the following questions in this discussion: What is the relation between 'religion' and fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub*)? What is the relation between 'religion' and the collective wellbeing of the fatherland (*maṣlaḥat al-waṭan*)? Their diverging answers to these ques-

81 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 27.
82 Hanotaux and Abdou, *L'Europe et l'islam*, 36.
83 Hanotaux and Abdou, 36.
84 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900.

tions determined their ideas about 'religion' and its (authoritative) role in politics and, more generally, its role in communal matters.

In an article series titled "Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ argues that Hanotaux's attacks on Islam were a matter of *maṣlaḥa*, of all kinds of political and economic interests, and, *therefore*, not of *dīn*, or religion.[85] Similarly, Hanotaux, *al-Ahrām,* and even *al-Muʾayyad* claim that Hanotaux's articles about Islam should not be considered religiously motivated and are thus not an expression of religious fanaticism – not a Crusade – *because* he wrote them as a politician.[86] In the interview with Taqlā, Hanotaux explains that as a politician and a historian, he keeps his public opinions independent from his private belief (*muʿtaqad khāṣṣ*) – similar to other European ministers who support Catholic missionaries despite their Protestant or atheist beliefs.[87]

Instead of seeking to ignite a war between Christianity and Islam, Taqlā and Hanotaux argue that Hanotaux aimed for reconciliation and harmony (*ittifāq*) between Islam and the West through a rational and open dialogue with his articles.[88] Hanotaux claims that this goal is achieved in the French protectorate of Tunisia; there, the French leave religion to Tunisians themselves, whereas Muslims accept French political authority. Also, because the highest political authority is merely superimposed, leaving the existing political structures intact, Hanotaux writes that the model of the protectorate partially circumvents the 'problem' he identifies: that a Muslim was not able to serve under a non-Muslim leader.[89]

Furthermore, Hanotaux claims that the model of the protectorate exemplifies the separation of religion and politics in France's foreign policy; people's religious and moral institutions and customs are left intact, suggesting that France's colonial policy was not religiously motivated.[90] Additionally, Hanotaux points to France's frequent support of the Ottoman Empire, even at the expense of Christian nations or communities.[91] Similarly, according to Hano-

85 ʿAwaḍ, "Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad*; ʿAwaḍ, "2. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad*; ʿAwaḍ, "3. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad*; ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

86 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*, May 10, 1900.

87 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 19, 1900.

88 Hanotaux, "Encore l'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 64, 66, 70–71; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900.

89 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 36; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900.

90 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 36; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900; "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Ahrām,* April 26, 1900.

91 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

taux and ʿAwaḍ, the frequent wars between Christian communities and even between Christian communities of the same denomination (*madhhab*) illustrate that the politics of European nations is not religious in nature. As an example, they both refer to the wars between the Boers and the British in South Africa (1899–1902) – wars that the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy had decried for being contrary to Christian principles, as ʿAwaḍ recounts.[92]

Hanotaux argues that instead of letting their religious adherence dictate their foreign policy, France is guided with an eye to its best interest (*maṣlaḥa*) in matters of international politics. Moreover, he states that the French statesman Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), about whom Hanotaux had written his magnum opus as a historian, had set the example centuries earlier.[93] For instance, Hanotaux explains that his own political support for the Ottoman Empire reflects this, as a strong Ottoman Empire is in France's best interest.[94] Similarly, Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ writes that the ultimate goal for European states was colonial power: a worldly benefit (*manfaʿa dunyawiyya*) instead of a religious one.[95]

For Taqlā, Hanotaux exemplifies a man who works for the sake of his fatherland; he is a man worthy of imitation.[96] Similarly, Hanotaux and Taqlā advise the East to give up on religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī*) and the idea of a conflict between Islam and Christianity; instead, it is better to imitate Hanotaux and embrace the interests of its fatherland. For example, Taqlā writes that anger towards Europe amongst Egyptians is not in the interest of Egypt because this would make it less likely for a European state to help Egypt get rid of the British occupation.[97] Furthermore, Hanotaux thinks that Egyptian Muslims will not benefit from seeking an alliance with the larger Muslim community. Hanotaux ominously warns that such an attempt at pan-Islamism would threaten European states with great numbers of Muslims among their colonized populations to the extent that it would even be possible that they would execute Kimon's plan (and extinguish Islam alongside many Muslims) after

92 Ibid.; ʿAwaḍ, "Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad*; ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

93 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," July 16, 1900; ʿAwaḍ, "Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.* Cf. Wesseling's description of Hanotaux's admiration for Richelieu's policy of prioritizing France's *raison d'état* in foreign policy: Wesseling, *Gabriel Hanotaux*, 10, 18–19.

94 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 19, 1900.

95 ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.* ʿAwaḍ does not distinguish between *manfaʿa* and *maṣlaḥa*; both refer to (worldly) interests, though not necessarily collectively. ʿAwaḍ also uses these terms to describe the actions of missionaries who were only interested in personal financial gain, for example. ʿAwaḍ, "2. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

96 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 19, 1900.

97 "Ākhir Kalima Maʿa al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām.*

all.[98] Furthermore, Hanotaux continues, an Islamic political union is not feasible and would not have helped to ward off colonization. Even an Islamic religious union is not likely, according to Hanotaux, as there is too much diversity among Muslims.[99] In short, Hanotaux claims that mixing religion with politics only brings Muslims misery in this world, while its separation would bring an end to their misfortune.

The interest of the *waṭan* is also what Taqlā stressed within Egypt, pleading for patriotism (*waṭanīyya*).[100] In this discussion, *al-Ahrām* presents itself as the true defender of the *waṭan* or *umma.*[101] It is not always clear whether his *waṭan* or *umma* refers to Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, or the East, however, which is also why I am hesitant in translating *waṭanīyya* here as 'nationalism.'[102] Furthermore, *al-Ahrām* contrasts its position in the discussion with the *taʿaṣṣub dīnī* of the other Egyptian newspapers, which impair the fatherland's unity with their religious fanaticism.[103] In doing so, Taqlā seems to follow Hanotaux's argument that the unity of the fatherland trumps the unity of a religious or racial community because it is more comprehensive, encompassing people of multiple religions.[104]

As an example, Taqlā argues that the distrust of and enmity towards Christian Europe sometimes spilled over into suspicion of and animosity towards Ottoman Christians.[105] This is perhaps what Taqlā refers to when he writes that *al-Muʾayyad*'s instigations remind him of the times of the ʿUrābī revolt in the early 1880s, during which the press of *al-Ahrām* in Alexandria was burnt down.[106] Instead of considering the interests of a particular religion paramount, Taqlā advocates lenience (*hawāda*) in interreligious relations within the *waṭan*.[107] Taqlā's preference for patriotism over sectarian conflict echoes his education at Buṭrus al-Bustānī's National School (al-Madrasa al-Waṭaniyya), which aimed

98 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

99 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

100 Zolondek, "Al-Ahram and Westernization," 187.

101 "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*.

102 Leon Zolondek writes that Bishāra Taqlā argued for Egyptian self-rule under the Khedive. However, he did so for the ultimate sake of the Ottoman Empire, according to Zolondek. At the same time, Taqlā embraced a general attachment to the East. Zolondek, 185–187.

103 "Tadjīl al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*; "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

104 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

105 Taqlā.

106 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, 207.

107 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900.

at transcending sectarianism through invoking the *waṭan*.[108] In addition, Taqlā points out that *al-Muʾayyad*'s intermeddling with religious affairs only revealed dissension within the Muslim community in Egypt. He writes that there are many Muslims who support *al-Ahrām* against *al-Muʾayyad* and that the Azhar does not even want to include ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux in its library.[109]

For Hanotaux, a concern for the interest of the fatherland was part of a more general societal reform (*iṣlāḥ*), rooted in science, public service, and activity, leading towards strength, justice, progress, and civilization.[110] Religion or morality does not contribute to progress in the material domain (*al-māddiyyāt*), as Hanotaux explains in his interview with Taqlā.[111] Instead, success (*najāḥ*) and progress (*taqaddum*) are only to be attained when the religious is separated from the political, which is expressed by the renunciation of religious fanaticism and the prioritization of the interest of the fatherland. This holds true for Christian Europe, Hanotaux explains, whose civilization only set off when the religious wars were curbed by separating the religious and civil authorities – despite Christianity's doctrinal suitability to such a separation.[112]

However, this also holds true for Muslims. Despite Hanotaux's conviction that religion and politics are intricately intertwined in Muslim eyes, he stresses that he does not think that Islam is necessarily incompatible with progress, as Kimon and others argued. Muslims can only progress once they separate Islam, as a religion, from the domain of politics. For this purpose, Hanotaux suggests the model of the protectorate, even in spite of his belief that the Ottoman Sultan was best equipped to implement civilizing reforms in the Islamic world.[113] Furthermore, he stresses that neither France nor Europe wish to hinder reform (*iṣlāḥ*) in the Muslim lands; moreover, the separation of religion and politics is not a colonial strategy to weaken the Muslims.[114] Instead, according to Hanotaux, the separation is part of the necessary *iṣlāḥ* in order to progress.

It is striking that, even though the *iṣlāḥ*-movement of the turn of the twentieth century is commonly associated with Islamic (perhaps proto-Islamist) reform, the same terminology of *iṣlāḥ* was also used to translate a form of

108 Goldschmidt, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt*, 207. In the case of al-Bustānī, too, it is not always clear what his *waṭan* precisely refers to. In addition, it was heavily contested, as Rogier Visser makes clear in his dissertation on al-Bustānī's contemporary Louis Ṣābūnjī: Visser, "Identities in Early Arabic Journalism," 54–71, 125–160.

109 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900; "Murāwighat Al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 14, 1900.

110 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

111 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900.

112 Ibid.; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 17, 1900.

113 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900.

114 Taqlā.

reform that not only emphasized the separation of religion and politics but also the subordination of religion to politics.[115] In this study, these similarities in terminology are considered to be indicative of the global conversation Hanotaux, ʿAbduh, and others shared, in which they gave diverging answers to a shared question: what kind of collective or communal reform (*iṣlāḥ*) is needed for progress and what role should religion and the various religions have in this process? Similarly, they shared a dislike for religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī*) out of a concern for the interest of the fatherland (*maṣlaḥat al-waṭan*); however, they differed in how they compared Islam and Christianity in relation to these shared concerns.

2.2 *'Religion'* (Dīn) *in the Interest of the Fatherland*

Similar to Hanotaux and Taqlā, ʿAbduh and the newspapers that were on his side (Yūsuf's *al-Muʾayyad,* Kāmil's *al-Liwāʾ,* Riḍā's *al-Manār*) are vocal in their aversion to religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī*) in their contributions to the debate.[116] At several moments in the discussion, they reiterate how important interreligious tolerance and rationality are and that these result in mutual understanding.[117] Particularly at a moment such as this – that is, when Islam is under attack and should be defended – Riḍā argues in *al-Manār,* there is a great need for friendship between Muslims and Christians.[118] Accordingly, ʿAbduh is praised for his rational and scientific response, and *al-Liwāʾ* emphasizes that *al-Muʾayyad* does not instill religious fanaticism.[119]

Conversely, ʿAbduh and his circle question if Hanotaux and Taqlā reject religious fanaticism and if they themselves separate religion and politics in national and international politics, as they urge others to do. In his reply, ʿAbduh writes that Hanotaux's article is comparable to calling the French into a Crusade, and, by attacking Islam's fundamentals, Hanotaux does not limit himself

115 Cf. Jādd al-Ḥaqq, "Namūdhaj ʿal-Radd ʿalā Hānūtū,'" 294–295.

116 In contrast, Malcolm Kerr describes how *taʿaṣṣub dīnī* was reconceptualized in *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā* as a great societal and unifying force, reminiscent of Ibn Khaldūn's notion of *ʿaṣabiyya* and explicitly going against the negative connotation of *taʿaṣṣub*. Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 138–139.

117 Within the discussion between Hanotaux and the Egyptian press, there was general optimism that reason and agreement go hand-in-hand, implying that disagreement and conflict are based on misunderstanding, misinformation, and the rule of emotion and passion. "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 338 and 344–345; "Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*; ʿAwaḍ, "3. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.* Cf. Fitzgerald on 'the secular' dressed as factual and neutral, corresponding to natural reason. Fitzgerald, *Ideology of Religious Studies*, 5.

118 Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:834. Cf. al-Azharī, ed., *Al-Islām*, 30–32.

119 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām (wa-l-Muʾayyad wa-l-Ahrām)," *Al-Liwāʾ*; "Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Muʾayyad*; Al-Azharī, *Al-Islām*, 30–32.

to politics.[120] Hanotaux does not really want harmony (*ittifāq*), according to ʿAbduh, given that real harmony would only be possible in a situation of equality. Instead, Hanotaux merely pursues his colonial ambitions without caring for justice, rights, and respect for believers.[121]

Similarly, ʿAbduh and others question if the foreign policy of France and other European states is really devoid of religious interests. In *al-Manār*, Rashīd Riḍā mentions France's ban on Tunisian and Algerian Muslims performing the *ḥajj*. While it is said that this prohibition springs from health concerns, Riḍā argues that this ban is actually meant to break the bond between Tunisia and Mecca and is perceived as religious fanaticism by Muslims around the world.[122] In addition, in his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh refers to France's support of Jesuit missionary schools in Syria, despite the fact that Jesuits were banned from France. Furthermore, ʿAbduh adds, this contrasted with France's lack of support for new-style schools founded by Syrians. Also, ʿAbduh points to the missionaries' role in preparing the hearts and minds of the colonized, or to-be colonized, peoples to accept the authority of the European colonizer.[123] For this reason, the author of the series "Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ, concludes that missionaries are not religiously motivated but are only interested in political and financial gains.[124] ʿAbduh's conclusion turns this logic around, as he argues that French foreign policy is downright religious and that religion is one of the strengths of Europe and its civilization, opening up space to reconsider the role of Islam as a religion in ensuring Muslims' progress.[125]

In contrast, ʿAbduh argues that there has long been a separation of the religious from the political in Muslim lands. He mentions the Ottoman Empire's civil law system and adds that the Ottoman *millet*-system has rendered non-Muslim religious communities in charge of their own communal affairs for centuries. ʿAbduh writes that in Egypt, too, both the Mixed and Native courts are based on civil law.[126] Accordingly, in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, there is no distrust or hostility towards Ottoman Christians–or Egyptian Copts. Journalist Bishāra Taqlā, to begin with, has always been highly trusted and has even been honored with a medal of merit by the Ottoman Sultan. Indeed, as Riḍā also writes in *al-Manār*, Eastern Christians obtain high positions within the

120 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:217, 255.
121 ʿAbduh, 3:235, 235–237.
122 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 341.
123 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:237–238.
124 ʿAwaḍ, "2. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*
125 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:237–238.
126 ʿAbduh, 3:249–250.

Ottoman administration and are generally very well off, for example regarding education.[127]

Likewise, Muslims and Muslim states are not dictated by religion in their actions towards Christian Europe, according to ʿAbduh. For example, Ottoman foreign policy is based on its political interest not religion. According to ʿAbduh, this shows in the alliances the Ottoman Empire has with Germany and England and especially the fact that the Ottoman Empire continued its alliance with the English even after Prime Minister William Gladstone said in parliament that the Quran was an obstacle to peace. ʿAbduh writes that it is also evident from the great celebrations that the Ottoman Sultan holds on the occasion of visits by Christian leaders.[128]

Similarly, the actions of Muslims towards their colonial governments and towards European Christians do not reveal suspicion or a lack of trust. The Muslim populations of India, Russia, Egypt, and Tunisia are obedient to their non-Muslim rulers, ʿAbduh writes, and they often willingly put their fate in hands of the colonial administration. Moreover, Muslims often send their children to Christian missionary schools, despite the very real possibility of their children being converted. ʿAbduh further recounts how many Egyptian Muslims are friends with French residents in Egypt.[129]

The question for ʿAbduh is, however, whether this Muslim trust in European governments and Christian missionaries is actually in the best interest of these Muslims, given European governments' frequent abuse of their subjects' trust.[130] In an earlier article in his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh explains that Muslim opposition to the French is not related to the French being non-Muslim, but instead is a response to the French's unjust treatment of their colonial subjects in Algeria and Madagascar.[131] These Muslims are not guided by religion, but they act in accordance with their best interests. Similarly, Riḍā remarks in his own response to Hanotaux in *al-Manār* that in opposing a colonizer who robs them of their land, Muslims merely act in their own political interests (*maṣlaḥa*). So, Riḍā asks ironically, why then does Hanotaux not concur with Muslims' resistance to their colonizer?[132]

Contrasting Christian with Islamic history, ʿAbduh writes that the first was filled with religious violence while the second was one of religious tolerance.[133]

127 Ibid., 3:251–254; "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 343.
128 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:250–251, 253–254.
129 ʿAbduh, 3:250–252.
130 ʿAbduh, 3:252–253.
131 ʿAbduh, 3:234.
132 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," 342–343.
133 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:246.

Furthermore, ʿAbduh points out the existence of Christian distrust towards Muslims in Egypt, which he probably thought that Taqlā exemplified. According to ʿAbduh, Christians irrationally fear that Muslims' call for Islamic unity implies that Muslims would only care for their own religious community.[134] The Christians' suspicion and enmity is regrettable, ʿAbduh writes, as the people of one fatherland (*waṭan*) cannot do without fellow compatriots.[135] Similarly, the newspaper *al-Liwā'* contests Taqlā's claim to work for Egypt's welfare and describes its own efforts to support *al-Mu'ayyad* as a coalition that expresses patriotism instead of religious fanaticism.[136]

In their replies to Hanotaux and Taqlā, ʿAbduh and others underwrite the importance of the fatherland and its interest (*maṣlaḥa*) in terms of its unity, in contradistinction with divisive religious fanaticism. According to Hanotaux, these concerns are answered by separating religion and politics. However, for ʿAbduh and many around him, Islam was the solution and could be employed to the service of the fatherland by promoting unity instead of fanaticism. In the process, they conceptualized Islam in response to questions they shared with their adversaries.

First, ʿAbduh argues in his reply to Hanotaux that Islam is not fanatical in its essence.[137] Similarly, editor ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm Ṣāliḥ included a letter by the Prophet Muḥammad to the monks of the monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai as proof of Islam's command of interreligious peace and respect and the absence of religious coercion.[138] In addition, in his first reply to ʿAbduh, Hanotaux approvingly mentions the Young Turk Ahmed Riza (1859–1930) and his pamphlet *Tolérance musulmane* (1897) in which he argued that religious fanaticism was not a part of Islam. If it existed among Muslims, it was a response to imperialism and to the mission – and with this last claim the French cardinal Lavigerie agreed – Hanotaux writes.[139]

Second, in *al-Mu'ayyad*, a reader from Damietta states in response to Taqlā that there is no difference between a Muslim working for religion (*al-dīn*) and working for the fatherland (*al-waṭan*).[140] In addition, in *al-Manār,* Riḍā writes that, besides uniting Muslims spiritually, Islam also unites Muslims with non-Muslims in society, and it does not favor Muslims over others, which makes it an appropriate foundation for a country and conducive to the people's wel-

134 ʿAbduh, 3:247 and 251.
135 ʿAbduh, 3:247.
136 "Istiyāʿ al-Ahrām," *Al-Liwā'*; "Shahāmat Ṣāḥib al-Ahrām. Faṣl Muḍḥik," *Al-Liwā'.*
137 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:247.
138 Al-Azharī, *Al-Islām*, 2–3.
139 Hanotaux, "Encore l'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 67.
140 "Hānūtū wa-l-Ahrām," *Al-Mu'ayyad.*

fare.[141] Similarly, ʿAwaḍ recommends setting up an Islamic missionary movement in order to resist the Christian missionaries, to establish schools and hospitals, and to convert Muslims in areas where there are no Muslims – thus advising the deployment of *dīn* for *maṣlaḥa*.[142] Historian Abbas Kelidar defines *al-Muʾayyad* as Egyptian nationalist as well as pan-Islamic, following the Ottoman Sultan's ambitions.[143] Similarly, historians Albert Hourani and Nadav Safran describe how Muṣṭafā Kāmil, editor of *al-Liwāʾ*, believed that Islam, like other religions, taught patriotism and refuted sectarianism, as the Islamic union was not political.[144]

Third, ʿAbduh and his associates think that Islam – also through its benefit to patriotic unity – is conducive to progress (*taqaddum*) and reform (*iṣlāḥ*). While Hanotaux is right that the separation of the religious and the political brought progress to Europe, ʿAbduh writes in the fifth article of his reply that this is not necessarily true for the Muslim world.[145] He notes that the separation of religion and politics in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, as discussed before, has not yet led to progress.[146] In contrast, ʿAbduh writes that the early Muslims celebrated huge successes and worldly power, which has also been observed by other contributors to the discussion.[147] For ʿAbduh and others, this seems to be evidence that (true) Islam is conducive to progress, which is reflected in their conceptualizations of the relation between politics and religion in the case of Islam.

In an article in *al-Muʾayyad*, a reader claims that Islam does not and cannot know a separation of the religious from the political because its law concerns both this life and the hereafter. It brings together all human interests, both religious and worldly (*jāmiʿ maṣlaḥatay al-bashar al-dīniyya wa-l-dunyawiyya*).[148]

141 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 344.

142 ʿAwaḍ, "2. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.* Cf. Umar Ryad on Riḍā's ideas about an Islamic missionary movement, modeling and responding to Christian missionary activities, culminating in the short-lived Jamʿiyyat al-Daʿwa wa-l-Irshād (Society for Mission and Guidance). Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity*, chap. 3. Interestingly, ʿAbduh had already suggested an Islamic missionary movement in his memorandum on Ottoman education. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:89–90.

143 Kelidar, "Shaykh ʿAli Yusuf," 11–14.

144 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 205, 207; Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Intellectual and Political Evolution of Egypt, 1804–1952* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 87–88.

145 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:249. Cf. Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 92–93.

146 Also discussed by: Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 93–94.

147 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:240, 250. See also: "Ṣadā al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

148 "Hānūtū wa-l-Ahrām," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

However, ʿAbduh and others set forth a more nuanced argument. They stress that Islam does not know a pope-like figure. Instead, in the fifth article of his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh writes that the caliph himself is bound by Islamic Law (*al-sharīʿa al-Islāmiyya*), which "the people of religion" (*ahl al-dīn*)[149] are responsible for.[150] Also, Islam does not have detailed rules for governing a kingdom or regulating commerce and industry.[151] Therefore, the religious and the political were not mixed in a problematic way, as they had been in Christian history, which hindered the onset of progress and civilization.

ʿAbduh maintains that the Islamic religion was never an obstacle to communal welfare (*maṣlaḥa*); instead, it can greatly further it. Most importantly, Islam is the perfect vehicle for implementing a general reform (*iṣlāḥ*), as Islam already carries the people's trust (*thiqa*). However, to carry out this role, Islam itself has to be reformed – as the contemporary understanding of Islam lies at the root of the current misery. By restoring and correcting (*taṣḥīḥ*) Islam, liberating it from later innovations (pl. *bidaʿ*), Muslims' deplorable conditions are rectified (*taqwīm*).[152] The close connection ʿAbduh posited between reforming Islam and reforming the Muslims' conditions is epitomized by his use of *iṣlāḥ* for both.

Thus, ʿAbduh explains that the problems as well as the remedies of Muslims are one. For him, both the problem and the solution lie in Islam; the first is in its corrupted form, and the latter is in its restored and "true" form. The Ottoman Sultan, he continues, is the most capable of implementing the urgently needed Islamic reform (*iṣlāḥ*) for the sake of all Muslims' reform and progress.[153] ʿAbduh explains that this role of the Ottoman Sultan for the whole Muslim

149 I am not certain who *ahl al-dīn* refers to here. Discussing a work by the secularist Syrian journalist Faraḥ Anṭūn, with whom ʿAbduh had a polemic, Marwa Elshakry translates *ahl al-dīn* as the "community of religion" in contrast to the "community of science." Elshakry, *Reading Darwin in Arabic*, 219–220. It might well be that for ʿAbduh, the *ahl al-dīn* were those knowledgeable of the Islamic religion (*ahl al-dīn* was sometimes used for Islamic theologians: *ahl al-kalām*): the *ʿulamāʾ*. For ʿAbduh, this probably did not imply a dichotomy with the "community of science," however. Instead, it probably referred only to those religious scholars who shared ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam and the compatibility he saw between Islam (as a 'religion') and 'science' (both *ʿilm,* as we saw in the analysis of ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*). However, I cannot completely exclude the possibility that ʿAbduh referred to the "community of religion" in a broader sense, foreshadowing developments of a 'lay Islam' in the twentieth century that latched onto this type of ambiguity in meaning.

150 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:249.

151 ʿAbduh, 3:240–241.

152 ʿAbduh, 3:246–247.

153 ʿAbduh, 3:248. For the Islamic reform movement in more general, too, the caliph was meant to be the champion of religio-moral reform (*iṣlāḥ*), resulting in the revival of the

community is often misunderstood. ʿAbduh as well as Riḍā assert that it does not express a political or military union.[154] Instead, it is about solidarity and unity in reform (*iṣlāḥ*), through religion. It is about Muslims' membership to a larger religious community (*jamāʿat al-dīn*) and their shared responsibility for upholding their religion. It is, according to Riḍā, a spiritual bond.[155]

ʿAbduh explains that religious solidarity and union are not as exceptional and peculiar for Muslims as Hanotaux claims. Christians, too, help each other to uphold their religion across national boundaries, as part of a religious community and an expression of religious solidarity.[156] A few pages further, still in the fifth article of his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh exclaims:

> Truly, France calls itself the guardian of the Catholics in the Orient (*al-Mashriq*), and the queen of England calls herself the queen of the Protestants, and the tsar of Russia is king and leader of the church at the same time. But Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd is not permitted to be called the caliph of the Muslims or the prince of believers?![157]

Furthermore, ʿAbduh writes that Islam does not concern itself with the specifics of politics. It does, however, obligate an effort for the common good (*maṣlaḥa*), as we have also seen in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. For ʿAbduh, a community spirit is one of the virtues that have been lost with Islam's corruption and have been substituted by personal gain and a general neglect of public matters.[158] Accordingly, and in stark contrast with Hanotaux's assertion that material progress is not dependent upon morality or piety, ʿAbduh and Riḍā seem to claim that the *iṣlāḥ* needed for progress is religio-moral par excellence, echoing the interpretations of Islam and religion in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its context in the 1880s. Riḍā explains that one of the problems for the Muslims was that new forms of education (*taʿlīm*) were not accompanied by moral edification (*tahdhīb*).[159] In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh identifies the inculcation of morals (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*) as part of the necessary reform for which Islam was suitable.[160] Similarly, Farīd Wajdī explains that European intellectuals empha-

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Muslims to stand up against Europe and regain dignity and justice. See: Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, 69; Aydin, "Idea of the 'Muslim World,'" 186.

154 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 339; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:248.

155 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 344.

156 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:248.

157 ʿAbduh, 3:250.

158 ʿAbduh, 3:240–241, 243–245.

159 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 343.

160 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:246–247.

size that religion is imperative for upholding civilization because of its moral value, particularly in the face of anarchism and its ideal of complete freedom and lawlessness.[161] Focusing on Islamic morality as a central part of the reform (*iṣlāḥ*) of which the community was desperately in need, ʿAbduh and his circle conceptualize Islam, *maṣlaḥa,* and progress as compatible and mutually reinforcing even though, yet again, it remains ambiguous if the community that was intended to benefit was Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, (parts of) the Muslim community, or all at the same time.

Perhaps paradoxically given the animosities in this particular discussion, historian Zolondek writes that *al-Ahrām*'s editor Bishāra Taqlā also believed in the moral benefits of an adherence to Islam. Taqlā supported the pan-Islamic policy of Ottoman Sultan ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd and believed that the Sultan could be the Muslims' moral guide, instilling Muslims with a sense patriotic unity. Reminiscent of al-Bustānī's motto *ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān,* with which he must have been very familiar through his education at al-Bustānī's school, Zolondek explains that Taqlā thought that Islam could be useful in instilling Muslims with a sense of patriotic unity.[162]

By questioning Hanotaux's claims about the separation of politics and religion in France and Europe and the Islamic world, ʿAbduh and others contest Hanotaux and Taqlā's claim that progress, or civilization, is necessarily dependent upon a particular separation between the religious and the political. Through their recourse to Islam's moral benefit to the fatherland, ʿAbduh and others negotiate the nature of this separation, replying to questions he shared with Hanotaux and Taqlā regarding the relation between 'religion,' religious fanaticism (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī*), and the best interest of the fatherland (*maṣlaḥat al-waṭan*) but answering these differently. Moreover, this moral advantage is what makes Islam particularly conducive to progress in contradistinction with Christianity. While the Biblical command "to render to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's" (Mark 12:17) teaches Christians to withdraw from this world and to work towards the next world instead, Islam teaches the Muslim to work towards the common good in this world too; it instills the virtue of *maṣlaḥa ʿāmma*. Additionally, also in contrast with Christianity, Islam teaches Muslims to work hard and confidently through the Islamic doctrines of *tanzīh* and *qadar*, according to ʿAbduh, conceptually providing Islam with a role in the societal reform that is necessary for progress and offering Muslims a role in shaping the history of civilization. In short, his reinterpretation of Islam is

161 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 50–52.

162 Zolondek, "Al-Ahram and Westernization," 185–187, 191–192. For a description of pan-Islamism as an imperial ideology in the Ḥamīdian era: Landau, *Politics of Pan-Islam*, 9–72.

built upon Islam's similarity to and difference from other religions and negotiates the relation between the religious and the non-religious in multiple ways. The next chapter will analyze these two facets of his interpretation.

CHAPTER 8

Comparisons Compared: A Play of Similarity and Difference

ʿAbduh, Hanotaux, and others compared Islam and Christianity as religions in light of shared questions that resulted in different answers. This chapter aims to analyze the concepts of 'religion' and 'the religions' that are presupposed by these comparisons. The aim is not to pinpoint one univocally shared concept of 'religion' but to explore the field of conceptualizations of 'religion' in both their similarities and their differences. It situates ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of 'religion' and of Islam as a religion therein, analysing how these mirrored a plurality of conflicts and negotiations with his contemporaries.

1 'Religion' (*al-Dīn*) and 'the Religions' (*al-Adyān*)

In his second article about Islam in the Parisian *Le Journal*, Hanotaux defines the conceptual relation between Islam and Christianity as one of "ressemblances" and "dissemblances," of similarities and differences (*al-munāqaḍāt wa-l-ashbāh* in Arabic translation in *al-Muʾayyad*).[1] The conceptual relation between religion and the religions (*al-dīn wa-l-adyān*) can be said to revolve around a similar dynamic: as a species of the genus 'religion,' a religion shares certain features with other religions, but at the same time, the plural of 'religions' implies differentiation. The first part of this chapter investigates this conceptual dynamic by studying the patterns of generalization and hierarchical differentiation in ʿAbduh and others' conceptualizations of 'religion' and 'religions,' and, as I stated in the first chapter of this study, analyzes whether these patterns can be viewed as 'theological' or 'non-theological' (or 'anthropological'). Specifically, it demonstrates the ways the religious grammars of similarity and difference corroborated or contested those grammars that were non-theological in nature, showing the interaction of both types in the discussion between ʿAbduh and Hanotaux; and, it considers these against the background of a global convergence in conceptualizations of 'religion.' In addition, this study argues that these patterns of generalization and hierarchical differ-

1 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 30; Hānūtū, "Al-Islām. 2," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

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entiation reflected the myriad global and local power relations in which ʿAbduh's use of the concept of religion should be understood.

1.1 *Anthropological Grammars of Similarity and Difference between the* **Adyān**

In the beginning of his second article, Hanotaux identifies "prédestination," "grâce," and "justification" as the three essential issues of *every* religion, as we have seen. This way, he continues, "la religion" (translated into Arabic as: *al-dīn*) – as a genus or a collective singular – defines the relationship between God and man. For Hanotaux, the question that religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and the ancient Greek religion seem to share is: What are the relations between the creator and His creatures and between His power and their freedom?[2]

Hanotaux's concept of religion as a category seems to be modelled on the history of Christianity and its internal differentiation. He transposes key doctrinal issues, over which great theological disputes and also wars have been fought between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism but also within Protestantism, from the European history of the Christian religion to 'religion' in general and thus to *all* religions. Such a conception of religion is inclusive as well as exclusive and is certainly not neutral with regard to national or global power relations, yet the outer boundaries of the category that Hanotaux uses seem to be neutral regarding religious truth. The question of which 'religions' count as 'religions' does not depend on Hanotaux's religious beliefs – at least not explicitly – whatever they may be.

In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh uses Hanotaux's terminology without any visible problems. He refers to all the religions that Hanotaux mentions, including Islam, as *adyān*, as the plural of *dīn*, and to a specific religion as a *dīn* or sometimes a *diyāna*.[3] This is in spite of the fact that ʿAbduh also uses a theological conceptualization of 'religion' (*al-dīn*), as we have seen in the analysis of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* which I will return to with regard to his reply to Hanotaux.

In addition to Hanotaux and ʿAbduh's 'anthropological' conceptualization of the outer boundaries of 'religion,' the polemic between ʿAbduh and Hanotaux testifies to two non-theological patterns of hierarchical differentiation between 'the religions,' as members of a non-theological, anthropological category of 'religion' (*al-dīn*).

2 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 28; Hānūtū, "Al-Islām. 2," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

3 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:217, 222. At times, he also uses the word *diyāna* to denote the Islamic, Christian, and ancient Greek religion. ʿAbduh, 3:223, 231, 233.

First, as we have seen, Hanotaux compares and differentiates the religions in view of the answers they offer to the question they shared about the relation between God and man. In so doing, the distinction Hanotaux sets forth between the religions is doctrinal yet not theological. He does not (explicitly) evaluate the doctrines' truth in relation to (his idea of) a divine truth. Instead, he separates Christianity and the ancient Greek religion from Islam and Buddhism based on their doctrines about the relation between man and God, while he acknowledges that the doctrines of Islam and Christianity also overlap.[4] In addition, he alludes to the doctrinal suitability of Christianity to a separation between the political and the religious, in contrast with Islam. Thus, his hierarchical division is not explicitly based on the concerned doctrines' relation to religious truth but only to their worldly usefulness and civilizational capacity. According to Hanotaux, Christianity, as well as the religion of the ancient Greeks, is superior to Islam and Buddhism because of their doctrines' implications for worldly success, providing their believers with a role in the history of civilization. For Hanotaux, their progress and success are not dependent on God in any direct or explicit way.

A distinction between Aryan and Semitic races is the second grammar of difference that Hanotaux invokes in his comparison between Islam and Christianity. This grammar was genealogical in nature, with the full weight and authority of nineteenth-century scholarship behind it. While Christianity is religiously Semitic by birth, it broke with its Semitic descent, Hanotaux writes.[5] Instead, the Christian religion is a more direct heir to the Aryans, in contrast with the Semitic Muslims who have not been able to free themselves from their Semitic origins.[6] For Hanotaux, as for others, the combination of the Christian religion and the Aryan race is then expressed historically in a civilization, "la civilisation aryenne et chrétienne," matched by an Islamic-Semitic counterpart.[7]

While the Aryan-Semitic discourse is genealogical, it is not profoundly historical, Maurice Olender argues. As religious civilizations came to be identified with the characteristics of their languages and races, the rigidity of structure

4 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 30. Hanotaux's inclusion of 'predestination' as one of the key questions that determines the relation between man and God raises the question of how he would position Protestantism/Calvinism in his scheme. However, it is clear that Hanotaux, at the very least, here is not primarily concerned with intra-Christian differences and their interpretation.

5 Cf. Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 148–149, 191–192.

6 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 19, 21, 29.

7 Hanotaux and Abdou, *L'Europe et l'islam*, 19, 30–31, 38.

was emphasized over change and thus over the effects of history.[8] Differences were fixed, essentialized, and hierarchical. Tomoko Masuzawa explains how these racial notions that developed within comparative philology were transferred to the study of religion and the comparative study of religions in particular. The Semitic religions were considered to reflect the characteristics of the Semitic languages, in contrast with those of the Aryan, or Indo-European, languages. Most importantly, as the Semitic language was considered rigid, the Semites were destined to stagnation.[9]

Hanotaux's classification of Christianity as Aryan and Islam as Semitic corroborates the hierarchy of his doctrinal differentiation discussed above, and vice versa. For example, his classification of the doctrines of the ancient Greeks as particularly conducive to success and progress matches his racial categorization of the ancient Greeks as Aryan. In fact, the ancient Greeks were commonly considered a pre-eminent example of the lauded energy and philosophical powers of the Aryans.[10] Moreover, the ancient Greeks were thought to occupy an essential and crucial link in Europe's Aryan genealogy. Hanotaux's reference to the example of this ancient Aryan people thus reinforces European Christianity's superiority over Islam in a genealogical way. In this way, the example of the ancient Greeks reinforced European Christianity's superiority over Islam. Likewise, historian Maurice Olender stresses that the nineteenth-century hierarchical distinction between the Aryan and Semitic races-cum-languages "revived the old conflict between monotheisms" (not only between Christianity and Islam, but also between Christianity and Judaism) and that the nineteenth-century philologists remained deeply attached to the Bible's historical premises, suggesting a profound connection between theological and anthropological grammars of similarity and difference between the religions.[11]

The essentialization and fixation of the hierarchically ordered identities of Islam and Christianity informed European colonial policy-making towards Islam and Muslims. Hanotaux refers to Kimon to explain how some thought that there was an unbridgeable difference between Islam and Christianity, resulting in unsolvable hostility, which resulted in the only solution being to murder a large proportion of the Muslims, to coerce the rest into forced labor, and to

8 Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, 1989th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 15–16.

9 Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, chap. 5.

10 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 19, 28–29; Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, 12; Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, 168, 171, 173, 189.

11 Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, 15, 19.

destroy the holy places of Mecca and Medina.[12] Hanotaux, too, did not seem to believe in the possibility of change in what he thought to be the fixed identity of Islam, which led him to argue for its separation from politics in order to facilitate the colonial subjugation of Muslims.[13]

In his reply, ʿAbduh also employs the genealogical characterization of Islam and Christianity as civilizations-cum-races-cum-religions that Hanotaux introduces. He refers to "Aryan religion" (*al-dīn al-ārī*) and "Semitic religion" (*al-dīn al-sāmī*). In doing so, he creates a type of sub-categories within the genus of 'religion' whose differentiation was not rooted in their relation to religious truth (as he explains that the Semitic religion included communities who adhered to *tawḥīd* and those who did not).[14] Furthermore, he typifies his interpretation of Islam, stating: "This is the Semitic doctrine, or the Muḥammadan mission, or the Islamic civilization" (*Hadhihi hiya al-ʿaqīda al-Sāmiyya, aw al-daʿwa al-Muḥammadiyya, aw al-madaniyya al-Islāmiyya*), combining qualifications of race, religion, and civilization.[15] Historian Cemil Aydin considers this turn in the conceptualization of the Islamic religion as a civilization and as a race to be more general in the pan-Islamic discourse of that time.[16] Moreover, ʿAbduh also employs this distinction between Aryan Christianity and Semitic Islam strategically in his polemical response to Hanotaux. He refers extensively to historical examples of active Semites and passive Aryans to corroborate his refutation of Hanotaux's doctrinal differentiation between Islam and Christianity, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

Besides using the genealogical categories that Hanotaux introduces, ʿAbduh also questions this categorization by pointing to the many loci of intersections between the two racial blocs. First, he points to the Aryans influencing the Semites religiously and vice versa and explains that the Semites are not one in their religion.[17] Second, he discusses the multiple historical moments in which the Aryan Christian civilization learned from the Semitic Muslim one, and vice versa. He concludes that the foundations of human progress are one: "the principles of industry and work are one with all peoples advancing upon the ladder of humanity" (*mabādiʾ al-ṣināʿa wa-l-ʿamal ʿinda jamīʿ al-aqwām al-murtaqiyya fī al-sullam al-insāniyya wāḥida*).[18] According to ʿAbduh, in the

12 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 31.
13 Hanotaux and Abdou, *L'Europe et l'islam*, 31–32.
14 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222.
15 ʿAbduh, 3:225.
16 Aydin, "Globalizing the Intellectual History," 169.
17 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222, 224–226.
18 ʿAbduh, 3:219, 221 (for quote), 221–222, 225.

face of history, race is not a very meaningful distinction for explaining civilization or religion (it seems that both are employed here as collective singulars).

In this way, ʿAbduh contests the hierarchy that Hanotaux introduced between Aryan Christianity and Semitic Islam – or at least the rigidity of this hierarchy – in a non-theological manner. In contrast, while Hanotaux also notes the entangled history of Islam and Christianity, he still deems the two religions essentially different because of their doctrinal differences regarding God's power and human freedom (resulting in their differing worldly success and progress). Their relative distance or closeness to the Aryans or Semites confirms this difference.[19]

1.2 *A Theological Grammar of Similarity and Difference between the* **Adyān**

In response to Hanotaux's racial categorization, in the first article of his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh writes that "the religion of *tawḥīd* does not coincide with Semitic religion" (*dīn al-tawḥīd laysa dīnan sāmiyyan*).[20] Further on, in the third article of his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh writes that *tawḥīd*, as well as *tanzīh* (transcendence), are characteristics of the religion of God (*dīn Allāh*), which is one amongst the other religions but is the only true one and coincides with true Islam (*al-Islām al-ṣaḥīḥ*).[21] In so doing, ʿAbduh introduces a new differentiation between religions, between the religion(s) of *tawḥīd* and *tanzīh* on the one hand and the religions of *wathaniyya* (idolatry) and *tashbīh* on the other.[22] ʿAbduh's differentiation between the religions was rooted in the two sides' differing relation to his religious ideas, to what he believed was God's truth. It was a quite harsh and radical distinction, moreover, suggesting that Indian idolaters were merely on the brink of even being human.[23] Within the category of *wathaniyya*, however, there were several stages, leading from Africa to the Chinese Buddhists and the Indian Hindus.[24]

According to ʿAbduh, however, Islam is not the only religion that corresponds with this religion of God in its true form. ʿAbduh does not only employ the term *dīn* within the phrase *dīn Allāh* (religion of God) as a singular but also

19 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 30.

20 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:222.

21 ʿAbduh, 3:232.

22 ʿAbduh, 3:229–231.

23 ʿAbduh, 3:227. ʿAbduh's allegation of idolaters' 'animality' mirrors his view that Hanotaux's assessment of Islam's beliefs about the relation between God and man brought man down to the level of mere animality. With his focus on animality versus humanity, ʿAbduh also mirrors Kimon's description of Muslims as beasts.

24 ʿAbduh, 3:227. Cf. ʿAbduh, 3:229–230.

as a category: a collective singular. It comprises the religion(s) of the prophets of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Muḥammad; as such, it is the unadulterated origin for the religions of Christian as well as Jewish communities, whose religions he also refers to as *adyān*.[25] Grouping religions together on a similar basis, Ḥusayn al-Jisr speaks about the divine religions (*al-adyān al-ilāhiyya*),[26] while Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ refers to a religion being either heavenly (using *samāwī* in Arabic, probably meaning 'revealed') or not.[27]

ʿAbduh explains that originally, Christians were also ordered to believe in *tanzīh*.[28] In contrast, he claims that his Christian contemporaries' belief in human intermediaries between God and man is a form of *tashbīh* and *wathaniyya*. As such, this type of Christian belief can only be an addition of later times and a corruption of Christianity's true message. Indeed, ʿAbduh rhetorically asks if it would make sense if Christianity would make people leave (one form of) idolatry for (another form of) idolatry.[29]

In accordance with their hierarchical and theological distinctions between the religion of God (as a religion of *tanzīh* and *tawḥīd*) and idolatry (including *tashbīh*), ʿAbduh and al-Jisr are both highly surprised that Hanotaux proudly claims Christianity's descent from idolatrous Indians or ancient Greeks, even though Aryan.[30] In contrast, ʿAbduh writes that Islam, as the epitome of the religion of God, removed the legacies of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Persians, and that Islam's true conception of *qadar* was the opposite of what the ancient Greeks thought.[31]

In the religious grammar of similarity and difference that ʿAbduh and others employ in the discussion with Hanotaux, Christianity thus holds an ambiguous position that is similar to what we have seen in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and its context. On the one hand, original Christianity was a fellow divine religion; on the other hand, Christians have become a type of anthropomorphizing idolaters who are barely human, almost beasts. This conceptual ambiguity was perhaps a reflection of ʿAbduh and others' ambiguous views on the relations between Muslims and actual Christians, both Eastern and European, to which we now turn to consider.[32]

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25 Ibid., 3:232.

26 Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 76.

27 ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

28 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:232.

29 ʿAbduh, 3:229–230, 231.

30 Ibid., 3:218; Al-Jisr, "Munāqashat Hānūtū," *Ṭarābulus,* July 12, 1900, 76.

31 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:224 and 232.

32 Cf. Tayob's analysis of ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux and Faraḥ Anṭūn as examples of the particularity and universality of ʿAbduh's interpretation of Islam: Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 79–82.

On the one hand, the commonality between the religious truth(s) of Islam and Christianity fit well with ʿAbduh and others' rejection of religious fanaticism out of a concern for the fatherland, interwoven in the discussions around Hanotaux, as we saw in the previous chapter. In addition, the idea of similarity between Islam and Christianity's religious message was reflected in the disappointment many of ʿAbduh's contemporaries felt over European Christians' animosity towards Muslims. European policy is clearly not based on an idea of a sisterhood between Islam and Christianity, *al-Muʾayyad* writes, even though it also acknowledges that some Europeans believe in this idea.[33] Similarly, ʿAwaḍ explains that if Europe would be religiously motivated, it would wage war against Japan, China, or Siam instead of against the Muslims since the people of these countries do not believe in a revealed religion.[34] He suggests that this shows that Europe is clearly not religiously motivated in its politics.

On the other hand, the profound and religiously sanctioned difference between true Islam and corrupted Christianity indicated Muslims' superiority over European colonizers and missionaries, reassuring the Muslims of the possibility of successful resistance. Yet, it also suggested Muslims' superiority over the Egyptian and Ottoman Christians with whom ʿAbduh and others shared a fatherland, which both Christians and Muslims claimed to hold dear, which I return to in the second part of this chapter.

Islam, like Christianity, has not been safe from corruption either, as we encountered earlier in ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. In the fifth article of his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh writes that the Islamic religion was turned upside down (verb: *inqalaba*), its nature and its truth changed (*taghayyara; tabaddala*) and its way obliterated (*inṭamasa*) due to the introduction of unlawful innovations (*bidaʿ*). This resulted in a loss of interest among believers to uphold their religion.[35] Even though ʿAbduh does not explicitly contest the fact that most of his

33 "Hānūtū wa-l-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad,* May 10, 1900. In his second article in *Le Journal*, Hanotaux also lists some Frenchmen who believed in a sisterhood between Islam and Christianity: Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 31–32.

34 ʿAwaḍ, "4. Dīn am Maṣlaḥa," *Al-Muʾayyad.*

35 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:241–242 for quoted words, 241–245 for full account of this degeneration. As a side note: Wilfred Cantwell Smith describes how Islam, since the end of the nineteenth century, has increasingly come to be defined as a historical civilization, in a secularized and un-idealist fashion. In making this argument, Cantwell Smith explicitly points to two book titles of ʿAbduh's works in which the word *Islām* features, including the collection of ʿAbduh's replies to Hanotaux. Cantwell Smith finds it especially relevant that Hanotaux is a foreigner, which according to him, is indicative of ʿAbduh taking up an outsider's perspective on Islam. However, in my opinion, ʿAbduh's history of Islam in his reply to Hanotaux is indicative of ʿAbduh's ambiguous relation to history. On the one hand, ʿAbduh refers to history to prove Islam's eternal and true

contemporary Muslims are Muslims, he does claim that their religion was inverted and they do not follow its divine truth.[36] Especially in its relation to religious truth, this is a very harsh distinction that explains the vehemence of responses to ʿAbduh, such as those of *Ḥimārat Munyatī,* which was also discussed in the previous chapter. When ʿAbduh challenged the authoritative conception of *qadar* of that time as not true to Islam's principles, *Ḥimārat Munyatī* challenged the correctness of ʿAbduh's ideas and methods in response, as we have seen. The satirical journal suggested that ʿAbduh did not teach Islam in full by leaving out the *ḥadīth*-collections as one of the sources of Islamic knowledge; a critique that tied into the accustations towards ʿAbduh in conservative Azhari circles.[37]

It is perhaps ironic or paradoxical that ʿAbduh, in search for Muslims' political unity and despite his abandonment of intricately discussing theological matters such as *qadar* (or predestination), uses a religious grammar of difference that implied deep theological divisions within the Muslim community. In that sense, he could be considered to stand at the basis of a narrowing down of the Islamic tradition, by excluding many of the convictions and practices of his Muslim contemporaries as not faithful to Islam's divine truth, as Norman Cal-

character and confirm the rigidity of genealogical identities, or civilizational stereotypes, which pertained to the Aryan-Semitic discourse. On the other hand, ʿAbduh also recognizes a historical Islam, with a history in which Islam lost its worldly power. This loss of power serves as proof that Islam was corrupted and acquired the opposite character of true Islam. Thus, ʿAbduh defines Islam as a historical civilization in an idealist fashion in a binary with Islam as a historical civilization in an unidealist fashion. The word *Islām* in the title of ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux refers to Islam or the Islamic civilization in its true historical form, which was not the Islam or the Islamic civilization that history had led the Muslim to at that time, according to ʿAbduh. Smith, "The Historical Development in Islām of the Concept of Islām as an Historical Development," 59–63. This argument is reiterated and expanded in his famous book: Smith, *Meaning and End of Religion*. Armando Salvatore also refers to it: Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse*, 76, 85. Cf. Shaden Tageldin's analysis of the secularization of the term "Islam" through a process of translating works such as Carlyle's *On Heroes*. Within a process of translation, an 'Islam,' as a supersign, came to displace the fundamentally different previous concept of Islam in the Arabic language almost unnoticeably. "Islam" came to be conceptualized in terms of its civilizational value. Even though "Islam" came to be utilized to counter or question British dominance, Tageldin argues that its semantic origins were unconsciously adopted from the British and essentially reflected a colonial framework. Tageldin, "Secularizing Islam."

36 In his reply to Anṭūn, ʿAbduh writes that his common Muslim contemporaries believe in something they call Islam, which is not really Islam except in its retention of some of the rituals. ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:341.

37 Cf. Brown on ʿAbduh and *ḥadīth*: Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 37.

der regretfully notes.[38] At the same time, however, his rejection of *taqlīd* also reflected a desire to open up the Islamic tradition, breaking it free from its authorities and its rigid division in theological and juridical schools (*madhāhib*), to engender Muslims' strength through their unity and rationality. In the process, moreover, he opened Islam's door to a flood of individual subjectivity in the twentieth century.[39]

In his reply to Hanotaux, however, Farīd Wajdī claims solid footing in these uncertain times of contested traditional Islamic authority. He points to man's natural dispositions (*fiṭra*) as a safeguard against the corruption of God's religion(s) – as a solid footing for true religion. He writes that even though historical research has raised doubts regarding many religious certainties and has proved that religious knowledge is often merely relative, there is no need to despair about finding God's original truth. Human nature stands permanent and unchanging as a bulwark against change and corruption. According to Wajdī, mankind has a natural inclination towards religiosity (*tadayyun*), which he defines as a desire to penetrate into worlds hidden behind the visible. This is the general and universal foundation for human beings' adherence to a specific religion (*dīn khāṣṣ min al-adyān*), to one among many and varying others.[40] A return to this natural religion (*al-diyāna al-ṭabīʿiyya*) is the key to reaching God's truth, which is a truth that is empirically grounded.

Moreover, for Wajdī, true Islam is such a natural innate religion (*dīn fiṭrī ṭabīʿī*).[41] In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh also agrees that Islam corresponds with humanity's natural disposition, it is *dīn al-fiṭra*.[42] For ʿAbduh as well as Wajdī, the compatibility of divine truth and human nature seems to lie in the divine origin of human nature. Human nature is not coincidental; it is a creation of God, and He has endowed it with its natural dispositions. His eternal wisdom is to be found in (human) nature. Because God creates according to a

38 For a lamentation of ʿAbduh's narrowing down of religion (although it does not do justice to ʿAbduh's actual views of Sufism), see: Calder, "Islamic Orthodoxy," 235–236.

39 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, 7.

40 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 44–45. See also Rogier Visser on a painting commissioned by ʿAbduh's contemporary Louis Ṣābūnjī of "The historico-pictoral genesis & symbols of the various religions," in which he "visualizes the idea that all different religions are derived from 'the pure natural religion,' which is depicted prominently at the highest position in the center." Visser "Identities in Early Arabic Journalism," 118. According to Visser, Ṣābūnjī argued that the religions were represented as equal to each other. However, Visser points to the disproportionate space Syriac Catholicism (which Ṣābūnjī adhered to himself) is given in this pictoral table of religions. Visser, "Identities in Early Arabic Journalism," 118–120.

41 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 52–54, 55–58.

42 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:232, 240 (quote).

fixed 'measure' (God's *qadar*), resulting in nature's regularities (*sunan*), moreover, His truth is attainable by man's reason. Wajdī is convinced that true science can attain true religious knowledge.[43]

ʿAbduh and Wajdī's references to *fiṭra*, *qadar,* and *sunan* in their explanations of Islam as a true religion were part of their replies to globally shared questions about the relations between religion, reason, and nature, which the next part of this chapter addresses. Furthermore, it is a reminder that ʿAbduh's conceptualization of 'religion and the religions,' mirroring a multiplicity of inter- and intra-religious power relations, is at the same time in constant negotiation with natural explanations of the world, its history, and its religions. ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islam, as an answer to questions about reason and nature that were also asked of other religions, also implied a comparison with these other religions. His interpretation of Islam as a religion was a response to two types of questions regarding two types of 'others' (other religions as well as 'non-religion') at the same time. In ʿAbduh's replies to questions about both 'others' of Islam as a religion, religious truth is an added dimension that is sometimes used to deepen the boundaries he draws between Islam and its 'others' and at other times used to strengthen the bond between the two sides.

2 Reconfiguring Islam as a Religion

This section analyzes ʿAbduh's conceptualization of the relations between Islam and (human) nature as well as his views about Islam's relevance to communal affairs. Moreover, it argues that these were intricately connected. We will see that his reinterpretation of Islam in reply to questions about the relation between Islam and natural and rational knowledge implied answers about the kind of role that Islam could and should (therefore) have in the political domain.

Furthermore, ʿAbduh formulated his answer in negotiation with the answers of his contemporaries, many of whom argued that religion in general, but especially Islam, should be isolated from politics and from playing a role in community matters. Given Islam's teachings about its relation to history, nature, and politics, they argue that Islam should be rendered solely a private and individual affair. At the same time, ʿAbduh's conceptualization of Islam was also a contestation of the authoritative role of the Islam of many of his Muslim contemporaries and those who upheld this Islam. His interpretation of Islam thus mirrored a multiplicity of questions regarding 'religion' in a converging

43 ʿAbduh, 3:230.

global intellectual field, as well as a plurality of contestations with his contemporaries.

2.1 *Sacralization of History, or the Naturalization of 'Religion'*

In 'Abduh's reply to Hanotaux, 'Abduh's (at times implicit) conception of history was an important part of his configuration of the religious and the natural. Hanotaux and 'Abduh's shared belief that man's free will, activity, and audacity were absolute prerequisites for historical progress seems to have reflected a more general turn in the modern historical consciousness of Western Europe, as described by authors such as historian Reinhart Koselleck. In this historical consciousness, it was considered to be up to man to shape his own history; it introduced man as the self-confidently acting protagonist of his life and history. Furthermore, this historical consciousness was itself intricately connected to the co-emergence of the notions of historical change and progress, which were central to the making of history. Man was considered to be able to effect change and thereby make history.[44]

Simultaneously, this conceptualization of man's role in his history has been interpreted as a gradual turn away from a notion of history that is directly and predominantly guided by Providence. In the newly emerging understandings of history since the eighteenth century, in contrast, history was viewed as an increasingly self-explanatory course of events, largely independent from God in its workings – although older notions of history continued to exist and merged with newer ones.[45] Furthermore, this idea of history mirrored an understanding of the realm of nature as, to a very large degree, self-sufficient; God never – or rarely – intervened in the natural world after having created it.[46]

These new understandings of history also reflected in the conceptualization of 'religion.' In his study of the genealogy of the concept of 'religion' as it came to be used in Religious Studies, Peter Harrison describes a transition of biblical

44 Koselleck, "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation,'" 265–266; Jan van der Dussen, "De tijd in perspectief. Zoeken naar een oriëntatie in de geschiedenis," in *De ongrijpbare tijd. Temporaliteit en de constructie van het verleden*, eds. Maria Grever and Harry Jansen (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 25–26; Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 31.

45 An interesting field of study in the respect of merging notions of history concerns the sacral aspect of national histories.

46 Van der Dussen, "De tijd in perspectief"; Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 60. Fabian explains that for the genealogy of the concept of time in the field of anthropology, the very temporality underlying the idea of progress implies a parting with a biblical conception of time since time was not a coordinate of change in a history of salvation. Instead, time had to be naturalized in order to be meaningful as such, "i.e. separated from [Biblical] events meaningful to mankind." Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 13.

history to a secularized natural history in the conceptualization of religion and the religions in the eighteenth century. Harrison argues that this meant that in the study of the history of religion, history was no longer itself a source, or the essence, of religious truth.[47]

In this study, this type of a 'desacralization of history' (even if history was 'sacralized' in other ways) is considered to be one particular answer to a question that ʿAbduh shared with his contemporaries in a globally converging world: the relation between religion, nature, and history. ʿAbduh's answer to this shared question differed from the particular answer discussed above, however, mirroring his attempt to prove Islam's relevance in a time in which natural and rational knowledge were authoritative.

In his interview with Bishāra Taqlā, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Hanotaux explains that material progress is independent of spiritual or moral progress. According to him, God does not reward piety and deep religiosity in this world. Instead, material progress is up to man's industriousness and courage.[48] So, while Hanotaux does not necessarily deny the existence of a God here, he does not think that He is involved in the people's material welfare in this world. Therefore, it is not materially beneficial to be religious or to work towards Him. Instead of looking towards God, man should take his life and history in this world in his own hands, working hard towards change.

However, ʿAbduh's exposé on the Islamic doctrine of *qadar* testifies to a different conception of history, in tandem with his conception of the relation between God and nature. ʿAbduh refutes Hanotaux's accusation that a Muslim's conception of history is completely dependent on God, and that, therefore, man is not believed to have any historical agency in Islam. ʿAbduh argues that man's history in this world is not completely independent from God either. In the second article of his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh defines *qadar* as God's determination of the *sunan*, or the (God-dependent) principles of nature. This is the regularity with which God created the world and by which its history and nature run, resulting in a system of which man's historical agency is one divinely willed component.[49]

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47 Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, chap. 4 and 5, particularly 169–172. In addition, as Johannes Fabian explains for the genealogy of concepts of time in the field of anthropology, the very temporality underlying the idea of progress implies a parting with a biblical conception of time, since time was no coordinate of change in a history of salvation. Instead, time had to be naturalized in order to be meaningful as such, 'i.e. separated from [Biblical] events meaningful to mankind.' Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 13.

48 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," *Al-Ahrām,* July 16, 1900.

49 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:224.

As such, most importantly, history gives insight into God's plan, which might also point to a 'secularization' of Islam. In their article on *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar* in the journal *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, reprinted in *al-Manār* and *al-Muʾayyad* around the time of ʿAbduh's discussion with Hanotaux, ʿAbduh and al-Afghānī explain that the discipline of history is itself rooted in the belief in *al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*, that is, the belief in the regularity of the world that God created. Through the study of historical events and the historical course of communities, man can uncover the laws of history and can learn about the divine logics of the rise and fall of communities and can understand this specifically in its relation to the moral and even inner realm.[50] Thus, having studied history and its regularities (*sunan*) properly, man knows which way is rewarded in God's world, which cannot but coincide with God's way (as the originator of the *sunan*) and the way that God's religion commanded (*al-sharīʿa*). It is in this sense that Malcolm Kerr refers to ʿAbduh's conception of Islam's revealed law as "natural law," a moral code that is derivable from man's rational study of this world.[51] It is in this sense, too, that Islam is conceived to be not only oriented towards the believers' (collective) welfare (*maṣlaḥa*) in the Hereafter, but also in this world, as reiterated in articles in *al-Muʾayyad*.[52] Historical and natural knowledge is not separated from spiritual or religious knowledge for ʿAbduh – similar to the compatibility between rational and revealed knowledge that was discussed in this study's fifth chapter with regard to *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*.

Thus, history-as-religion teaches man how to affect his history successfully. Man can turn his history for the better, as expressed in the Quranic verse 13:11 "God does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves," which is oft-quoted by Islamic reformists such as al-Afghānī, ʿAbduh, and Riḍā.[53] Within the discussion around Hanotaux, the verse is quoted in an article from *Thamarāt al-Funūn*.[54] Moreover, people are free to do otherwise, to deviate from the divinely sanctioned route, but then they will decline

50 Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 108.

51 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 131. Malcolm Kerr explains that historical laws are not so much moral laws themselves: "The law of history – God's custom, or *sunnat Allāh* – belongs in a class with the physical laws of nature. It is not a moral code itself but only its sanction." However, reason can deduce the moral law from the historical laws that give insight into its sanction. It is in this sense that Kerr distinguishes between two types of law in ʿAbduh's conception of history: God's *sunan* as historical laws (or the laws of nature) and the *sharīʿa* as the moral law (or natural law), which are intricately intertwined, as the first sanctions the latter. And, I would add, as the first provides the empirical material to deduce the latter. Kerr, 131.

52 "Hānūtū wa-l-Ahrām," *Al-Muʾayyad*; "Ṣadā al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*.

53 See also: Ivanyi, "God's Custom."

54 "Ṣadā al-Islām," *Al-Muʾayyad*.

historically.[55] God does not intervene directly in his creation, which allows man a considerable range of action, but that does not mean that history is completely desacralized in its naturalization. History mirrors God's plan, as does nature (and, vice versa, God's plan mirrors history, which might be called a 'secularization' of religion). Similarly, ʿAbduh's characterization of Islam as *dīn al-fiṭra*, or 'the religion of (man's) natural disposition,' is rooted in a sacralized concept of nature or a naturalized concept of religion.

In his reply to Hanotaux, Wajdī, moreover, connects the religion of human nature more explicitly to historical knowledge, as he aims to uncover religious truth by stripping the accidental from the essential or the original in human religious history.[56] In this sense, the natural or original state of human religiosity is truthful; nature in its original state is a key to religious knowledge, so natural history is a key to religious knowledge. As the *dīn al-fiṭra*, natural history is also a key to Islam and its knowledge.[57]

In response to questions they shared with their contemporaries around the world, ʿAbduh and Wajdī conceptualize 'religion' in close relation to 'nature,' 'reason,' and 'history,' thereby sacralizing nature and history as well as secularizing religion. As such, this view does not confirm Hanotaux's idea that material historical progress is independent from spiritual progress. Instead, as we will see in the next section, ʿAbduh's reconfiguration of the relation between religion and history implies the necessity of religious reform (*iṣlāḥ*) for the purpose of societal reform (*iṣlāḥ*) and, consequently, progress. It is in this sense that ʿAbduh provides Islam with a relevance and role in history, not only for individual believers but also for the welfare of the community as a whole (*maṣlaḥa*).

2.2 *Islam as a Religion and the Making of History*

At the same time, ʿAbduh's integration of God's truth in nature and in history in his reinterpretation of Islam may raise the question if God and His revealed knowledge is rendered redundant for this world. Whether divine in origin or not, nature seems quite sufficient as a source for man to discover how to live by

55 According to Malcolm Kerr, ʿAbduh distinguishes here between the individual and the collective in this respect. This law of 'decline-in-this-world-in-case-of-deviation' only applies to collectives; individuals are punished in the Hereafter. Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 121.

56 This position by Wajdī seems to correspond to Peter Harrison's definition of a 'natural history' of religion, explained by Harrison as an Aristotelian historical inquiry into the essential, non-accidental state of nature and, accordingly, of natural religion. It is not an inquiry into historical laws. Harrison, *"Religion" and the Religions*, 158–159.

57 Wajdī, "Naẓra ʿalā Maqāl Musyū Hānūtū," in *Al-Islām*, 52–58.

laws that ensure success in this world as well as possibly in the Hereafter. Then, what is the added relevance of Islam as a religion?

In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh's refers to trust in God (*tawakkul*) as part of a proper understanding of *qadar*. For ʿAbduh, a correct interpretation of *qadar* implies a belief in the regularity of God's world, a belief in the according accessibility of God's truth to man through nature and history, and a belief that it is up to man to access this truth and act accordingly. Psychologically, this makes a believer trust assuredly in the backing of God (*maʿūnat al-qadar*) when following His way. It motivates him towards courage and activity in the assurance that he is following God's plan and will be rewarded accordingly, even if it is not an easy road.[58] In his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh explains that it is in this (psychological) sense that religion is an element of strength for Muslims. Moreover, according to ʿAbduh, as Muslims have a great trust (*thiqa*) in religion, it is easiest to effectively reach them through religion.[59]

So, even though neither nature nor history is in need of constant divine intervention and even though both history and nature are sources of religious knowledge, people still need a religious understanding of history to actually push them into action, as we also have seen in the analysis of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. Similarly to what Kerr described on the level of an individual's morality, people need religion as a "decisive impulsion" to actually follow ethical norms, even though these are also rationally deducible.[60] Moreover, Islam, in its conception of *qadar* as well as in its transcendent view of God, is excellently equipped to give such an impetus to worldly action, as we have seen ʿAbduh, al-Jisr, Wajdī, and others emphasize in the previous chapter.

ʿAbduh and Hanotaux's quarrel about Islam's relation to activity and progress was extra pertinent, as it was not merely about people making their histories, but was ultimately about the making of universal history (or History). Similarly, in his *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, Stephen Sheehi describes the central importance of activity and effort within *Nahḍa*-discourses as an Arab effort to enter "a Hegelian concept of universal history, where history belongs to those who effect change and development."[61] As anthropologist Johannes Fabian describes in his *Time and the Other*, another essential feature of the modern conception of progressive time underlying anthropology is its universalization and generalization. This was also discussed in relation

58 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:226–228 and 508; Al-Afghānī and ʿAbduh, *Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā*, 109; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 5:131; cf. Van Nispen tot Sevenaer, *Activité humaine et agir de Dieu*, 294, 297–298.

59 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:247.

60 Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 126.

61 Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 31.

to its consequences on ʿAbduh's conceptualization of 'religion' in the fifth chapter of this study.[62] All societies and their histories were progressively placed in one universal temporal framework: History. The society leading History in its most progressive phase did not only lead one's own history ahead in time, but it also led the universal temporal framework, History, under which all other histories were subsumed, ahead. This society's present represented the other societies' future – most concretely reflected in conceptualizations of modernization as Westernization, in which the West's modernity represented the future of the non-West. This universally shared and progressively phased temporal framework was the field where historical agency mattered most crucially, raising the question: who leads History along?

Furthermore, this was also the History that was ultimately contested in the discussion between ʿAbduh and Hanotaux. This is, for example, perceptible in Hanotaux's use of the concept of civilization. For Hanotaux, it is the French civilization that leads Civilization ahead, "la civilization," without any further adjective, as a universal and singular process.[63] It is the French civilization, therefore, that should be exported to the Muslim world in order to help them climb the ladder of Civilization, calling upon his fellow Frenchmen to replace the fatalist Arabo-Islamic civilization with a more up-to-date and active one.[64] In Hanotaux's eyes, this is a mission for which their Christian religion and its conceptualization of the relation between man and God has prepared them exceptionally well.[65] ʿAbduh, on the other hand, urges Muslims to return to their true religion in order to regain power and wealth and to confidently stand up to France to resettle the balance of power.[66] This was what was at stake beneath ʿAbduh and Hanotaux's discussion of predestination: which religion encourages man to actively lead History? Can Islam encourage man to make History? If not, Muslims are destined to be led by others – and very literally so in the colonial world that was the background to their comparisons of Islam and Christianity.

ʿAbduh's configuration of the relation between Islam, history, and nature reflected his negotiations to also provide Islam – as a religion – with a role in

62 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 13–17. See section "*Al-Adyān* and truth" in chapter 5 in the present study.

63 Hanotaux, "L'Islam," in *L'Europe et l'Islam*, 21, 26.

64 "(…), à cette population islamique et sémitique, ce peuple aryen, chrétien et républicain, doit apporter, maintenant, le pain et le sel de la vie et de la civilisation!" Hanotaux and Abdou, *L'Europe et l'islam*, 21.

65 Hanotaux's belief in the extraordinary suitability of the French to make History is captured in the title of one of Hanotaux's works: *L'énergie française*.

66 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:226, 234, 235, 237.

the History of this world. Similarly, it reflected his conceptualization of the relevance of Islam as a religion in communal matters, through pointing out Islam's collective benefit (*maṣlaḥa*). His conceptualization of the specificities of Islam's role in communal matters is the subject of the last section of this chapter.

2.3 *Islam as a Religion and Politics*

The specificities of Islam's role in determining the course of the community (whether this is the Muslim community or a multi-confessional 'fatherland' or *waṭan*) are most explicitly discussed and fought over in Hanotaux and ʿAbduh's discussion about the separation of religious and political authority, especially regarding the nature of pan-Islamism and the figure of the caliph. While Ḥāfiẓ ʿAwaḍ believes that the religious cannot be in any way connected to economic or political considerations if it is to remain religious, ʿAbduh and others seem to look for a way in which Islam as a religion was allowed to have a role in communal matters, in negotiation with how Hanotaux and Taqlā configured the relation between the religious and the political in their contributions to the debate.[67] These negotiations had ramifications on multiple levels, and therefore ʿAbduh's configuration reflected a plurality of contestations.

In response to Taqlā's interview with Hanotaux, ʿAbduh but also Riḍā stress that for them the caliph's role is not a political or military one, as we have seen. A political or military role is not even considered feasible, they claim. Furthermore, the caliph is no pope. Instead, ʿAbduh writes, the caliph himself is bound by Islamic Law (*al-sharīʿa al-Islāmiyya*) for which 'the people of religion' are responsible. A few pages earlier in this article, he states that Islam does not have detailed rules for governing a kingdom (or regulating commerce and industry).[68]

Instead, Riḍā explains, Islamic unity is a spiritual unity.[69] ʿAbduh claims that an appeal to it is an appeal to all Muslims for solidarity in upholding or rectifying religion as well as an appeal to united religious reform (*iṣlāḥ*).[70] Through the right type of belief and knowledge, the right type of virtuous conduct was inculcated, which follows from his conceptualization of the connection between *ʿilm* and *ʿamal* and the priority he gives to interiority over exteriority that was described in the fourth and fifth chapters of this study. ʿAbduh's understanding of *qadar* and *tanzīh* as conducive to worldly goals

67 Cf. Asad, "Law and Ethics in Colonial Egypt," 230–231.
68 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:240–241, 249.
69 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 344.
70 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:248.

seems to be a point in case. A pan-Islamic religious reform will provide all Muslims with the right interpretation of Islamic doctrines such as *qadar* and as such with the morale that is needed in order to regain power, progress, and civilization, as the problem and solution are one across the Muslim world, according to ʿAbduh. Thus, the caliph seems to be a rallying symbol in a call for religio-moral reform that will usher in a societal reform at the same time and lead to the Muslims' progress.[71]

Moreover, this study argues that ʿAbduh's reinterpretation of Islamic unity and the role of the caliph seems to be an attempt to find Islam a public role that is considered suitable to a religion within the global public sphere, where people like Hanotaux did not consider a political role for religion to be conducive to progress. ʿAbduh's comparisons with Christianity also seem to serve this goal: his reference to Christian religious unity and solidarity, backed by European heads of state, seems to be aimed at rendering Islamic unity less of an anomaly in the modern world by 'translating' it into examples with which Christians and Europeans were familiar.[72]

The discussion between Hanotaux and ʿAbduh also clarifies, yet again, that the global contestations over the public role of religion were deeply implicated in colonial politics. On the one hand, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Hanotaux advocates establishing 'protectorates' in French colonies that were dominated by Muslims, thereby providing only the French with the highest political power and effectively relegating Islam to the realm of the politically powerless. He thinks that this is legitimated in view of the fusion of the religious and the political in Islam, which he considers to be essential to this religion. On the other hand, ʿAbduh's pan-Islamic religious reform seeks to encourage Muslims to regain strength vis-à-vis colonizing Europe by carving out a communally beneficial role for Islam within an international political logic that is very wary of any problematic confusion between religious and political authority. Without arguing that Islam or Islamic authorities should have political power, ʿAbduh provides Islam with an indispensable role in engendering morals that benefit and revive the Muslim community as a whole and/or the multi-confessional communities (for example Egypt) of which a portion of this Muslim community was part.

Within the national public sphere, too, ʿAbduh and others try to carve out an acceptable public role for religion in a 'fatherland' (*waṭan*) that includes people of religions other than Islam as well. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Riḍā describes how the religious unity of the Muslims does not conflict

71 Aydin, *Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, 62–63.

72 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:248–250.

with the unity of a political society that they share with non-Muslims. Instead, the Islamic religion endorses a societal unity with non-Muslims, and ʿAbduh does too in his fifth article in reply to Hanotaux.[73] Patriotism, or *waṭanīyya*, seems to be part of the moral reform that a (pan-)Islamic revival would usher in. However, as ʿAbduh notes, the call towards pan-Islamic unity and a return to Islam engendered great fear among Eastern Christians, such as Taqlā himself – despite Taqlā's support for the pan-Islamic reformist policies of the Ottoman Sultan and their shared concern for the fatherland.[74]

Much of this distrust seems to be buried in the ambiguity of the specificities of the relation between Islam and its role in communal affairs, for example with regard to the implications of this religio-moral role of the caliph in its relation to law. ʿAbduh writes that a caliph is unlike a pope in that a caliph himself is under the authority of Islamic Law, as upheld by 'the people of religion.' Does this imply that the enforcement of Islamic Law is part of the religio-moral role of the caliph in upholding religion, reflecting the ambiguity in the close relation between *fiqh* and *akhlāq* that al-Ghazālī's work on morals epitomized, as discussed in the fifth chapter?[75] On the other hand, in ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux, the right Islamic morality is first and foremost taught through Muslims' achieving the right understanding of Islamic doctrines such as *qadar* and *tanzīh*, not through imposing specific laws. Also, in his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh argues that Islam does not teach the details of how to govern a kingdom or how to regulate commerce or industry, which is in agreement with the limitation of Islamic Law in Egypt to family and *waqf* matters.[76] Thus, is this reference to Law (*sharīʿa*) perhaps a reference to more general guidelines about what is the right path for a community rather than to the implementation of specific rules, as we have also encountered in the analysis of ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*?

ʿAbduh does not give unambiguous answers to these questions revolving around the relation between Islam, law, and public authority. Yet, these were questions that could be answered in ways that were deeply problematic for many of ʿAbduh's Christian, let alone atheist, contemporaries – as is evident in

73 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 344; ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:247.

74 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:247. Perhaps somewhat similarly, historian Albert Hourani remarks how Muslim Egyptian nationalists such as *al-Liwāʾ*'s editor Muṣṭafā Kāmil were never really trusted by Egypt's minorities, despite Kāmil's insistence that Islam was conducive to nationalism. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 207.

75 In ʿAbduh's reply to journalist Faraḥ Anṭūn, ʿAbduh writes that Islam is "*dīn wa-sharʿ*" (religion and law) and that the second aspect had to be enforced by a state (logically the caliph). ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:309.

76 ʿAbduh, 3:240–241.

the history of political Islam in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[77] In one of the last articles in the discussion around Hanotaux, Riḍā seems to be aware of this implication, as he assures that Muslims and non-Muslims are equal in rights in Islam, which is why Islam is a proper foundation for a society and for the welfare of its people.[78]

Lastly, ʿAbduh's appeal to pan-Islamic reform is revealing of the negotiations and contestations that took place within Islam. For ʿAbduh, the combination of pan-Islamism and religio-moral reform (*iṣlāḥ*) seems predicated on a theoretical unity of religious truth for all Muslims; there is one problem for all Muslims and the solution is found in a united religious reform, which is, moreover, a correction towards Islam's true and original state. At the same time, ʿAbduh proudly reiterates his position that in Islam, every believer is directly accountable to God without intermediate religious authorities.[79] Perhaps ʿAbduh believed that Muslims would all accept one form of Islam as true, once they were freed from *taqlīd* and the superstitions of earlier generations and returned to the Quran and used their sound reason instead.

ʿAbduh remains ambiguous about who is authoritative in deciding on this singular truth for all Muslims (besides himself perhaps) and why. According to ʿAbduh, as we have seen, the caliph is not a pope; he is not a religious authority but is himself placed under the religious authority of Islamic law and 'the people of religion' (*ahl al-dīn*), upholding it.[80] While ʿAbduh does not make clear who these *ahl al-dīn* were, it seems clear whom he excludes from this responsibility and authority: the *ʿulamāʾ* who upheld the authoritative Islam of that time, sanctioned through their reference to earlier generations of religious authorities and their interpretations.

Conversely, Taqlā recounts how many Muslim intellectuals and scholars disagreed with ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux and how his exposition of Islam in reply to Hanotaux was not held at the Azhar library.[81] The journal *Ḥimārat Munyatī* attacked ʿAbduh's interpretation of *qadar* as shamefully incorrect, in explicit reference to authoritative *ḥadīth*-collections.[82] ʿAbduh's phraseology of true Islam or true religion (*al-Islām* or *al-dīn al-ṣaḥīḥ*) – and, vice versa, *Ḥimārat Munyatī*'s allegations that ʿAbduh did not teach the entirety of Islam (*tamām al-Islām*; *kamāl al-īmān*) – is indicative of the depth and weight of the conflict over religious authority within Islam.

77 Cf. Kerr, *Islamic Reform*, 149–150.
78 "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ," *Al-Manār,* 344.
79 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:228.
80 ʿAbduh, 3:249.
81 "Murāwighat al-Muʾayyad," *Al-Ahrām*, May 11, 1900.
82 "Muḥammad ʿAbduh," *Ḥimārat Munyatī.*

In his reply to Hanotaux, moreover, ʿAbduh's view on the role of the caliph does not seem to imply many means of imposing a certain type of Islam for the caliph outside of his symbolic power – whether this reflected an ideal situation for ʿAbduh or was merely a consequence of the constraints of the international power relations at that time. However, in the Egyptian context, backed up by Lord Cromer and the colonial state, ʿAbduh was in a position of power to at least try to impose his reforms, his truth of Islam, as the Grand Mufti of Egypt and as a member of the Administrative Council at the Azhar – in which, it is worth noting, he was only moderately successful.

In carving out a suitable role for Islam and particularly the caliph in reforming (*iṣlāḥ*) the community to procure progress, ʿAbduh reinterpreted Islam and Islamic unity as 'religio-moral' instead of 'political' interaction with national and international interlocutors. For this purpose, he used the similarities and differences he saw between Islam and Christianity, likening the caliph to the queen of England rather than to the pope. In the process, he excluded many of the religious authorities of that time (his fellow *ʿulamāʾ*) from this role for Islam – at least conceptually. However, he did not unambiguously replace their 'traditional' authority with a new authoritative structure. Moreover, his ambiguity about the nature of this Islamic unity, beyond its designation as 'non-political,' engendered great tension amongst his Christian compatriots.

In Conclusion

1 A World beyond Westernization

It is no shocking conclusion that a perspective of 'Westernization' or 'modernization-as-Westernization,' especially pertinent to the literature describing ʿAbduh as an Islamic *modernist*, no longer constitutes a viable paradigm for the study of Muḥammad ʿAbduh. While many of the studies that employ this perspective of ʿAbduh and others are still valuable and certainly informative, it also seems clear that their overtly singular focus on a unilateral relation of impact and response between an 'original' and a necessarily failing 'copy,' often precipitated on the expectation of Islam's eventual or desired disappearance into non-existence or at least the private realm, is not a productive approach to examine this period of history in Islamic thought. Dyala Hamzah, Samira Haj, Stephen Sheehi, Johann Büssow, Marwa Elshakry are only some examples of scholars who presented a similar diagnosis.[1] Their studies are themselves part of a much broader field that examines and challenges the eurocentrist nature of the analytical and conceptual foundations on which academic knowledge in disciplines such as Religious Studies, History and Anthropology is continuously being built.[2]

The alternative to a paradigm of Westernization is much less obvious, however. One of the options is to refocus our attention, to look for other meaningful approaches to understanding ʿAbduh rather than solely concentrating on the interaction between Europe and Islam in explaining and interpreting ʿAbduh's ideas. For example, following Talal Asad, Samira Haj proposes to study ʿAbduh as part of a continuing Islamic tradition centering around recurrent endeavors of redefining, reforming and renewing the Islamic religion. Within this endeavor, she studies ʿAbduh's thought as part of a dynamic conversation with Muslim predecessors, for example with al-Ghazālī on Islamic ethics and morality. Conceiving ʿAbduh within the Islamic tradition is not a new endeavor in itself; it builds forth on, for example, the work of those who have named ʿAbduh a nineteenth-century representative of the 'Salafi,' 'fundamentalist,' 'reformist' or 'revivalist' mode as well as Riḍā's portrayal of ʿAbduh, demonstrated in the

1 Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*; Hamzah, "La pensée de 'Abduh"; Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*; Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*; Buessow, "Re-Imagining Islam."

2 Numerous studies could be mentioned here, so I only give some prime examples of studies in the fields of Religious Studies, History and Anthropology respectively that have tackled some of the eurocentrist leanings of "our" academic concepts and approaches: Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

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first chapter of this book. This strand of study had its own challenges with acknowledging the full (heterodox) pluralism of the Islamic tradition as well as with the historicity of certain genealogies, especially in view of questions and interests surround ʿAbduh's 'orthodoxy.' Samira Haj's proposal to conceptualize the Islamic tradition as dynamic certainly provides a potential remedy to these problems. Furthermore, her and others' 'Islamic' perspective on ʿAbduh is certainly valuable, necessary and currently underdeveloped. It is highly relevant in today's exclusionary Islamist politics to understand *that* ʿAbduh's thought fits in the dynamic Islamic tradition, and also what type of direction ʿAbduh's thought took within this tradition.

Yet, even then, the 'Islamic tradition-paradigm' on its own does not seem to suffice as an alternative. ʿAbduh's concept of 'reform' might serve to illustrate this point, especially as it was central to a *reform*ist thinker like ʿAbduh. Haj argues that his rationalization of Islamic reform originated in a "long-standing argument internal to Islamic tradition," in which *tajdīd* and *iṣlāḥ* were key concepts.[3] Similar to the more puritanical reformist thinker Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century, ʿAbduh made an effort to "redefine and reconfigure the religion in the light of the two most authoritative sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna."[4] For ʿAbduh and others, *iṣlāḥ* did not refer to just any redefinition, but to a necessary "correction" to the contemporaneously deficient situation of the Islamic religion. This correction might also be translated as a "restoration" as he claimed to revive the older (and 'true' or 'authentic') version of Islam with his reform. In making this argument, Haj seeks to refute the view that ʿAbduh's logic of reform originated in Enlightenment or Comtean thought, as Albert Hourani postulated in his famous study of Arabic thought.[5] ʿAbduh's ideas of reform should not be understood in connection to Auguste Comte, Haj argues, but as part of the Islamic tradition.

Yet, as much as ʿAbduh's concept of reform (*iṣlāḥ*) is part of a continuing Islamic intellectual discussion, it *also* gained meaning in the global intellectual field of which ʿAbduh was part and in which Europe and European thinkers were often dominant. Within the discussion surrounding Hanotaux, the term

3 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 73, see also 35. Haj describes that *iṣlāḥ* and *tajdīd* are used interchangeably in the Islamic tradition. I am under the impression that *iṣlāḥ* (as well as *muṣliḥ* for "reformist") is the term for Islamic reform that ʿAbduh himself most commonly uses, while *tajdīd* (as well as *mujaddid* for "renewer") is a term that Riḍā more "Hānūtū wa-l-Iṣlāḥ."commonly uses to describe ʿAbduh, very prominently for example in the introduction of his biography on ʿAbduh in which he portrays ʿAbduh as continuing the line of earlier Islamic *mujaddid*s. Riḍā, *Tārīkh*, 1:jīm.

4 Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 73.

5 Haj, 73.

iṣlāḥ was used in an Egyptian newspaper to translate the *development* Hanotaux desired for the Islamic world to reach progress and civilization.[6] With this term, Hanotaux meant to refer to a progressive process of secularization in the Muslim world. In particular, he alluded to the separation of religious and worldly authorities in Tunisia, a process which neatly aligned with the French colonial project he had in mind. In response, ʿAbduh and Riḍā also used the term *iṣlāḥ* to a type of reform aimed at progress and civilization, but their idea of 'reform' was of a religio-moral type and focussed on transforming people's Islamic values and beliefs. In another context, the same word '*iṣlāḥ*' was used by ʿAbduh himself as well as others, to designate the Protestant *reformation*, which he saw as indebted to the true spirit of Islam and which, in its true (Islamic) form, is an important factor in bringing about the scientific, progress-driven, autonomous mindset that is conducive to civilization.[7] In addition to this term being conceived as a motor of perpetual change within the Islamic tradition, then, *iṣlāḥ* also made sense in multiple ways in a global respect. These sets of meanings mutually informed each other in the conversation between ʿAbduh and his interlocutors, piling up in that one word *iṣlāḥ*.

This means that a diachronic perspective on ʿAbduh in an age-old and winding Islamic tradition, as proposed by Samira Haj, is certainly valuable but cannot completely substitute a synchronic perspective on ʿAbduh's thought and practice that focuses on the very real interlocutors in conversation with whom he formulated his ideas, always within a larger context in which European people, states, goods and ideas were hegemonic (yet not all-dominant). Focussing only on ʿAbduh's conceptualization of *iṣlāḥ* within a diachronic Islamic conversation would miss the contemporary meanings revealed in the interaction with Hanotaux or in the comparison with Protestantism. It would also fail to show what ʿAbduh's idea of *iṣlāḥ* meant within this global field, contesting and navigating secularist projects for the Muslim world which were often based on eurocentrist readings of history that saw the Reformation as a pivotal *and* uniquely European moment in the history of civilization.[8] Indeed, ʿAbduh was also part of a global discourse.

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6 Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," July 16, 1900; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," July 17, 1900; Taqlā, "Ḥadīth maʿa al-Musyū Hānūtū," July 19, 1900.

7 ʿAbduh, *Al-Aʿmāl al-Kāmila*, 2006, 3:491.

8 Samira Haj's analysis of ʿAbduh's responses to Hanotaux and Faraḥ Anṭūn combined as alternative trajectories of secularization actually show that she herself is certainly sensitive to the global framework in which ʿAbduh's ideas also participated and acted. Yet, she chooses to explicitly explain ʿAbduh's particular path only in relation to the Islamic tradition. Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 90–99.

Therefore, this book is a call to *also* continue the study of ʿAbduh within the synchronic, ultimately global context in which he formulated his ideas, instead of conceiving him only or predominantly as a modern part of an age-old Islamic conversation. This is important, because studying ʿAbduh only in conversation with his past Muslim interlocutors would postulate an unnecessary and unhistorical boundary between ʿAbduh and the non-Muslim contemporaries with whom he was in contact – or, indeed, even between 'Islam' and 'the West'.[9] "As a Muslim," to use Samira Haj's phrase, ʿAbduh viewed the relation between individual, community and state differently from his liberal contemporaries in Europe differently – while being just as modern.[10] Yet, this difference should not be conflated. "As a Muslim," ʿAbduh did not (and could not) retreat to an isolated island in a fast globalizing world – and he did not seem to have wanted this either. "As a Muslim," ʿAbduh was very much part of the conversations of his time, in which non-Muslims fulfilled dominant roles. He shared many ideas and concepts with his interlocutors around the globe, while he put forward his own particular configuration.

To be clear, this book is not a call to *only* write global histories of ʿAbduh's thought; it does not claim that this is the only valid approach. As said, it would be very useful to follow in Samira Haj's footsteps in studying ʿAbduh as part of a changing Islamic tradition. Indira Falk Gesink, in turn, adds another valuable perspective in her book *Islamic reform and conservativism* when she focuses on ʿAbduh's conservative Muslim counterparts.[11] She shows that they were not averse to change, as ʿAbduh's stories made historians to believe. These conservatives advocated a different type of change, yet were equally part of that contemporaneous context in which ʿAbduh's ideas were just one potential response to the challenges he and his Azhar colleagues faced. Indira Falk Gesink's book is a prime example of what a synchronic, yet more local approach to ʿAbduh's ideas and those in his context can yield.

After this plea for studying ʿAbduh also in a global context, the challenge remains *how* to study ʿAbduh's ideas as part of a globalizing world in which Europe was dominant without falling into the familiar traps of Westernization and eurocentrism. This book posits that this type of endeavor hinges on analytically acknowledging and historically documenting the *diversity* within the global framework. This emphasis upon diversity is pertinent to different yet interrelated aspects and levels of analysis. First, a *diversity of spatial contexts*, of

9 I feel quite sure this would certainly not be Samira Haj's intention, but it seems a very real implication of the type of critique she puts forward in her book on ʿAbduh.

10 Haj, 28.

11 Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*.

which the 'global' itself is obviously a relevant spatial layer. Zooming in on ʿAbduh's actual historical connections and interactions, this book shows how, in his world, the global invariably impacted on the local, and vice versa. *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, for instance, was conceived at a place where global ideas about morality and education were locally reconfigured at a new-style school in one of Beirut's new neighborhoods. In the discussion around Hanotaux to which ʿAbduh's reply made a central contribution, journalists in Cairo contended fiercely with each other over professional standards and numbers of readers, at the same time reflecting and employing the global rivalry between the colonizing powers of France and Britain. The global and local, the international and domestic, they were fundamentally entangled.

A second important facet of understanding ʿAbduh within a global history is acknowledging the *diversity of interlocutors*. ʿAbduh formulated his ideas in contact with many contemporary individuals, groups and intellectual movements, who were all part of this global framework, yet to varying degrees. His network often transgressed religious and ideological frontiers that have since become cemented. Indeed, his connections included people that might surprise his successors as well as his historians. This book exposes this type of diversity in ʿAbduh's contacts and network. It shows that, "as a Muslim," he shared many ideas about moral education with the Syrian Christian editors of *al-Muqtaṭaf* or Englishmen like Isaac Taylor or G.W. Leitner. In showing this diversity, this book stresses that ʿAbduh can and should be characterized as an 'Islamic' thinker – that is, thinking about Islam from within Islam,[12] but that being an 'Islamic' thinker does not imply that he formulated his ideas only in conversation with past and present Muslim thinkers. Very evidently, his interlocutors also included Christians as well as other non-Muslims.

This is important, too, because, compared to later standards, especially in a religious respect, important parts of ʿAbduh's web of contacts were quite controversial and perhaps even easily considered heterodox. A striking example is his intellectual friendship with the Syrian publicist Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra, who came from a Greek Orthodox background and who put forward a scripture-based unity of religions. Jibāra's universalist ideas about religion and about scripture were part of the intellectual context in which ʿAbduh formulated his ideas about Islam. Similarly, his visits to multi-confessional Masonic Lodges

12 Islam in the sense of a full repository of human actions and creations "that Muslims *acting as Muslims* have produced, and to which Muslims *acting as Muslims* have attached themselves." Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 356–57. Quote found through: Alireza Doostdar, "Review of Shahab Ahmed, 'What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic,'" *Shi'i Studies Review*, 2017, 273–78.

signal a dimension to his religious ideas that became sensitive in years to follow, at least shortly after his death.[13] Thus, ʿAbduh's concept of reform (*iṣlāḥ*), including his idea of a return to scripture within Islam, was developed in the proximity of Jibāra's pleas to return to scripture in order to acknowledge the unity of all revealed religion. Even though the two thinkers were certainly not in complete agreement and even though ʿAbduh's writings with regard to other religions (Christianity, most prominently) were often also of a quite divisive tone, it indicates a universalist dimension to ʿAbduh's religious thinking that should not be overlooked for the sake of salvaging him for orthodoxy.

Ideally, a study of the diversity of contemporary interlocutors and spatial contexts should also be matched with an analytical acknowledgment and documentation of the *diversity of intellectual traditions* on which ʿAbduh drew and to which he contributed. Due to its synchronic focus, this aspect is regretfully underdeveloped in this study – although it is touched upon every now and then. Chapter 4, for example, traces ʿAbduh's late-nineteenth-century idea of virtuous practice both to the eleventh-century thought of al-Ghazālī and the traditional coupling of *ʿilm* and *ʿamal*, as well to European theories of moral cultivation culminating in Samuel Smiles' work. ʿAbduh's use of the term of *iṣlāḥ* could very fruitfully be placed in a more diachronic perspective, too, tracing his particular use of the term within continuing discourses of reform, development and progress in the Islamic tradition (building forth on Samira Haj's work) as well as in European traditions.

Lastly, studying ʿAbduh in relation to intellectual globalization should acknowledge and record a *diversity of ideas* within a global framework. There was not one global way of thinking during ʿAbduh's time. Then and there (as well as here and now, for that matter), a degree of global convergence did not obliterate the existence of differences. As people like ʿAbduh put globally circulating ideas to actual use, there certainly was fierce disagreement as well as careful negotiation. Around the globe, ʿAbduh and his contemporaries configured global ideas in relation to multiple historical contexts and drew on local and preexistent ways of thinking.

This study heeds the diversity within processes of globalization by proposing an analytical model for documenting the generality as well as particularity of ʿAbduh's ideas through using the lens of *shared questions* and *diverging answers*. For this synchronic perspective, it does not matter who is or where lies

13 I am not the first to emphasize the importance of acknowledging these dimensions of his intellectual context (see: Sedgwick, *Muhammad Abduh*; Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*). In this conclusion, however, I want to emphasize the importance of acknowledging this and other types of diversity when studying ʿAbduh in a global context, without falling into the trap of Westernization.

the 'first source,' a specific time and place to which these global ideas were 'native' and 'authentic.' It does not trace a one-directional pattern of influence, indeed a pattern of 'Westernization' – even as more recent attempts, inspired by translation studies, allow for creativity in configuring this 'influence.'[14] This book seeks to understand what kind of act ʿAbduh's ideas and texts represented within a larger multi-directional conversation and what type of contribution he made. It does not focus on how he compares to others for the sake of comparison, which would reduce him to his relation to others. Even more importantly, it refrains from a sense of normativity in the writing of ʿAbduh's history, measuring ʿAbduh's ideas against those of his interlocutors. Unlike the many older approaches of Westernization, it does not wish to assume one way of global thinking as 'desirable,' 'original' or 'predestined' in the course of history. As Dyala Hamzah explained well, such an approach would only lead to identifying the ways in which his ideas were *lacking* and would leave us without a clear sense of what his ideas were *doing*.[15]

Thus focussing on shared questions and diverging answers when examining the historical sources, this study exposes the historical variety of ideas in ʿAbduh's world and positioned ʿAbduh amongst his interlocutors, while showing the ways their ideas converged at the same time. On the one hand, highlighting global intellectual convergence, the fourth and seventh chapters of this book identify several sets of questions that were *shared* in the contexts of two of ʿAbduh's texts. In the case of *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, the fourth chapter maps how ʿAbduh and his interlocutors' comparisons of Islam and Christianity responded to the shared question of how to uphold morality. Specifically, they jointly asked questions about the communal benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) of religions and the ways in which religions encourage action (or not). Furthermore, ʿAbduh and his interlocutors compared religions in response to questions about their relation to 'reason' (*ʿaql*), specifically with regard to the intellect's autonomy in matters of science and religion. In the case of ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux, the seventh chapter shows that ʿAbduh and his interlocutors commonly compared Islam and Christianity in relation to questions about 'progress' (*taqaddum*) and 'reform' (*iṣlāḥ*). More specifically, ʿAbduh, Hanotaux and others asked shared questions about how the relation between God and man is conceptualized in these two religions, what these doctrines' implied for a believer's activity in this world and, subsequently and most importantly, what this meant for the religions' suitability for progress. In addition, ʿAbduh and his interlocutors jointly asked how Islam and Christianity compared with

14 Elshakry, *Reading Darwin*.

15 Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh"; Hamzah, "Introduction."

regard to their configurations of the political and the religious. Specifically, they compared Islam and Christianity in relation to 'religious fanaticism' (*taʿaṣṣub dīnī*), 'the welfare of the fatherland' (*maṣlaḥat al-waṭan*), and 'reform' (*iṣlāḥ*). These were the questions that mattered to ʿAbduh, Hanotaux as well as many others in discussing religion.

Identifying these comparative questions reveals the coherence of the discussions and conversations of which the two texts were part. ʿAbduh and his interlocutors often gave varying answers to these questions, however, which highlights the *divergence* within a global framework. The fourth chapter exposes the way ʿAbduh's *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* was linked to his interlocutors' conceptualizations of 'religion' as generally conducive to a collectively beneficial morality. Yet, *unlike* some of his interlocutors, ʿAbduh considered the Islamic religion especially beneficial in a moral respect, more than any other religion. In addition, ʿAbduh was ambiguous as to the 'collective' that actually benefitted from this unique Islamic morality; he did not make it clear if it was the Muslim community or the multi-confessional 'fatherland' (*waṭan*) that some of his interlocutors in Beirut wished to defend. In addition, his answers to globally shared questions were often quite different from those of many of the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) of that time – in direct contestation even. Indeed, in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd,* his reinterpretation of Islam as conducive to intellectual autonomy was based on its rejection of the blind following of religious authorities (*taqlīd*). In rejecting *taqlīd*, he posited himself directly against many of the religious scholars of that time, as they practiced and defended *taqlīd*.

Furthermore, in his reply to Hanotaux, the particularity of ʿAbduh's ideas-as-acts in relation to those of his interlocutors is evident in ʿAbduh's inversion of Hanotaux's assessment of the Islamic doctrines' activating qualities. Islamic conceptions of transcendence as well as of *qadar* did not struck believers with fatalism, as Hanotaux claimed, but actually encouraged believers to strive and to engage in science, according to ʿAbduh. The seventh chapter shows that ʿAbduh did not contest Hanotaux's interpretation of the importance of activity and striving; he only contested the way Hanotaux related Islam to these qualities. Similarly, in debate with *al-Ahrām*'s editor Bishāra Taqlā, ʿAbduh and others tried to demonstrate Islam's compatibility with the 'interest of the fatherland' by claiming Islam's rejection of 'religious fanaticism.' In this sense, the seventh chapter demonstrates that Taqlā and ʿAbduh both agreed on the importance of both the fatherland and of tolerance, but differed in their assessment of what this meant for Islam. Lastly, as we have briefly touched upon before in this conclusion, ʿAbduh argued for the importance of an Islamic religio-moral reform (*iṣlāḥ*), led by the caliph, in obtaining progress for all Muslims. This interpretation of *iṣlāḥ* directly contested the way Hanotaux defined

the reform (for which the Arabic word *iṣlāḥ* was used in translation) he considered necessary for the Muslim world.

In this way, ʿAbduh's answers contested and negotiated the answers of his interlocutors, at the same time as they shared many of the same presuppositions, such as a general desire for change (*iṣlāḥ*). His answers were related to those of his interlocutors but should not be reduced to this relation or (normatively) measured against the ideas of his interlocutors. At times, his answer stood in fierce contestation with those of others; at other times, his answer latched onto the answers given by others, diverging only slightly.

A final aspect of this study's approach is that it takes care to document these and other types of diversity within a global framework *historically* and therefore mainly draws on sources contemporary to ʿAbduh. So, while ʿAbduh's ideas of *iṣlāḥ* might indeed be reminiscent of either Ibn Taymiyya as well as Auguste Comte, this study focuses on the actual conversations ʿAbduh actually *had* about *iṣlāḥ*. Instead of identifying similarities and insinuating influences, this book highlights his actual connections with people as varied as Gabriel Hanotaux, Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra, Rashīd Riḍā, and Bishāra Taqlā.

Given its selections of texts and contexts, albeit inevitable, this book's conclusions are always limited. The relational meaning of ʿAbduh's ideas set forth in this study applies to the two selected texts in relation to the selection of interlocutors. Other selections would yield additional and perhaps contradictory meanings. The commencing full-text digitization of nineteenth-century Arabic sources would offer possibilities in this respect, as it would, for example, enable the historian to search for key words (for example *tahdhīb*) across a very large corpus of sources, map these quantitatively, in addition to qualitatively interpreting a selection of these. In addition, the contextualised study of other works of ʿAbduh would provide an opportunity for how these texts by ʿAbduh relate to other texts of the same author. A proper contextualized study of one of ʿAbduh's earlier works, such as the *Taʿlīqāt ʿalā Sharḥ al-Dāwānī li-l-ʿAqāʾid al-ʿAḍudiyya* (Glosses on the commentary of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dāwānī)), might yield additional layers, especially in comparison with *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. It might show the shifting ways ʿAbduh configured the Islamic tradition. While these limitations and objections make clear that this study cannot provide a new interpretation of ʿAbduh's *oeuvre* or *persona* as a whole, this study does offer a balanced and empirical insight into how religion was conceptualized in a global field by ʿAbduh and his interlocutors.

2 The Concept of Religion in a Globalizing World

In ʿAbduh's time (and probably before and after that, too), 'religion' was one of the key concepts to make sense of the world. It was also central to many endeavors that aimed at bending and controlling the world's affairs; indeed, to both "Orientalists" and "Islamists," to mirror Dietrich Jung's way of labeling the people behind the European colonial imagination and those aiming at an Islamic revival.[16] They used the concept of 'religion' as if it were universally applicable and simultaneously (and strategically) employed it to differentiate the world's religions. It was a concept, too, that reflected, produced and contested power relations. Many scholars have pointed out how Orientalists, colonial officials and travellers' use of it (consciously or unconsciously) excluded the religious from public power and construed similarities and differences between religions.[17] Vice versa, Islamists conceptualized 'religion' in order to mirror and procure the inclusion of a religion within the realms of power, again relying on a play of similarity and difference to back this up with. As history tends to resist clear-cut categorizations, there were many in-between options, meandering back and forth or venturing beyond this simplified description.

This study captures some of the various ways in which religion was conceptualized at the turn of the twentieth century by mapping and interpreting the ways ʿAbduh and his interlocutors conceptualized religion. While ʿAbduh's long-distance, global connections indicated that his conceptualizations were related to those of his interlocutors, part of a global conceptual field, their conceptualizations of religion varied and differed – sometimes slightly and other times heavily. They were similar *and* different to each other; or, a reponse to common questions, but with different answers. These answers contested each other, negotiated with each other, *interacted* with each other. With his specific conceptualization of religion, of Islam as a religion, ʿAbduh acted within this conceptual field.

The specific ways ʿAbduh and his interlocutors conceptualized 'religion' across familiar geographical, cultural, political, and religious boundaries expose a number of important, surprising or clarifying mechanisms and characteristics, which could very well be pertinent to the globalization of the concept of religion more in general in this period.

16 Jung, *Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere.*

17 For example: King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Veer, *Imperial Encounters*; Fitzgerald, *Religion and the Secular*; Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*; Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire*; Ahmed, *Reform and Modernity in Islam*.

For example, the fifth and eighth chapters of this book demonstrate how ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of 'religion' and 'the religions' – in reply to a globally shared question about the relations between religions – revealed a versatile "play of similarity and difference" between the religions, in which the assertion of the superiority of Islam quickly alternated with the similarity of Islam to other religions.[18] In his writings, ʿAbduh certainly emphasized the similarity between Islam and other religions, reflecting an intellectual milieu of intellectual societies and Masonic lodges in which universalist conceptions of religion were quite common. Yet, as is evident in his polemic with Hanotaux, at other times he highlighted difference. Similarly, ʿAbduh played with commonality and difference within his conceptualization of Islam. Theologically, ʿAbduh conceptualized true Islam as one and united as the religion of God, reflecting his desire to unite Muslims theologically as well as politically. At the same time, this true version of Islam did not include the corrupted Islam of many of his Muslim contemporaries, according to him – an act of exclusion that reflected the harsh conflicts he had with several of them. ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of religion (as well as those of his interlocutors) thus show a constant alternation between identifying similarities and differences between religions, drawing upon both theological and anthropological frameworks.

This book also concludes that this alternation, and the ambiguity that sometimes resulted, reflected the co-existence of discourses that emphasized difference and those that emphasized similarity, each related to specific political interests. ʿAbduh's play of similarity and difference in conceptualizing religion mirrored the diversity of the discussions in his milieu and the negotiations he had with his very diverse interlocutors. His assertions of the superiority of Islam related to his desire to defend Islam against Christianity in a colonial context, among other things. His response to Gabriel Hanotaux should be seen in this light. On the other hand, his emphasis on Islam's similarity to other religions matched his and his interlocutors' ambition to establish inter-confessional communal harmony in the context of the *waṭan*, for example, fitting in with discourses around the Sulṭāniyya School. ʿAbduh (or his interlocutors) did not continuously express one particular configuration between the religions, but presented a range of options – whether this was conscious and strategic, or not. The exact balance struck between identifying similarity or difference between Islam and other religions seems to have relied on the specific occasion and his interests therein, on the specific conversation his answer was meant to contribute to. [19]

18 Chidester, *Savage Systems*, 265.

19 Cf. Chidester on the politically strategic "discovery" of 'religion' in South Africa or the denial thereof. Chidester, *Savage Systems*.

Further, ʿAbduh's conceptualizations of the hierarchical relations between Islam and other religions were intricately connected to his efforts to relate the Islamic religion to, first, reason (*al-ʿaql*) and, second, a public role in procuring progress and civilization, responding to contemporaneously and globally shared questions about religion in a time of great change. The similarities and differences he imagined to exist between Islam and the other religions reinforced his interpretation of Islam's relation to reason as well as the progressive role he envisioned for Islam in communal matters, as the fifth and eighth chapter make clear. These chapters underscore that comparison was central to conceptualizations of a particular religion in this time of globalization, not only for armchair philologists but also for ʿAbduh and other religious intellectuals and activists.

ʿAbduh's postulation of an evolutionary difference between Islam and the other religions in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* serves as an example of how ʿAbduh used comparison to conceive of the relationship between Islam and reason. Here, ʿAbduh attributes full rationality only to the community that received the Quran and not to those who had received earlier revelations. In the same text, he also tries to defend Islam's worth in processes of science-based civilization by emphasizing its similarity to another religion: Protestantism. According to ʿAbduh, Islam and Protestantism have been alike in conducing intellectual autonomy and in their common rejection of blindly following previous religious authorities. It is this similarity to Protestantism (or, actually, Protestantism's similarity to Islam) that made Islam so particularly apt for civilization and progress. Another example of his use of comparison in order to reinterpret Islam is found in his reply to Hanotaux. Here, ʿAbduh highlights Islam's difference with Catholicism in order to defend Islam's role in communal matters in the person of the sultan. Since the caliph was so *unlike* the pope, ʿAbduh argues that he did not problematically merge religious with political authority. In this case, the comparison and postulation of difference with another religion reinforces ʿAbduh's vision of Islam's public role.

At other times, however, ʿAbduh did not compare Islam with another religion, but rather considered Islam's relation to the category of religion. In *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, for example, ʿAbduh aims to prove Islam's relevance in communal affairs by referring to its moral worth *as a religion*, as part of what Islam shares with all other entities in the category of religion. Similar to many of his contemporaries, he claimed that this moral and collectively beneficial worth was a typical function of religion and one that reason could not take on effectively. In his reply to Hanotaux, he uses this similarity between the religions by referring to examples where Christians helped each other to uphold their religion in order to clarify and justify the role of the caliph. According to ʿAbduh,

the caliph had a moral role just like other religious representatives had moral roles in guiding their believers.

Yet, while employing the moral use of religion as a category at some times, he switched to emphasize Islam's difference to the other religions in a moral respect at other times. In both *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* and his reply to Hanotaux, ʿAbduh considers Islam's doctrines as *especially* conducive to community-oriented and action-oriented virtues that would result in progress – often in comparison with and contrast to those virtues he attributed to Christianity. Precisely because of Islam's special virtues, it was so important and relevant for the caliph to have a religio-moral role reforming the Muslim community as a whole. In thus arguing for Islam's special moral worth, ʿAbduh reversed Hanotaux's assessment of Islam as especially fatalistic in comparison with Christianity. In addition, with his emphasis on the moral role of the caliph, he opposed Hanotaux' straight-forward relegation of Islam to the non-political sphere.

In reinterpreting Islam as a religion that was morally meritorious because it instilled collectively beneficial, activating, and progress-oriented virtues, ʿAbduh did not only oppose the assessments of Hanotaux and other non-Muslims. He also distanced himself from the Islam of many of his contemporaries and the authorities upholding it. According to him, their interpretation of doctrines such as *qadar* did not engender an active attitude and were thus of no use in procuring the desired reform and thus progress (*iṣlāḥ*) of the community. Similarly, in reinterpreting Islam as a uniquely rational religion because of its lack of religious authorities (except for God), ʿAbduh excluded the existing religious authorities in Islam (the Islamic scholars: the *ʿulamāʾ*) and conceived of them as an obstacle of irrationality and backwardness on the path towards civilization.[20]

It is clear that ʿAbduh's ideas about Islam 'as a religion' were born in and gained meaning through the interaction with his interlocutors. His answers to global questions about Islam in relation to reason and its public role represented navigations, contestations and negotiations in the global intellectual field, just as the definitions of Hanotaux, Bishāra Taqlā, Khrīsṭufūrus Jibāra or ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī represented others. This field, moreover, was intricately connected to the global and local politics of that time. ʿAbduh's ideas were not distant or purely theoretical observations of Islam, if ever possible; they were *acts*. ʿAbduh's words on religion (like those of Hanotaux and other interlocutors) responded to the world. And he intended for his ideas to have an impact on this world. In this sense, this study reiterates the insights generated by the aforementioned scholars Richard King, David Chidester or Timothy

20 Cf. Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, chaps. 3–4.

Fitzgerald that conceptualizations of religion and the comparisons between religion that are so foundational to these conceptualizations are always intricately related to the political.[21]

Reconfigurations of the religious and the secular in a time of increasing globalization might be one last way of looking at the results of this study. The alternating configurations of this relation by ʿAbduh as well as his interlocutors could be considered illustrative of the multitude of conceptualizations of the relationship between the religious and the secular, or the non-religious. In this sense, this book joins an overwhelming number of studies that counter the idea that there is a singular global process of secularization, a single configuration of the religious and the non-religious, in which the religious is expected to retreat to its private realm where it is mainly concerned with the supernatural, separated from the public domains of state and society in which only rational and natural knowledge mattered.[22] As with the 'Westernization'-paradigm, it is widely acknowledged that the 'secularization'-paradigm is simply too normative and teleological to be productive (also within Europe, for that matter). Yet, such a particular, implicitly normative, and Protestant conceptual configuration of the religious and the non-religious is still what many people (and academics are people, too) generally have in mind.[23] Instead, however, this study considers the ideas of ʿAbduh and others as representing various ways of secularization, of configuring the religious and the secular, in the sense that they all dealt with questions about the relation between religion, reason and nature as well as the relation between religion and public affairs. These were the global questions of their time. Yet they gave different, sometimes even opposing answers. In a way, in short, this study reinforces Marion Eggert and Lucian Hölscher's conclusion in their volume on *Religion and Secularity*: "[G]lobalized secularization means nothing other than diversified secularization."[24]

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21 For example: King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Veer, *Imperial Encounters*; Fitzgerald, *Religion and the Secular*; Gottschalk, *Religion, Science, and Empire*.

22 King, *Orientalism and Religion*; Fitzgerald, *Ideology of Religious Studies*; Veer, *Imperial Encounters*; Asad, *Formations of the Secular*; Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*; Bock, Feuchter, and Knecht, *Religion and Its Other*; Dressler and Mandair, *Secularism and Religion-Making*; Nongbri, *Before Religion*.

23 Cf. Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 18.

24 Hölscher and Eggert, *Religion and Secularity*, 7. Cf. Haj on ʿAbduh's objections to the European path of secularization instead of to secular forms of power, per se. Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 96. Somewhat similarly, ʿAbduh's many contestations with some of his Muslim contemporaries may be considered exemplary of the historical diversity within the Islamic tradition. He and his Muslim contemporaries used key concepts in the Islamic tradition to contest each other, such as *bidʿa* (innovation) and *iṣlāḥ* (reform; correction); they invoked and fought over sources and structures of authority that are

3 And Further

In 1902, two years after his polemic with Hanotaux, ʿAbduh wrote a rejoinder to Faraḥ Anṭūn's depiction of the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126–1198). In an article printed in his journal *al-Jāmiʿa*, Anṭūn had presented Ibn Rushd as a materialist hero of science and civilization, drawing upon the work of the French scholar Ernest Renan, amongst others. Part of Anṭūn's article was a two-page reflection on the persecution of Ibn Rushd for his philosophical viewpoints, in which Anṭūn comparatively assesses Islam and Christianity's tolerance towards science and philosophy. He concludes that Christianity is not so much more tolerant than Islam regarding science and philosophy, but that Christianity lacks the worldly power to repress science and philosophy because of the Biblical command "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21) which, according to Anṭūn, entailed the separation of religious and worldly authorities. He finds proof in the the flourishing of philosophy and science in Europe at that time, which can only be a result of their circumvention of the intrinsic repressive tendencies of the Church. Science and philosophy then eventually led to modern civilization (*al-tamaddun al-ḥadīth*), according to Anṭūn, which the contemporary Islamic world lacks.[25]

In a series of six articles in *Al-Manār*, later compiled under the title *al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya maʿa l-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya* (or shortened: *al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya*), ʿAbduh is keen on disproving that, first, the respective natures of Islam and Christianity render Islam less tolerant towards science than Christianity and, secondly, that the contemporary civilization in Europe and lack thereof in the Islamic world are proof of this.[26] ʿAbduh's comparison between

integral to the Islamic tradition, such as *taqlīd,* the Quran, and the *ḥadīth*-collections, thereby showing that, in the words of Daniel Brown, "tradition is not an enemy of change, but the very stuff that is subject to change." Brown, *Rethinking Tradition*, 2.

25 Faraḥ Anṭūn, "Tārīkh Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuhu," *Al-Jāmiʿa*, June 8, 1902, 537–38; Faraḥ Anṭūn, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuhu*, ed. Ṭayyib Al-Tīzīnī (1988; repr., Bayrūt: Dār al-Farābī, 2007), 225–27.

26 This series of six articles was actually preceded by yet another article, normally excluded from the compilation *Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya*. In this first article, ʿAbduh responds to Anṭūn's contention that Ibn Rushd's rationalist philosophy was akin to that of a materialist. In response, ʿAbduh explains the various positions of Muslim theologians on existence in order to demonstrate that Ibn Rushd's philosophy was not akin to that of a materialist. According to ʿAbduh, Ibn Rushd was a theist. So, while Ibn Rushd was celebrated as a materialist hero by Anṭūn (and an Aryan hero by Renan), ʿAbduh presented Ibn Rushd as a Muslim hero, proving that Islam and science were compatible indeed. In this sense, ʿAbduh's first article on Ibn Rushd matches the six later articles that are commonly included in the collection *Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya maʿa l-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya*. See:

the foundations (*uṣūl*) of Islam and Christianity made clear that, in his analysis, not Islam but Christianity was less equipped for science, that history had made this abundantly clear and that the current civilization was not indebted to Christianity but to the lack thereof. *Vice versa*, the current state of Muslims did not indicate Islam's incompatibility with science. It indicated, rather, the absence of true Islam, one that was by its doctrinal foundations very sympathetic to science and progress. ʿAbduh's refutation of Anṭūn's analysis falls in two parts: the first concerning the doctrinal nature of the two religions and the second concerning the complicated relation between the religions' respective natures and their empirical realities, past and present.[27] For this last part, especially, ʿAbduh made extensive use of the works of European and American writers such as William Draper, François Guizot and Gustave Le Bon.

Historian Donald Reid correctly points out that, despite their differences in this vehement polemic, Anṭūn and ʿAbduh actually also shared many of their presumptions and ideals, certainly vis-à-vis those groups of people who did not want change to the extent that Anṭūn and ʿAbduh wanted.[28] They both agreed on the pivotal need for science and civilization and the importance of tolerance in the East. Yet the two men disagreed about the route towards progress, science and civilization and the role of religion – and particularly the Islamic religion – therein. Anṭūn's assessment of the difference between Islam and Christianity fitted his conviction of the need for a secularist separation between church and state, which he considered to have been key to Europe's flourishing at that time. Anṭūn elaborates on this conviction in his work *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuhu*, published in 1903. In his response to Anṭūn and those who similarly proclaimed the futile and even harmful role of Islam in the process of acquiring progress and civilization, ʿAbduh, on the other hand, defends

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Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Daf' Wahm ʿan Falsafat Ibn Rushd wa-l-Mutakallimīn," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 10 (August 20, 1902): 364–80. On ʿAbduh, Anṭūn and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), see: Von Kügelgen, *Averroes und die arabische Moderne*, p. 65–98.

27 ʿAbduh, "Al-Radd ʿalā Faraḥ Anṭūn." This is a compilation of the following original articles: Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Iḍṭihād fī l-Naṣrāniyya wa-l-Islām," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 11 (September 4, 1902): 401–34; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya. Maʿa l-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 12 (September 19, 1902): 441–65; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya. Maʿa l-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 13 (October 3, 1902): 481–95; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Islām Al-Yawm – Aw Lā Iḥtijāj bi-l-Muslimīn ʿalā-l-Islām," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 13 (October 3, 1902): 496–501; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya. Maʿa l-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 14 (October 18, 1902): 521–45; Muḥammad ʿAbduh, "Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya. Maʿa l-ʿIlm wa-l-Madaniyya," *Al-Manār* 5, no. 15 (November 1, 1902): 561–80.

28 Donald Malcolm Reid, *The Odyssey of Faraḥ Anṭūn: A Syrian Christian's Quest for Secularism*, Studies in Middle Eastern History No. 2 (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1975), 87–89.

the continuing relevance of Islam in modern times with an exposition of Islam and its history. ʿAbduh's analysis then was intended to prove Islam's compatibility with science and tolerance and demonstrate its civilizational potential. He writes: "Islam will never be an obstacle on the road to civilization (*al-madanīyya*), rather it will polish it and cleanse its dirt, and civilization will be amongst [Islam's] most powerful supporters when [civilization] comes to know [Islam] and the people [of Islam] come to know [civilization]."[29]

The conversation between Anṭūn and ʿAbduh, like those interactions that were the subject of this book, were part of the global field in which 'religion' and Islam as a religion were conceptualized. In this example, one might say that ʿAbduh and Anṭūn shared a set of interrelated questions, founded upon a shared concern for science, tolerance and progress: What is the relation between religion (or a specific religion) and science? What is the relation between religion (or a specific religion) and tolerance? What is the relation between religion (or a specific religion) and science- and tolerance-powered processes of civilization and progress? These questions, moreover, were very similar to those answered in ʿAbduh's reply to Hanotaux and in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*. This example also illustrates the variety of answers that were given to globally shared questions, as ʿAbduh and Anṭūn clearly disagreed on the position religion could and should have in the progresssive development of Egypt, the Muslim world or the East. These differences of opinion do not indicate that one is more 'Westernized' than the other; they were simply different answers to global questions and different voices in a global conversation. In this sense, the example of the polemic between Anṭūn and ʿAbduh reinforces this book's call to study ʿAbduh within a globalizing world in a way that acknowledges a great degree of diversity and differentiation without overlooking what was actually shared.

ʿAbduh's comparisons of Islam and Christianity in response to Anṭūn's assessment also reiterate some of this study's insights about the globalizing concept of religion. In *al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrānīyya*, ʿAbduh portrays Christianity as quite different from Islam, and clearly inferior to the way ʿAbduh depicts Islam in matters of science and civilization. Christianity is irrational, intolerant and unscientific. According to ʿAbduh's analysis, Islam is better equipped for the values and attitudes that are needed to obtain progress and civilization than Christianity. Compared with the chronologically earlier works that were the subject of this study (i.e. his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, conceived at the end of the 1880s and published in 1897–8, and his polemic with Hanotaux in 1900), his elaborate and quite harsh treatment of Christianity in *Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrānīyya*

29 ʿAbduh, "Al-Radd ʿalā Faraḥ Anṭūn," 354.

is much more explict. He lists the tenets of Christianity and contrasts them very directly with those of Islam in view of their compatibility with science and civilization, even as he also, in the same text, explicitly praises interreligious tolerance and defends Islam's doctrinal and empirical tolerance towards other religions and convictions. In addition, here too, ʿAbduh adds that his assessment of Christianity applies to what Christianity had become, not what it originally was, reiterating the Qur'an-based doctrine that the original message of the Prophet Jesus was of divine origin and thus (essentially) the same as that of the Prophet Muḥammad.[30] As has been described in this study, it seems to have been common for ʿAbduh (and others) to alternate between highlighting differences or similarities, even in the same work, and using both non-theological and theological grammars to do so.

The example of ʿAbduh's reply to Anṭūn further reiterates that ʿAbduh's comparative assessments directly responded to the assessments of others as well as to the politics of the world he inhabited. ʿAbduh compared Islam and Christianity doctrinally and empirically in *Al-Islām wa-l-Naṣrāniyya* in order to demonstrate Islam's civilizational potential and its continuing relevance in the modern world. In doing so, he opposed the need for a separation of religious and worldly authorities that Anṭūn (but also Hanotaux and Bishāra Taqlā) considered desirable and that Anṭūn at his turn defended relying upon his assessment of the respective natures and histories of Islam and Christianity. In this sense, ʿAbduh and others' conceptualizations of Islam as a religion should be considered *moves* in a game of politics in which they all participated in one way or the other.

The questions ʿAbduh and his interlocutors asked have been answered in many ways since then. Their successors provided similar or new answers, and also added new shared questions. Partly, ʿAbduh's twentieth-century successors gave answers to questions to which ʿAbduh himself only gave ambiguous answers or which he responded to implicitly or left unanswered. We have encountered moments of ambiguity and absence several times in ʿAbduh's work. For example, he was silent about how he specifically configured personal ethics with law or about how his desire for Islamic uniformity was compatible with his emphasis on religious autonomy. Similarly, his views on the relation between religion and the state remain unclear, for example his thoughts on the state's role in imposing a certain type of religion as well as the state's position towards its non-Muslim citizens. This type of ambiguity is not productively explained as a sign of failure, though. Perhaps the underlying questions about the nature of Islamic Law and the relation between religion and state were not

30 ʿAbduh, 296–98.

yet relevant to ʿAbduh's time; or, perhaps ʿAbduh's ambiguity and silence should be explained as strategic acts. It is clear, however, that his successors' subsequent responses to these questions diverged amongst themselves, resulting in disagreement, debate, and contestation. In this way, ʿAbduh may be seen to have (implicitly) postulated some of the questions that those in charge of his legacy came to vehemently discuss and disagree over, causing his successors to go separate ways.[31]

31 Cf. Dyala Hamzah's concluding assessment: "Le legs de ʿAbduh, c'est cela, c'est d'avoir contribué à jeter les fondations de la délibération, et, ce faisant, de s'être effacé ou abîmé dans la pluralité des messages." Hamzah, "La pensée de ʿAbduh," 49.

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