

Chapter 1

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH AIMS

1.1.1 Background

The history and philosophy of science serves as the disciplinary background and resource to be drawn upon in conducting this study. It looks at the evolution of science from a historical and philosophical point of view.¹ In this study, the discourse on science, Islam and modernity in the nineteenth century, is thus seen against the background of the history and philosophy of science, and its cultural context. This study is an attempt to provide an account of the debate on Islam and modern science in the 19th century, as found in the exchange between Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Ernest Renan on science and Islam.

The Discourse on Science, Islam and Modernity in 19th Century Thought: Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's Exchange with Ernest Renan as a Case-Study is a discourse on the relationship between Islam and modern science based on the debate between al-Afghani and Ernest Renan who accused Islam like other religions of stifling scientific development. Al-Afghani's response to Renan's polemic against Islam was the first response by a Muslim scholar in the modern era. Islam is not related only to science but the whole of modern knowledge along with its methodologies and premises. It has since become the focus of a discourse that has far-reaching implications due to

the stance involved. As a result, it has affected as well as undermined the very essence of Islam as a way of life.

According to al-Afghani as opposed to Ernest Renan a renowned French most vocal anti-religion philosopher of the nineteenth century, the study of science originated from the Islamic world and Islamic science. Thus, Islam had paved the way to the Western subsequent accumulation of scientific knowledge and the domination of Islamic world by the West. Through this standpoint, al-Afghani tried to transform the universal beliefs in Islam and its religious practices. Islam had by then, based on its very foundations turned into an ideological tool to revive and unify Muslims against the predominant Western thought.

1.1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Since this research is geared towards providing an inclusive relation between science, Islam and modernity in 19th century, the main objectives therefore are as follows:

- i. to elaborate on Al-Afghani's response to Renan's accusation of Islam as a religion that had stifled scientific development, like the other religions.
- ii. to expound al-Afghani's response as found in his "*Answer to Renan*", in response to Renan's irrational portrayal of Islam;
- iii. to examine the significance of al-Afghani's deliberation on the study of science and modernity in the 19th century; and
- iv. to study al-Afghani's pursuit to reform the beliefs pertaining to Islam and its religious practices as opposed to Renan's impulsiveness.

1.1.3 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The choice of the topic is based on several observations and importance:

- i. This study is an attempt to provide an account of the discourse on Islam and modern science, through a historical study of the exchange between al-Afghani and Renan. The study is based on the assumption that the current debate on Islam and science can be presented through the description and analysis of the renowned academicians.

- ii. On a relatively smaller scale the revealing clash between the secular premises of modern science and the traditional Islamic worldview was brought home to Muslim intellectuals with the publication of Renan's famous lecture, "*L'Islamisme et la Science*" in Sorbonne, 1883, in which he strongly argued about the Muslims' irrationality and inability in contributing to science. However, nowadays, Renan's quasi-racist attacks on the Islamic faith and his crude promulgation of positivism on Islam carry very little weight. It was however an eye opener for the Muslim intelligentsia. By now, they are more conscious about the way Western science achievements were portrayed. Spearheaded by the efforts of al-Afghani, the present Muslim men took upon themselves the task of responding to what they considered a distortion of modern science by several anti-religious philosophers, thus creating a significant discourse on modern science. As we shall elaborate further on, al-Afghani *inter alia*, came to epitomize the mindset of his time when his historical defense against Renan was based on the assumption that there could be no clash between religion and science. In fact, the modern Western science was nothing more than the original true Islamic science being shipped to the Westerners via the Renaissance and Enlightenment by the Islamic world.
- iii. The contemporary Islamic discourses and their relation to modernity have been greatly influenced by al-Afghani. For this reason an analysis of his comprehensive thought is enlightening in coming to terms with numerous contemporary issues. In al-Afghani's discourse, the dual encounter with modernity takes a slightly different form. In reality, he created two discourses. The first; was what he considered as the enlightened elite in Islamic societies. It

is based on the principles of individual subjectivity that was avowed in a number of concepts, namely critical thinking. He also developed a parallel discourse which was more appealing to the masses, known as the Islamic revival movement. The movement was motivated by his anti-imperialist goals, of which in many ways were a sharp contrast to his first critical discourse. Still, al-Afghani was an outstanding figure in the process of Islamic revivalism. Today, this movement is confronted with waves of new challenges, though, that require new responses. Nonetheless, its main preoccupation is still similar to that of al-Afghani. The movement is ordained to determine a new position of Islam in the modern world; a bi-sided challenge comprising copious explanations about the relations between:

- a. Islamic thought and modernity; and
- b. Muslim world and Western civilization that entail a study on al-Afghani-Renan exchanges and their polemics on Islam, science and modernity.

Hence, the transpired explanations could well prepare Muslims for yet another endless and gruesome face-off with the Western modern-day challenges.

1.1.4 METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This study will employ a combination of methodologies, chiefly the principles of Islamic worldview, especially on Islamic science and modern Western science, and secondly, the analysis and qualitative content analysis.

The methods in use would be premised on the Islamic viewpoint that concords to the philosophical and ideological comparative studies between West and East, as well as between Islam and Western rationalism; a dichotomy of ideas and civilizations perpetuated by the history and clashes between Muslims scholars in the likes of al-Afghani and his followers, namely Muhammad Abduh, Ahmad Amin, Mustafa Abdul Raziq, Rashid Rida, Muhammad Iqbal, Zaki Badawi, Said Nursi and Farid Wajdi who echoed al-Afghani's voice and thoughts in one hand and the Western scholars, particularly Ernest Renan, Ignaz Goldziher and Toby Huff who on the other hand, had been working their socks off against Islam. Thus, the historical outlook underlining this research is based on researcher's investigations and findings since the related attitude and technique engaged by the researcher derived from one of the greatest literary and academic disciplines-history.²

In other words, this study is a multi-disciplinary approach which attempts to integrate different approaches, such as comparative philosophy, history of ideas, historiography, field of research and bibliographical research; a mixture of a modest discourse that focuses on contemporary Islamic thoughts and also Islamic responses to modern challenges.³

Here, the whole dissertation of Islamic and Western thoughts written by two prominent scholars, notably al-Afghani and Renan, along with others, would be

scrutinized, dissected and examined within the parameter of conflicts between two agonized civilizations.

1.1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter One is a synopsis pertaining to the circumference of the investigation that discusses the topic, objectives, methodologies, importance, and work schedule. This chapter serves as an introductory and supplemented by preliminary remarks on the studies.

Chapter Two is a prelude to the discourse on science, Islam and modernity. It summarizes a comprehensive background of Islamic world and Western civilization, especially in relation to science, Islam and the 19th century modernity that coincides with the early development of the aforementioned modern era conflicts. This chapter also emphasizes on the encounters between Islamic and Western thoughts that have dominated the century, triggered by the exchanges between Sayyid Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani and Ernest Renan.

Chapter Three is about *Sayyid Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani's* religious, political and philosophical *intellectual biography (1838-1897 A.D.)* that precipitated him as a revivalist Muslim.

Chapter Four zeroes in on Ernest Renan's religious-philosophical ideologies intellectual biography (1823-1892 A.D.) that has enabled him to be seen as a Western positivist-Christian and a new Enlightenment 19th century philosopher. Among European scholars especially French writers of the nineteenth century who aroused

special interest were Ernest Renan. This is mainly due to his dominant position in French thought and his thesis concerning the decline of Islamic science. This chapter presents arguments that the decline of Islamic science thesis by Renan and other Western scholars was a scholarly error that was remarkably persistent despite the availability of contrary evidence and the attention of ever-growing numbers of concerned scholars. In the absence of an alternative explanation, the thesis acquired the status of a paradigm; an analytical model that achieved circulation even though it did not bear facts. A thoughtful reading of Ibn Khaldun and other Muslim scholars' works would have forced rejection, or at least alteration of the much-touted thesis. Based on substantial findings, scholars like Saliba, Nasr, and Ziauddin Sadr, Mustafa 'Abd al-Razziq and Sabra have rejected the basic claims of the decline thesis.

Chapter Five is a case study that analyzes the exchanges between al-Afghani and Renan about science, Islam, and modernity. In so doing, the chapter addresses the following:

- i. Renan's Famous Lecture on "*Islam and Science*" that was first delivered at the Sorbonne which was published in *Journal des Debats*, March, 1883 and the rejoinder of Al-Afghani, in May 18, 1883; complete with annotation, commentary and elaboration;
- ii. The significance of al-Afghani's arguments that depicts Muslims and Christians' attitudes towards science and technology. It is also about Arab-Muslims' historical position and contribution towards philosophy and science. Islamic compatibility and affability that glorifies scientific spirit are included, too;

- iii. A survey on Western perspective and attitude towards the Islamic world and its civilization with special attention given to Renan's thought and attitude on religion and modernity. Thus, it leads to the reconstruction of Islamic thinking regarding science and modernity with reference to Al-Afghani's 19th century Islamic revivalism; and is a conclusion that summates the exchange between al-Afghani's and Renan in 1883 and a further exploration on Islam and the West that has opened a passage way to a new image and approach depicting a civilization dialogue and a clash of civilization.

Chapter 6: This chapter summarizes the studies that concentrate on the exchange of idea or enlightened dialogues between al-Afghani and Renan in Paris, 1883. In fact, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani or Asadabadi represents 19th century Islamic scholars who have championed the return of *ummah* to the original Islamic appreciation that has been cited as the Islamic Revivalism Movement, whilst Ernest Renan is represents the Positivism mainstream that has become Western main phenomenal thinking during the Post Crusade War and Post Medieval Europe. Thus, the 19h century clash between the two main schools of thought is caused by the two prominent scholars in *Journal des Debats*. The allegation by Renan that Islam is against scientific development and the Arabs do not contribute anything towards the field of science and philosophy are the results of Western secularization and modernization influence, which have discarded religious values by a wayside since the Western community is buoyed by the achievement in science and philosophy. Furthermore, it is also due to Renan's strong conviction in Etnocentrism creed that perceives Western civilization as the mainstay of the modern civilization after the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

On the other hand, al-Afghani tries to vindicate the supremacy of the Muslim philosophy and intellectual which have been pioneered by the Arabs, Persians, Turkish and other Muslim community.

He persisted on the role of Arabic language as key element to the *Ummah* unity and as the medium of instruction for Islamic knowledge tradition. In fact, the sources of Islamic teachings ie; *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* are the core mechanism to Muslim activities from the time of Prophet of Islam S.A.W. until the Golden Age of Islam. According to al-Afghani, while the Western Civilization originated from Andalusia, the Islamic Civilization of the East originated from Baghdad and both have showcased the ingenuity of a diverse community or Neo-Muslim which is Islamic based with Arabic as its lingua franca. He surmised that the main factor which caused the deterioration of scientific thinking and philosophy was tyranny or despotism among a few Muslim leaders. Yet, he persisted that one of the major elements to *ummah* progress is their dominance in the field of science and technology similar to the one achieved during the Expansion and the Golden Age of Islam.

1.2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The bibliography serves as a list of sources that is referred to during the write-up of the research. All of the sources may not necessarily be disclosed, though. Only those that were deemed as relevant to the topic of discussion were examined.⁴

1.2.1 SOURCES

References and sources of research are divided into two categories and they are as follows:

- i. Primary sources, renowned as the original contributions and works of al-Afghani, Ernest Renan, and inclusively, other original literatures provided by scholars of the times. Among them are Muhammad Abduh, W.S.Blunt, E.G.Browne, Rashid Rida, Jurji Zaydan, Sa'id Zaghlul, Muhammad Basha al-Makhzumi and al-Maghribi; and
- ii. Secondary sources that leverages posthumous literary works, compiled by other writers and scholars along with their interpretations, annotations and elaborations on science, Islam and 19th century modern thoughts or other forms of commentary, especially those relevant to this area of study.

1.2.2 A LITERATURE REVIEW ON SCIENCE, ISLAM AND MODERNITY IN 19th CENTURY THOUGHTS: A CASE STUDY ON THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN AL-AFGHANI AND ERNEST RENAN

The literature review is a critical survey and discussion of literature materials in a given area of study. It is not an annotated bibliography because it groups related works abound and discusses trends and developments rather than focusing on a singular item at a time. In short, this investigation is not a summary for it only measures previous and current research based on their relevant and/or useful manners in contextualizing the content area. In effect, there are a number of books and articles about Islam, science and modernity in 19th century modern judgment which are well thought-out and all of them, written by both Muslim and Western scholars are listed below:

- i. Keddie, R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialisme, Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "Al-Afghani"*. Berkeley: University of California Press;
- ii. Hourani, Albert. 1987. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. Cambridge & London: Cambridge University Press;
- iii. Iqbal, Muzaffar. 2007. *Science and Islam*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press;
- iv. Habib Irfan, S. 1997. *Reconciling Science with Islam in 19th century India*. In *the International Congress of History of Science in July 1997*. SAGE: <http://www.sagepublications.com>. pp.64-92. (This article was presented at the International Congress of History of Science in July 1997 at Liege, Belgium, and later at the Department of Sociology, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India);

- v. Abu Zayd, Nasr. 2006. *Reformation of Islamic Thought*. Amsterdam / Den Haag: Amsterdam University Press; and
- vi. Michelangelo Guida. 2011. *Al-Afghānī and Namık Kemal’s Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamist Thought*. *Turkish Journal of Politics*, Vol. 2 No. 2 Winter 2011. pp. 57-70. *An early draft of this paper was presented at the 5th International Conference of the Asiatic Philosophical Association in Fukuoka, Japan, on 7 December 2011. On that occasion, Guida (2011), as an appreciation to the contributions and supports received had these glowing words to say, “I would like to acknowledge the Fatih University Research fund (project P51151002), for their contribution in partially financing this research.”*

In the meantime, Keddie, Nikki, R. (1968), in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism, Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din “Al-Afghani”* provided a first-time credible picture of “Al-Afghani’s life...” Whilst, the second part contained translations of works by Al-Afghani himself, and were considered invaluable guide since most parts were written in Persian and had either been readily available or had only been translated to Arabic. This was particularly true in “*Refutation of the Materialists*.” Herein, Keddie’s work supplemented a significant portion to my own research on “*The Exchange with Ernest Renan*” (pp.84-95). According to the author:

In the Muslim world the discussion between Afghani and Renan has been distorted by those who have not read Afghani’s response to Renan and assume that since Renan had called Islam hostile to science, Afghani must have said that Islam was friendly to the scientific spirit. No part of Afghani’s actual argument can be construed in this sense, as a reading of the whole answer easily shows. Afghani was just as categorical as Renan about the hostility of the Muslim

*religion to the scientific spirit; his quarrel with Renan rested on quite different points, points that were in large measure accepted by Renan in his rejoinder.*⁵

Nonetheless, it was Hourani, Albert (1987) in his *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, who had provided the most comprehensive study on modernizing trends of political and social thought in the Arab Middle East. Albert Hourani studied on how ideas regarding politics and society changed during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century's in response to the expanding influence of Europe. His main attention was focused on the movement of ideas in Egypt and Lebanon. He also showed; how (the) two streams of thought: one pointed towards the reinstatement of social principles in Islam, meanwhile the other aimed at justifying the separation of religion from politics, which overlapped with each other that consequently helped form Egypt and Arab nationalisms of the present century. Chapter five of the book observed al-Afghani's personality and emphasized on al-Afghani constant engagement in controversy with Renan about the attitude of Islam towards science.⁶ This book, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* has been regarded as a modern classical interpretation of al-Afghani's work.

Along a similar breadth, Iqbal, Muzaffar's (2007) attested to that through his latest work entitled *Science and Islam* that was guided on the premise of awareness on the impact of issues regarding boundary between sciences reverberated throughout the intellectual realm worldwide, crossing various disciplines and forces driving this impact were of diverse pedigrees. They encapsulated and accelerated various entities, particularly the development of science and technology; globalization of scientific culture; religious responses to new scientific visions of the universe; and ethical

concerns prompted by biotechnology and environmental threats. In relation to that, Muzaffar Iqbal had his own idea on al-Afghani's response to the Western science. He later criticized al-Afghani for his erroneous view which is still upheld by many Muslims based on the presumed objective of the modern physical science. However, it may also be relevant to point out that the author failed to realize and articulate the attributes of metaphysical underpinning sciences which al-Ghazali referred to as comparable to those of modern science. This rhetoric found new expressions in the next generation of Muslim intellectuals, many of whom were deeply influenced by al-Afghani, yet, they in their own ways differ without any significant departures from al-Afghani's courageous stands against colonization. In effect, Muzaffar Iqbal particularly, had viewed the exchanges between al-Afghani and Renan as follows:

Ever since the first formulations of arguments such as Renan's, many Muslim intellectuals have felt obliged to defend their religion against this argument—but only a few have attempted to recast the entire discourse on a different foundation. They also did not challenge the racist elements in Renan and other writing of the times, for Renan was articulating a view generally held by many Europeans. Renan believed that in the final analysis, for reasons inherent in Semitic languages, the Semites, unlike Indo-Europeans, did not and could not possess either philosophy or science. The Semitic race, he said, is distinguished almost exclusively by its negative features: it possesses neither mythology, nor epic poetry, nor science, nor philosophy, nor fiction, nor plastic arts, nor civil life. For Renan, the Aryans, whatever their origin, define the West and Europe at the same time. In such a context, Renan, who otherwise fought against miracles as a whole, nevertheless retained one: the "Greek Miracle." As for Islamic science, "It is," wrote Renan, "a reflection of Greece, combined with Persian and Indian influences; in short, Arabic Science is an Aryan reflection."⁷

Habib, Irfan, S. (1997), in his article "*Reconciling Science with Islam in 19th century India*", had earlier mentioned that Afghani's pragmatism is: The best reflected in his exchanges with the French Orientalist Ernest Renan in Paris. Habib concluded that in his article;

*Thus, for Renan, Islam as a Semitic religion and the Arabs as a Semitic race were too simple and trivial to make any meaningful contribution to the growth of science and philosophy. He was convinced that the Semitic Oriental sensibility never reached the heights attained by the Indo-Germanic races. What is generally called Arab science and philosophy is really Greek and Persian. Renan's argument buttressed the Orientalist theory of origins, viz., that the Indo-European race is the source of science and philosophy. However, after highlighting the regenerative role of Islam in the cultivation of science and its subsequent abandonment and repression under the later Islamic regimes, Afghani concluded his response to Renan.*⁸

Abu Zayd, Nasr (2006) in *Reformation of Islamic Thought*, had subsequently described al-Afghani as the pioneer of Reformation, *Islah*, the challenge of modernity in 19th century, Islam and Science. He pointed it out in his work entitled "*The Challenge of Modernity in 19th Century*" and it is as follows:

*Renan posited the absolute incompatibility between Islam and both science and philosophy." In his doctoral thesis, Averroès et l'Averroïsme (1852), Nasr argued that whatever that is labeled as Islamic science or Islamic philosophy, is merely a translation from the Greek. Islam, like all other religious dogmas based on revelation, is hostile to reason and freethinking.*⁹

Due to this, the article has become more applicable to the varying areas of this research study.

That aside, Michelangelo Guida (2011) in his article "*Al-Afghānī and Namık Kemal's Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamist Thought*", put an emphasis on al-Afghani-Renan debate that focused on Renan's belief in racial theories. Al-Afghānī stated that Greek and Persian contribution to the development of Muslim sciences was immense. At the same time, though, 'these sciences, which they (Muslims) usurped by right of conquest, they developed, extended, clarified, perfected, completed and coordinated with a perfect taste and rare precision

and exactitude' . Europeans learned from the Arabs the philosophy of Aristotle, 'who had emigrated and become Arab'. This proves the fact that Arabs have a natural attachment to science and philosophy even if they fall into ignorance and religious fanaticism.¹⁰

This research is written to highlight specific arguments and ideas in this field of study; so as to show what has been deliberated in the discourse on science, Islam, and modernity in 19th century thoughts with the exchange between Al-Afghani and Ernest Renan as a case study. This review should therefore also demonstrate to the reader the usefulness, necessity, importance, and validity of the research.

NOTES

- 1 See Losee, John. 2001. *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*. Fourth Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 2-3.
- 2 See Barzun, Jacques and Graff, F.Henry. 1985. *The Modern Resercher*. Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers. P. 5.
- 3 See Cox, Caroline and Marks, John. 2003. *The West, Islam and Islamism*. London: Civitas, Institute for the Study of Civil Society. Pp. 1-12.
As introduction the writers emphasized the comparison between Western and Islamic World-views. They exposed on key Islamist leaders leading by Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani etc. Pp. 51-57.
- 4 See Turabian, Kate, L. 1969. *A Manual For Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. P. 66.
- 5 See Keddie, R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialisme, Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "Al-Afghani"*. Berkeley: University of California Press. P. 85.
- 6 See Hourani, Albert. 1987. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*. Cambridge & London: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 103-120.
- 7 See Iqbal, Muzaffar. 2007. *Science and Islam*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press. Pp 147-49.
- 8 See Habib, Irfan, S. 1997. *Reconciling Science with Islam in 19th century India*. In *the International Congress of History of Science in July 1997*, SAGE: <http://www.sagepublications.com>. Pp. 80-82.
- 9 See Abu Zayd, Nasr. 2006. *Reformation of Islamic Thought*. Amsterdam/Den Haag: Amsterdam University Press. P. 23.
- 10 Michelangelo Guida. 2011. *Al-Afghānī and Namık Kemal's Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamist Thought*. In *Turkish Journal of Politics* Volume 2, No.2. Winter 2011. Pp. 57-70 and p. 65.

Chapter 2

2.1 SCIENCE, ISLAM AND MODERNITY IN THE 19th CENTURY

The landscape of the Islamic thoughts in the history of intellectuals within 19th century, especially during the mid-century towards the early 20th century was at a major crossroads which was marked with three significant issues, particularly:

- i. stagnation;
- ii. challenges from the Western's bloc; and
- iii. rebuilding or reengineering of the *ummah* that is also termed as "*The Islamic Project of the 19th Century*".¹

Eventhough Muslims were plagued by the three issues, the 19th century had also witnessed the ascend of Muslim intellectuals; a result of three distinguishable school of thoughts or *ikhtilaf*, with each being more complex than the others as concluded by Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi' (1996) in his masterpiece, "*Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, ". In his book, he reiterated that:

- i. the breakdown of the totalistic vision of Islam which considered Islam and the state to be one, or verified that Islam and state governance could not be separated;
- ii. the rise of different intellectual prophecies that, especially in the 19th century, that challenged the long-established authority of the '*ulama`*'; and

- iii. the political division and subdivision of Muslims and the Arab world in the wake of colonialism.²

The Muslims' response towards the challenges of modernization particularly in broadening the field of modern science and the Western's network of imperialism had created two liners of Islamic paradigm thoughts:

- i. Modernism
- ii. Traditionalism.³

The modernist or traditionalist terminology was labeled as the protagonists to the revival of Islam that responded towards imperialism and the advancement of science and technology; (in Europe only served as a guideline to a handful of researchers). In addition, the connotations were too generalized and did poorly in reflecting the complex nature of characters. For example, it was widely accepted at the time that Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), despite being a well-known reformist, was a self-avowed *Wahabi* or fundamentalist. Whilst, Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), in most instances, was arguably a modernist *'ulama* and he had the inclination towards conservative, as well as traditionalist style of thinking.⁴

Having said this, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Maghribi (1948), one of Sayyid Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani's disciples in his book entitled, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Zikriyyat wa Ahadith:* states that the main foundation and the beginning of Muslim response towards the Western challenges and modernism ultimately signified the rise of both the traditionalist and conservative groups in safeguarding Islamic principles that were threatened by the Western imperialists in various dimensions of life.⁵

Al-Maghribi recorded an interview with his eminent teacher al-Afghani and it was commented by Sami Abdullah Kaloti (1974) in his doctorate dissertation. His comments were as follows:

*Islamic reformist thought was determined by its traditionalist starting points. All the leading figures of the Islamic reform movement had in common an awareness of the need to overcome the intellectual and spiritual inertia of traditionalism, but the positive aspect of this awareness remained prescribed in both scopes and relevance. Its first step was the transition from blind obedience to traditional interpretation into a new and freer approach.*⁶

Modernism in this context has to be understood as a positive attitude towards the advancement in innovations and changes that have been accomplished by the Western civilization generally. It represents a new approach or a dynamic approach, which is essentially pragmatic, adaptable and open-minded. The modernist outlook is forward-looking; an approach as all modernists repudiated a status quo, and they derived their central assumptions not from traditionalism but from the Western way of thinking. The modernist outlook was fundamentally utopian in character; *the Golden Age* lay not in the past but in the future.⁷

According to Jacques Waardenburg (1996), modernity was a direct effect of modernization on human thoughts, encompassing individuality and social life. He then went further to conclude:

*Modernization is the process of rational transformation of nature and society by man through the development of science and its application in technology.*⁸

On the other hand, traditionalism was viewed as a negative attitude towards every modern science accomplishment, innovation and towards the Westerners as a whole. The critical criteria of traditionalism were the static position, fundamental

passiveness and responsiveness to react to external stimuli or aggressive reactions towards any outside threat or revolutionary movement. The leaders or the protagonists were labeled by the orientalist community as conservative intellectuals who envisioned the past as always better than the future. The past was rather restorable as it would one day be restored. The traditionalist ambition was to return to the “*Golden Age*” after being disappointed by the phenomenon of community deterioration and weaknesses. Conservative traditionalist pointed out that thinking, though it might not have wholeheartedly espoused the status quo, did not repudiate them either. As the only concrete reality, the established order represented continuity and the only link to the past constituted the starting point of revival and the only basis on which to resist the Western threat.⁹

In relevance, this protagonist group or the revivalist of Islamic movement, although labeled as Islamic modernist was in actuality the group in between the Islamic traditionalist and Islamic modernist advocates who dignified and glorified Westernization. In other words, between conservative traditionalism and progressive modernism was a middle ground occupied by what might best be termed as the reformist position. Reformism had often been referred to as Islamic modernism, but reformism was modernizing only a particular sense and to a limited degree. At heart, reformism was tradition-bound with its primary goal of safeguarding Islam and the institutional structures upholding it. As a revivalist movement, reformism was in fact not much more than enlightened conservatism, equipped with a more rational awareness of its situation and needs. The reformist position, in its fundamental premises and ultimate conclusions, opposed the secularization and ‘*Westernization*’ elements of social modernization more effectively than the conservative traditionalist ever did,

precisely because it was more rational, resulting in an opening for a change within prescribed limits. Therein, the Islamic reformists had a distinctive, yet differing approach from other Islamic sects. Still, they had the same goal with the traditionalist group which was to defend the honor of Islam and promote its integrity well as its institutional strength.¹⁰

Hisham Sharabi, Rashid Rida, Malek ben Nabi, Muhammad Basha al-Makhzumi, ‘Uthman Amin, Mahmud Abu Rayyah, Ahmad Amin, Charles C. Adams, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Zaki Badawi and Fathi Uthman had all but approved al-Afghani’s vindication. Furthermore, the characteristics of Muhammad Abduh along with their followers had all the makings of pioneering Islamic reformism and sparking the rise of Islamic movement that combined traditionalism and modernism approach or as it was often described as “*to internal reform and external defend*” *Ummah* and Islam from threats and intimidations from the Western imperialists.¹¹

Two main goals of the reformist or revivalist ideology from al-Afghani and his fellow protagonists can be concluded as such:

- i. to strive towards increasing the profile and nobility of Islam as it has been achieved by Prophet Muhammad’s (SAW) era and the Islamic Golden Age; and
- ii. to strengthen the efforts toward the rise of *ummah*; (so as) to enable them to return to the purity of Islamic teachings with *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* as its pillar or source of reference.

The framework or basic principles of which al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh catalyzed the two aforementioned goals could be catalogued in chronological order of progression comprising four distinguishable stages. They were as follows:

- a. liberating the mind from the bonds of '*imitative reasoning*' or blind tradition or *taqlid* and re-opening the door of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). This approach had opened an intellectual battlefield for the protagonist of reformism and the traditionalist conservative centered on religious being static;
- b. returning to the real understanding towards Islam on the basis of the understandings from the earliest Islamic groups with the interpretations from Prophet Muhammad SAW, the *Rashidun* Caliphate (*al-khilāfat ar-Rāshidiyah*, c. 632–661) and the interpretations from the Golden Age Muslim community. This group was known as *Salafiyyah* or *al-Salaf al-Sholeh* or the first generations of Muslims are collectively referred to as the "Pious Predecessors", and include the "Companions" (*Sahabah*), the "Followers" (*Tabi'un*) and the "Followers of the Followers" (*Tabi' al-Tabi'in*). This second stage approach invited controversies and polemics with the protagonists of traditionalist and conservative Islamic sects. The second stage was to attain the 'proper understanding' of religion with the emphasis was again put on the approach rather than the doctrine itself by focusing on the earliest period of Islam. Moreover, turning to the model of early Islamic examples created other opportunities as well. True knowledge derived from the original sources led directly to virtue and strength. By adhering to the divine doctrine (i.e. the word of God) as conveyed to Prophet Muhammad SAW in the *al-Quran* and by

following Prophet's example or *al-Sunnah*, Muslims were able to find the source of true Islam and therein the basis of indissoluble unity,

- c. further strengthening the authority of *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* (Prophet Muhammad's SAW sayings and practices) as the highest source of Islam S.O.P. (Standard Operation Procedure). No longer were authority tied with certain streams or baffled by the hierarchy of any religious groups. This led to the definition of the third stage, which became a cardinal reformist tenet: Final authority in all that concerning to religious doctrine enshrined neither in the schools nor in the religious hierarchy, but in the *al-Quran* and the *al-Sunnah*. As reformists, al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh's seemingly harmless call for the '*return to the original springs of Islam*' constituted a direct threat to the established clerical hierarchy for their demand, carried to its logical conclusion, would have forced radical changes to the institutional structure of Islam. At last, such transformation and legitimating of *Al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* as the final authority failed to take place. Thereafter, the reformist '*ulama*' only gained a strategically advantageous position.
- d. shaping and strengthening standards, especially for Islamic interpretation through sprouts of *ijtihad* so that Islam could ensure its continued relevance with contemporary issues experienced by the *ummah*. In other words, the fourth stage was the establishment of rational criteria of interpretation '*of considering religious truth rationally.*'¹²

The need for Islamic nations to move towards *ijtihad* was within the frame of achieving advancement. Similar comparisons could be drawn to Martin Luther's victory of reformism movement which had given meaningful contributions towards the advancement and appearance of Europe and the Western civilizations. From this, the new *ijtihad* having pure Islamic methodology in facing the past, present and future challenges would help strengthen the *ummah* and pave way towards the rise and advancement of the Islamic nation. In connection to this, Zaki Badawi (1978) in "*The Reformers of Egypt*" stated that the new objective of *ijtihad* by al-Afghani was as follows;

*The call for a new ijtihad and for striving towards perfection meant that the community must discard its lethargy and take part in the struggle for progress. A Muslim reformation was, in his view, necessary for achieving this. He often mentioned Luther and attributed his movement to the success of Europe and felt that a similar reformation would rejuvenate Islam and set the ummah on the road to progress.*¹³

In context of defending Islam from Western imperialist threats or widely known as 'external defense', protagonists of Islam or the reformist movement headed by al-Afghani had not only enabled the effort to spread and propagate Islam through writings and speeches, but also through his influential political pan-Islamism activities in the Islamic world as well as the Western world. Sylvia Haim (1976) had this dispute disclosed below:

*rightly argues both the activities and the teaching of al-Afghani, contributed to the spread of revolutionary temper and a new attitude toward politics all over the Muslim world.*¹⁴

Observation by Nikki R.Keddie (1968), in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din Al-Afghani*, apparently were erroneous and confusing, particularly when stating that the reformation movements led

by al-Afghani dwelled much of their time on political activities rather than concentrating on *islah* or *tajdid* efforts or internal constructions of a Muslim *ummah* (religious reform). Thus, Albert Hourani (1987:112) stated that al-Afghani stood out as a public speaker rather than being a cunning political thinker. With that, Hourani implied that al-Afghani talked more than he wrote. In connection to this, Azyumardi Azra (1998) and Bassam Tibi (1981) rejected Keddie and Hourani's arguments by concluding that every reformism and revivalism movements led by al-Afghani were rather aimed at awakening and uniting all *ummah* to counter and destroy all Western web of colonialism oppressing the *ummah* that had in many ways could be considered as a new world power that is capable of stabilizing the Western civilization powers. Tibi also asserted that within this context that the entirety of al-Afghani activities, in truth was within one integrated plan:

*They are an appeal to the Muslims, as the object of colonialism, in an attempt to mobilize them against European colonial rule.*¹⁵

The Pan-Islamism congregation idea was the most important substance in the reformism movement founded by al-Afghani. According to Sylvia Haim, Pan-Islamism is the substance of al-Afghani's political project. It was also aimed to unite all Islamic countries under a centralized leadership. At the same time, ideas of pan-Islamism congregation by al-Afghani showed progress and support from the *ummah*. Moreover, close relationship with Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II Uthmaniyyah within the latter part of his life gave further credence to this cause. Pan-Islamism in this context was the Islamic *Khilafah* rule under the Uthmaniyyah Empire in Turkey. According to Dwight E. Lee (1942), in *The Origin of Pan-Islamism*, Ignaz Goldziher (1965) in "*Djamal ad-Din al-Afghani*," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* and Jacob M. Landau (1990) in *The Politics of*

Pan-Islam, Ideology and Organization, al-Afghani was the founder and the igniter of the Pan-Islamism congregation. According to Jacob, visits, residencies, and political activities of al-Afghani in the vast part reached the Islamic and Europe world which included Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Turkey, Egypt, Hijjaz, France, England, Russia and Germany had made the pan-Islamism congregation a success in creating awareness and also realization towards *ummah*.¹⁶

The Muslim's response towards science could be seen in al-Afghani's major ideas that leaned on Islamic tradition strengthened by contributions of his philosophers. In his masterpiece, "*Refutation of the Materialists*", al-Afghani concluded three premises of thought that ignited positive Islamic behavior towards science;

- i. it was started and founded since the prophet Muhammad SAW and the *Rashidun* Caliphate's period. The Muslim *ummah* within the era attained numerous victories in wars which were mainly attributed from their mastery of military science and technology which even to an extent of overwhelming the Roman and Persian Empire which were considered as technologically advanced civilizations of their time;
- ii. interpretation of Islamic scholars and philosophers towards scientific facts could be found directly from *al-Quran* and had strengthened Islam's positive attitude toward science; and
- iii. adding al-Afghani's major idea about the reopening of new *ijtihad* or the door of interpretation of laws and doctrines had fueled the Islamic reformism and revivalism movement on the "Islamic science" agenda.¹⁷

Muhammad Basha al-Makhzumi in ‘*Khatirat*’ attempted to unravel al-Afghani’s real conviction about Islam and sciences’ issues. Al-Afghani firmly asserted Islam had never been and never would differ from science. For al-Afghani, laws of physics’, geometrical formulas, and philosophical arguments stood on facts. As such, it did not contradict the Islamic teachings as long as it was truth based on proofs (*dalil*) and reasons. Kaloti picked al-Makhzumi’s conclusion as below:

*Al-Afghani’s belief in Islam as a world religion, catering to the needs of all people in all climes and all ages, leads him to declare that Islam may not, must not and does not contradict science and scientific truths. To him, the laws of physics, the formulas of geometry and the arguments of philosophy are self-evident and axiomatic truths, and they can in no way contradict Islam, which is based on proof and reason.*¹⁸

Al-Afghani deliberated a number of science concepts in his discussions and writings. In one of his talks, on 8th November 1882 in Albert Hall, Calcutta, India entitled, “*Lecture on Teaching and Learning*,” he sees the field of science to include various branches of knowledge that are experiential towards fact or phenomenon and its relation with the facts. For al-Afghani, branches of science cover astronomy, chemistry, physics, mathematics, geology, etc. It is clear here how his knowledge on modern science is very advanced, even as the term science has just only been concluded by William Whewell (1794-1866) in 1833 in Europe. Al-Afghani even concluded the universality of science concepts by rejecting the idea of partition between the European science and Islamic science with the excuse that science did not belong to any race or any country, he said;

The strange thing of all is that our ulama these days have divided science into two parts. One they call Muslim science, and one European science. Because of this they forbid others to teach some of the useful sciences. They have not understood that science is that noble thing that has no connection with any nation, and is not distinguished by anything but itself. Rather, everything that known is known by

science and every nation that becomes renowned becomes renowned through science. Men must be related to science, not science to men.

How very strange it is that the Muslims study those sciences that are ascribed to Aristotle with the greatest delight, as if Aristotle were one of the pillars of the Muslims. However, if the discussion relates to Galileo, Newton, and Kepler, they consider them infidels. The father and mother of science are proof and proof is neither Aristotle nor Galileo. The truth is where there is proof, and those who forbid science and knowledge in the belief that they are safeguarding the Islamic religions are really the enemies of that religion. The Islamic religion is the closest of religions to science and knowledge, and the foundation of Islamic faith.¹⁹

In context of Islamic reformism movement, al-Afghani assumed science as vital to the development and modernization of the Muslims. Without it, Muslims will not be able to compete with the West. In connection to this, Charles E. Butterworth (1982) in his writing “*Prudence Versus Legitimacy: The Persistent Theme in Islamic Political Thought,*” concluded the foundation of al-Afghani’s thought in his Islamic reformism movement with science and the revivalism of the Islam *ummah* as its theme;

The basic premise of Afghani’s teaching is that science is useful to human being in numerous ways. Science alone gives man greater control over the universe and allows him to improve his material life. It thus stands to reason that human beings should strive to master the sciences.²⁰

Al-Afghani, in his talk on the position and role of science in the rise of *ummah*, at the grand opening of Science University ‘*Darul Funun*’ in Istanbul, Turkey, on 20th February 1870, explained:

*My brothers! Open the eyes of perfection and look in order to learn a lesson. Arise from sleep of neglect. Know that the Islamic people (**milla**) were (once) the strongest in rank, the most valuable in worth. They were very high in intelligence, comprehension, and prudence. They faced up to the most difficult things with respect to work and endeavor. Later this people sank into ease and laziness. It remained in the corners of the madrasas and the dervish convents; to such a degree that the lights of virtue were on the point of being extinguished; the banners of education were about to disappear. The suns of prosperity and the full moon of perfection began to wane. Some of the Islamic nations came under the dominations of other nations. The clothes of abasement were put on them. The glorious **milla** was*

humiliated. All these things happened from lack of vigilance, laziness, working too little and stupidity.

*As for us, let us learn all branches of science. Let us mount the ladder of humanity. Let us free ourselves from ignorance and animal qualities. Let us not lose the glory of past and the rights of future generations. We must go to the path leading to the stages of wisdom. Let us Endeavour to raise the honor of the **milla**.*

*My brothers! Are we not going to take an example from the civilized nation? Let us cast a glance at the achievements of others. By effort they have achieved the final degree of knowledge and the peak of elevation.*²¹

Al-Afghani's constructive and rhetoric orations on the position and roles of science to develop the *ummah* were well received by the protagonist of the *Dar ul-Funun* establishment. In extending the warm reception towards al-Afghani, Tahsin, the Director of the Islamic University at the time, organized a series of lecture for the whole of December 1870 (Ramadhan of 1278 Hijrah) during which al-Afghani gave lecture on "*The Progress of Sciences and Arts*". The lecture was conveyed in Turkish.²²

The idea of Islamic reformism for al-Afghani by mastering science received stimulating response from the Western educated young Muslims in Turkey, who were also known as '*The Young Ottomans*' as attested by Tahsin (Director of *Dar ul -Funun*) and Tahir Munif (Minister Education in Turkey). Both of them received their education in science in Germany and they had the ambition to build a house of sciences. So, the arrival of al-Afghani in Istanbul was an inspiration shared by the two. They wanted to emerge science advancement and modern technology that were acquainted with al-Afghani's skills and knowledge in various Arab scientific fields, inherited from the medieval Islam. Hence, the idea of the establishing *Dar ul-Funun* Science University was the idea of the *ulama* and that of al-Afghani's speech which response to the needs of *ummah* in mastering science and its various branches.²³

2.2 THE 19th CENTURY ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN ISLAMIC AND WESTERN THOUGHTS

One noticeable component of the 19th century of Islamic thought is the reemergence of Islam after going through a series of depression, internal conflict and attack from outsiders; whilst coping with imperialist challenges and assault in various dimensions. The revival of Islam was inspired by the desire of the fundamentalist and the traditionalist movements to return to the real Islamic foundations and principles that had been started and founded by Prophet Muhammad SAW in 7th century (1st Hijrah). William Montgomery Watt (1991) in “*Muslim-Christian Encounters*” tried to explain this tipping point and at the same time drew comparison to a similar situation which occurred in Western Christianity.

*An important feature of the last two decades has been the Islamic resurgence. Though it resembles Christian renewal movements, it has also distinctive marks, and so the term ‘resurgence’ may be retained. It is also characterized by fundamentalism, or, as I would prefer to say, traditionalism, since Islamic fundamentalism is not identical with Christian fundamentalism, which is a mainly Protestant phenomenon.*²⁴

According to Khaldun S. al-Husry (1966) in *Three Reformers : A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought* used the term religion revivalism and reformation coloring the resurgence of Islam in 19th century. In connection to this, religious reformationist(s), in order to solve internal Islamic conflict, had attempted to bring out Islam as an ideological movement. In response, al-Afghani founded the Pan-Islamism congregation in the hope of bringing the Muslim *Ummah* out from the great physical doldrums so as to prepare its military forces against the forces of the West. In other

words, the religious consciousness resurgence was aimed at returning the *ummah* towards purity and excellence of Islam just as it was in its glorious early era.²⁵

Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (1982), in his epistle *The Islamic Resurgence: Sources, Dynamics, and Implications*, was persistent that the revival of Islam in this context is a phenomenal political resurgence that is brought about by the resolved Islamic teachings. The revival has been perceived by the West to having an inclination towards igniting conflict against them as a colonial power that be. They have, in actual fact exaggerated the Islamic revivalism terminology presaging a negative perception and bigotry towards Islam. As a matter of fact, the revival of Islam has been ignited by the religion's insistence that demands its *ummah* to rise in organized manners to endlessly uphold truths and justice. The teaching of Islam founded on *al-Quran* emphasize the concept of change steered by the *ummah* with condition that Allah will not change the fate of the people except they change it themselves. Precisely, *verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves* (with their own souls).²⁶ According to Dessouki there were other indications suggesting Islamic revivalism as being a direct outcome of numerous accusations and verbal insults made by the Westerners towards Islam. Such smears included the portrayal of Islamic movements as religious extremist with dogmatic behavior and as an anti-modernization group. In retaliation, the Islamic resurgence movement focused its effort to counter these insults by presenting a more dignified image in honoring Islam.²⁷ In the context of the Muslims and the Western world encounter, Mohammed Arkoun (1988) in *Arab Thought*, stated that this Islamic movement brought forward statements and manifestations of new ideas (*new expressions*) as a response towards modernism which were sparked by the West.²⁸ What is meant by '*new expressions*' within this context

was further clarified by Muhammad ‘Ammarah (1984), in *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Muftara ‘alayh*, as an approach realized by al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh involving a synthesis of traditionalism and modernism. It was later identified as “*New Traditionalism*” encompassing Reformism and Revivalism. According to ‘Ammarah, al-Afghani was confident that Muslims could in fact assimilate Western science and technology on condition that its philosophy and ideology must base on Islamic teaching and its historical legacy.²⁹

As the predecessor of “*New Traditionalist*” whose influence spread beyond the borders of any single Muslim country, al-Afghani presented a position which rejects a pure traditionalism and also of pure Westernize. Kaloti presented his analogy as follows:

*By seeking these values within the Islamic tradition instead of openly borrowing from the heretical West, al-Afghani was able to attain an influence on believing Muslims which was not shared by those who simply appropriated Western ideas. As the first ‘New Traditionalist’ whose influence spread beyond the borders of a single Muslim country, al-Afghani is in some sense the parent of various later trends that reject both pure traditionalism and pure Westernize.*³⁰

Al-Afghani’s ability and broad knowledge about the heritage of Islamic education resulted in an Islamic reformist approach to ‘*New Traditionalist*’ that gave inspiration to Islamic movements in 20th century. It spread across the Muslim world like wildfire and regarding this, Charles E. Butterworth (1982) was quoted as saying;

*Al-Afghani had broad knowledge of Western culture and deep comprehension of Islamic traditions, thus was the first man to notice with his clear sight and intelligent realism, the danger of Westerners in the Eastern lands.*³¹

According to Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi’ (1996), in general there were three main Islamic reformist and revivalist concepts in response to modernity since the 19th century until today:

1. *Nahdah* (renaissance);
2. *Thawrah* (revolution); and
3. *'Awdah* (return to the principal/fundamentalism).

These three main groups of concepts shared three main objectives namely;

- i. reviving Muslim thought from within by affirming continuity with the past, without borrowing from Western sources;
- ii. establishing the nation state in the wake of resisting the political and economic domination of the West; and
- iii. transforming Islam into a non-nationalist or non-racist combatant ideology.

It is thus far an Islamic movement involving a fight to uphold a true Islam. It is not a dogfight between the secular partisans and a fight to establish a military junta. As it is, Islamist movement has been about resolving for the return to the genuine Islam. ³²

Al-Afghani's reformist approach as a response to the Western modernism challenge, as we have conceived, was indeed multi-faceted, quite complex and unique that could lead to misinterpretation if viewed only by one aspect of it. But one thing was clear, al-Afghani has contributed a great deal to the rise of new consciousness among Muslims in particular that catapulted them to carrying out more serious attempt to revive Muslims' awakening, thus returning to genuine Islam. Apart from that, he was fully dedicated and supportive of fellow leaders, '*ulama`*' and Islamic intellectuals to carrying out *islah* and Islamic reforms. This statement could be proven in Al-Afghani's vital role in increasing the Islamic Revivalism spirit in Egypt (1871-1879). He propagated his Pan-Islamism congregation idea in Turkey under Sultan Abdul Hamid II of the Uthmaniyyah empire and gave rise to Islamic revivalism through the famous magazine *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*

which was launched in the city of Paris. This idea of his, eventually, turned into a formidable exponent to the rise of Islamic revolution in Iran as well as a host of others.³³

The strength of al-Afghani's reformism was undoubtedly in his tolerance and accommodativeness towards science and Western technologies which were very instrumental in the rise of Western civilization. Therefore, al-Afghani emphasized that Islam had never rejected science. Instead, fellow scientist and Islamic philosophers were given numerous honors and full political support in science policies by many of the Islamic rulers in Andalusia, Baghdad, Egypt, India and Qayrawan, who supported him.³⁴

Western thought and civilization in the 19th century was a continuity of the French Revolution and the industrial Revolution in 1789. According to John L.Beatty and Oliver A. Johnson (1982) in "*Heritage of Western Civilization*", the 19th century marked the climax of European civilization. By the end of the century, developments that had been in progress for hundreds of years came to final fruition, ultimately propelling the West as the leader and master of the entire world. The supremacy of Western nations was exhibited in a variety of ways, based on a few factors. Among them were as follows:

- i. Western Europe nations as supreme military powers;
- ii. Western Europe nations as world economy hubs;
- iii. Western Europeans as highly progressive political nations; and
- iv. Western Europe as world cultural center.³⁵

By serving the factors from this premises, European nations or the West appeared as the world imperialist power because imperialism was an ideology that surfaced at about the same time as positivism, rationalism and scientism that colored human thought. Beatty and Johnson (1982) tried to sketch the style of thinking in Europe in 19th century as follows:

Perhaps the most pervasive 'ism' of nineteenth-century society was optimism. With few exceptions the intellectual leaders of the period were firm believers in progress... Such hopes plus, unfortunately, others less lofty led to still another characteristic nineteenth-century 'ism': imperialism. ³⁶

To that effect, W. Montgomery Watt (1983) in *Islam and Christianity Today: A Contribution to Dialogue* has associated the materialistic and ideological feats in Europe with its continuous folds of achievement in the exploration of science and technology. As a result, Europe emerged as the most supreme colonial power. This situation had ignited various responses from non-Western community, especially the Muslims. One of the obvious groups that appeared to respond to Westernize imperialism was an intellectual group that not only mastered the traditional Islamic knowledge, but was also directly exposed and involved in frontline battles against the Western imperialist. And so, that was the experience shared by al-Afghani and his follower Muhammad Abduh. They understand the thinking and the Western civilization intellectually, but had never physically traveled to the West. ³⁷

Other than the phenomenon of materialistic advancement, achievements in science and technology with imperialism ideology in the 19th century according to Franklin L. Baumer (1977) in *Modern European Thought; Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600-1950*, Henry D. Aiken (1956) in *The Age of Ideology: The 19th Century Philosophers* and John Theodore Merz (1965) in *A History of European Thought in the*

19th Century presented the thinking ideology that was known as the “*New Enlightenment*”. It is a continuation from the Renaissance era in the 15th century followed by the science revolutionary era and *The Era of European Enlightenment* in 18th century and 19th century that had also elevated Auguste Comte (1798-1857) as the father of Positivism. According to Baumer, Positivism is a form of scientism, and involves the worshipping of science;

*This maxim, stated in the second ‘lesson’ of Comte’s positive philosophy might serve as the motto of **the New Enlightenment**, particularly in French and England, but increasingly, as time went on, in Germany too. According to Comte’s maxim, action depends on science, and science is fundamentally concerned with prevision or prediction... **Scientism** means, not merely the growth of science itself, but the attempt, in marked contrast to the romantic disposition, to answer all questions scientifically, to turn everything possible into a science, including in some respects even the humanities, and to apply the principles of science to the world action... Similarly, there was to be a new ‘religion of science’ (Ernest Renan).³⁸*

To clearly observe the encounter between Islamic thought and Western thought in 19th century, not only must we refer to the rise of Reformism and Islamic revivalism as a response to Western imperialism, but it is also important to recognize the patterns of thought of the Europeans that influenced the shaping of the intellectualism of Christian protagonists. According to Sharabi (1970), two current European thoughts that perhaps had the greatest formative impact on Western and Christian intellectualism in terms of basic method that colored the *New Enlightenment* in 19th century constituted the following:

- i. rational and liberal traditions of the Enlightenment and to a lesser extent revolutionary and post-revolutionary France; and
- ii. 19th century traditions of Positivism and Liberalism and social Darwinism.³⁹

The Enlightenment had a tremendous impact on the educated Western nations and Christians of this generation. It endorsed the Positivism and Liberalism streams that had produced three France intellectuals who played a significant role in the polemics. They were August Comte, Ernest Renan and Gustave Le Bon. Amongst them, Ernest Renan stood out as the most important figure in the debate between Islamic and Western thought. This was because he had a dominant position in the rise of French intellectuals. He often formed his own theories about Islam and Christians. In addition, the majority of Christian intellectuals had placed Renan in high esteem within religious historical field that encompassed all three main religions; Islam, Christian and Jew. A passage from the prologue of his book, entitled “*The Future of Science: Ideas of 1848*” gave a clear picture about Renan’s utmost attention towards philosophical, historical, thought and religious issues:

The year 1848 made an exceedingly keen impression upon me... A paper on my study of Greek in the Middle Ages which I had begun in answer to a question of l’Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Letters had engrossed all my thoughts... I felt the need of summing up in a volume the new faith which with me had replaced shattered Catholicism... About the time I wrote those lines, M. Victor Le Clerc bethought himself to have me, in conjunction with my friend Charles Daremberg, entrusted with various researches in the public libraries of Italy in connection with the literary history of France and a thesis I had begun on Averroism. ⁴⁰

2.3 EXCHANGES BETWEEN AL-AFGHANI AND ERNEST RENAN : A CASE STUDY ON THE ISLAMIC AND WESTERN ENCOUNTERS IN 19th CENTURY

Al-Afghani's response towards Ernest Renan in 1883 required a comprehensive analysis in the context of Islamic and Western encounters in the 19th century which was an end product of a drawn out historical episode. It brought tremendous impact on both of these remarkable civilizations. Is the relationship a clash, a conflict, or simply a confrontation? Or is the relationship a civilized interaction that needed a channel to bring universal peace and prosperity? Al-Afghani and Renan met in Paris in an attempt to unravel the unsettled tangle between the two civilizations; Islam and the West with the background of the two of the world's most revered religions - Islam and Christianity.

According to Ahmad Amin (1979; 92-95), Muhammad al-Bahi (1960: 86), Albert Hourani (1987: 110, 120-123), Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq (1983: 23-24), Elie Kedourie (1966; 41-45), Mahmud Abu Rayyah (1966; 128 -132) and Keddie R. Nikki (1968: 84-97), the most important event for al-Afghani while he was in Paris in the 1880's was when he participated in a controversial exchange with the famous French philosopher, Ernest Renan. Each respected the other while they debated about Islam and the Arabs and even about the attitude of the religions and its pursuit of philosophy, science, and technology. Their polemic battlefield was written in a famous magazine in France, *Journal des Debats*.⁴¹

The controversy between al-Afghani and Renan first began when Renan gave a lecture in Sorbonne, Paris on '*Islam and Science*', which was later published by *Journal*

Des Debats on 29th March 1883, of which Renan maintained the disparity between Islam and science. Therefore, by implication, Islam and modern civilization were by design and nature incompatible with one another. Consequently, al-Afghani responded to Renan's lecture which was published by the same magazine on 18th May 1883. For Ahmad Amin, there are three main issues that were brought forward by Renan. These are:

- i. the Arabs had never given contribution towards science and technology advancement. For instance, while the Arabs mastered governing science, its civilization was controlled by Persians. Various fields of philosophy and science were instead mastered by Christian Nestorians. The famous philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Ibn Rusyd were not from the Arab race;
- ii. Renan claimed that Islam disapproved science, philosophy, and free thinking. Rather, Islam is about believing in supernatural things and faith towards *qada'* and *qadar*; and
- iii. The Arabs are not very keen on strengthening the rise of rational knowledge or the intellectual knowledge and philosophy. As a consequence, this has caused the deterioration of philosophical thought and instigated a gloom in the progress of science even in the period of Rashidun Caliphate (632-661), also heavily influenced by the Arab elements. During that time, the Persians were under the rule of Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) that toppled its predecessor, the Umayyad Caliphate (661-750). Its culture and thinking were in truth the real contributors to philosophy, science and civilization to the Islamic world. ⁴²

In connection to this, Nikki R. Keddie concluded a part of Renan lecture entitled, '*Islam and Science*' as follows:

Renan in his lecture had stated that early Islam and the Arabs who professed it were hostile to the scientific and philosophic spirit, and that science and philosophy had only entered the Islamic world from non-Arab sources. The science and philosophy that are often called Arab are really Greek or Persian. Only one of the great Islamic philosophers was an Arab by birth, and to call their philosophy Arab, just because they wrote in Arabic, makes no more sense than to call medieval European philosophy Latin.

Keddie summarized Renan's argument and highlighted two major points:

- i. the Arabs by nature and temperament were hostile to science and philosophy, and these subjects were only highly developed in the Islamic world by non-Arabs (mainly by the people of Indo-European or 'Aryan' origin); and
- ii. Islam is essentially hostile to science. The hostility is so rampant, particularly during the Arabs dominated the period. A similar phenomenon continues even when the Turks take over the reign. However, the administration that has the scientific and philosophical development activities at the pinnacle of its power and is also influenced by the elements of Greek and Persian still achieves rapid progress in a short period.⁴³

Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq (1966) and Albert Hourani's explanation about Renan's lecture on *Islam and Science* were more detailed;

Renan admitted indeed the existence of so-called Arabic philosophy and science, but they were Arabic in nothing but language and Greco-Sassanian in content. They were entirely the work of non-Muslims in inner revolt against their own religion; by theologians and rulers alike they had been opposed, and so had been unable to influence the institutions of Islam. This opposition had been held in check so long as the Arabs and Persians had been in control of Islam, but it

reigned supreme when the Barbarians-Turks in the east, Berbers in the West took over the direction of the umma. The Turks had a total lack of the philosophic and scientific spirit, and human reason and progress, the state based on a revelation. But as European science spread, Islam world perish, and elsewhere Renan prophesied that this would happen soon. As an example of the way in which Muslim minds were opened by their contacts with Europe, he gave Tahtawi's description of Paris, which was known to him. Renan of course was thinking of Catholicism, and of religion in general, when he wrote of Islam. For him Islam, like Christianity, although in a different way, was an example of the tragic result of confusing two realms. Reason should dominate human action, having as its final cause human perfection and the triumph of civilization, and in the modern world science was the form in which reason expressed itself. ⁴⁴

In a reply by no means lacking in perspicacity, al-Afghani met Renan on his own ground. A remarkable point about al-Afghani's answer to Renan was that in many ways, it seemed more in line with 20th century ideas than Renan's original argument. It rejected Renan's racist argument and put in its place an evolutionary or developmental view of people. Renan, as al-Afghani correctly pointed out, stated that the Muslim religion opposed science. But al-Afghani added that, no people in its earliest stages had historically accepted science or philosophy. It was true, he agreed, that while religions were necessary to draw men out of barbarism, they tended to become intolerant.

This was only a phase through which religions passed, but men, eventually liberated themselves from the chains imposed on their reason, and restored religion to its proper place. They had done so in Christendom at the time of the Reformation and Islam, as it was several centuries younger, would also undergo reformation that had still yet to take place. Islam needed a Luther; this indeed was a favorite theme of al-Afghani, and perhaps he saw himself playing that role. Once this reformation took place, Islam would fit in as any other religion in playing an essential role as spiritual and moral guide. Al-Afghani emphasized that history had proven that Islam could not be summed up, as Renan had suggested, as a blind triumph of orthodoxy over reason. The rational

sciences that flourished truly belonged to the Muslims and Arabs as it was precisely the language which constituted nations and distinguished them from one another, ergo sciences expressed in Arabic must be that of Arabs. Thus, the Arabs could claim Ibn Sina and Ibn Rusyd as theirs in exactly the same way as the French claimed Mazarin and Napoleon. While it was true, that conflicts between religion and philosophy would always exist in Islam, nevertheless it was the nature of conflicts that was omnipresent within the human mind. ⁴⁵

Al-Afghani's answer to Renan vividly illustrated his understanding in the history of Western thought which originated from the renaissance in 15th century, the Enlightenment era in 18th century and the "New Enlightenment Era" in 19th century. The "New Enlightenment Era" that rooted in imperialism, positivism, and scientism, was truly thick with its Eurocentric congregation that assumed the superiority of Western civilization over others. It deprived non-European civilizations, especially the Islamic civilization from flourishing. Renan's thesis presumed Islam as incompatible with science and civilization. Bassam Tibi (1981) had the following to say about Renan's thesis:

Al-Afghani vigorously opposed the racist notions then current in Europe which claimed that only Europe could produce a culture and civilization, and ignored all highly developed non-European cultures including Islam. Among the supporters of this point of view was the influential philosopher Ernest Renan, who considered Islam incompatible with science and culture. This thesis affronted al-Afghani, who was then in Europe, that he decided to challenge Renan's assumptions publicly in the Journal des Debats. ⁴⁶

Renan (1891) in, 'The Future of Science' proved and emphasized his conviction towards a Eurocentric perspective and how he held to it:

*Islamism which, by a strange fate scarcely constituted as a religion in its earlier years has since then marched onward constantly acquiring new degrees of strength and stability, Islamism, I say will perish without striking a blow by the sheer influence of European science, and history will point to our century as the one in which the first causes of that immense event began to appear on the horizon. The Turkish and Egyptian youth coming to our schools in search of European science will take back with them that which is its inseparable corollary, the rational method, the spirit of experiment, the sentiment of the real, the impossibility of belief in religious traditions evidently conceived beyond all sphere of criticism. Rigidly orthodox Musulmans are already growing uneasy at this and pointing out the danger to the emigrating younger generation. Sheikh Riffa in the interesting narrative of his journey in Europe lays great stress on the deplorable errors that disfigure our books on science, such as for instance, the motion of the earth, etc.; and still deems it not utterly impossible to cleanse them of this poison. It is, however, patent that these heresies will shortly prove stronger than the Koran with minds initiated to modern methods. I fancy that there also will occur a Renaissance analogous to that of Europe in the fifteenth century, and which will be due, not to our literature, which has no more meaning to the Oriental than had the literature of the Greeks to the Arabs of the ninth and tenth centuries, but to our science, which, like that of the Greeks, having no stamp of nationality, is a pure work of the human intellect.*⁴⁷

Al-Afghani's answer to Renan was wholesome, not in any way chauvinistic, prejudiced, nor showing any animosity. As a matter of fact, his speech attempted to correct Renan's misinterpretation towards Islam and the Arabs. Al-Afghani saw that Christian history had also confronted with the rise of the science, philosophy, and modernism movement. The same went for the Islam *ummah's* history that also faced the same problem. In relation to that, religion should not be faulted and blamed when witnessing the reality of the *ummah's* decline. There was no religion that went against science, civilization and advancement. Who should be blamed when there are conflicts between science and religion, theology and philosophy, traditionalism and modernism ? Al-Afghani's answer to this was to put the blame on the ruling group which lacked the understanding of religion as well as on the religious group driven solely by personal needs. In addition, al-Afghani admitted the superiority of modern Western intellectuals.

But people of the West and Christian worshippers should have realized that Christianity had gone through a similar evolutionary process to achieve its superiority that started with its encounter and interaction with the Islamic civilization in the middle period. Al-Afghani stated that:

*All religions are intolerant, each one in its way. The Christian religion, I mean the society that follows its inspirations and its teaching and is formed in its image, has emerged from the first period to which I have just alluded; henceforth free and independent, it seems to advance rapidly on the road of progress and science, whereas Muslim society has not yet freed itself from the tutelage of religion. Realizing, however, that the Christian religion preceded the Muslim religion in the world by many centuries, I cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely in the path of civilization after the manner of Western society... I plead here with M. Renan not the cause of the Muslim religion, but that of several hundreds of millions of men, who would thus be condemned to live in barbarism and ignorance. In truth, the Muslim has tried to stifle science and stop its progress.*⁴⁸

In connection to this, al-Afghani used the phrase ‘*Muslim religion*’ (faith or the Muslims religion beliefs) and not the term ‘*Islam*’ when referring to the reasons for the decline or backwardness of the Islam *ummah*. On the other hand, he used the term ‘*Islam*’ when inviting the *ummah* to return to the real Islam or the pure Islam that had been taught and practiced by Prophet Muhammad SAW and his followers. The real Islam had called upon its *ummah* to gain knowledge in science and technology and to conquer the world from their success and their mastery of the knowledge as started by Prophet Muhammad SAW’s era in 7th century and enjoyed its Golden Age at the turn of 10th century. Kaloti (1974) quoting al-Afghani commented that:

*In truth, the Muslim religion sought to stifle learning, to trammel its progress; it succeeded in destroying the philosophic or intellectual movements and withdrew men’s minds from the search for scientific truth. It can be concluded that what he means by ‘**Muslim religion**’ here is not the original Islam of the early Muslims, but what has come to pass as ‘**Muslim religion**’ amongst the Muslims since the fifth or sixth century of the Hijrah, i.e., of it had become stratified and*

overlaid with the crust of individual opinions, alien accretions and superstitions beliefs. ⁴⁹

Al-Afghani's second point about Arab superiority that also contributed towards the advancement and development of science and philosophy was not in agreement with Renan's lecture which underestimated the Arabs. According to al-Afghani, history had proven that the Arabs had mastered science and philosophy and had conquered other elements of civilizations. They had been spearheaded by the Arab rulers until the encounter with the Western Christian world. Under the rule of the Arabs-Hellenism, Greek philosophy, and other Semitic cultures had gone through the process of Arabisation and Islamization.⁵⁰

Al-Afghani concluded his speech in a concrete way by saying:

It is permissible, however, to ask oneself why Arab civilization, after having thrown such a live light on the world, suddenly became extinguished; why this torch has not been relit since; and why the Arab world still remains buried in profound darkness. Here the responsibility of the Muslim religion appears complete. It is clear that whenever it became established, this religion tried to stifle the sciences and it was marvelously served in its designs by despotism. ⁵¹

As the answer and in response to the allegations by Renan, al-Afghani had in his first thesis argued that religion that has descended even from Abrahamic religion (also *Abrahamism*) groups, in which the monotheistic faiths emphasized and traced their common origin to Prophet Abraham or recognized a spiritual tradition identified with him, especially Islam, encourages the development of science and technology. The Islamic Golden Age and the European modern age were deeply embedded in this research, as R. Hooykaas (1972; xi) had put it in "*Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*":

*That other root of European civilization, the Judaeo-Christian, finds less positive appreciation. Current opinion would hold that science grew thanks to the classical and in spite of the biblical tradition. Even theologians and clergymen sometimes show great zeal in disavowing the ecclesiastical past and in deploring the retarding influence of the church on the development of science. The role played by Bible exegesis in offering resistance to new scientific theories on the origin of animal species has been emphasized again and again.*⁵²

The argument stressed by Hooykaas was also echoed by al-Afghani which emphasized:

*The Islamic religion is really is the closest of religions to science and knowledge ,and there is no incompatibility between science and knowledge and foundation of the Islamic faith... As for Al-Ghazali, who was called the Proof of Islam, in the book, Deliverance from Error, he says that someone who claims that the Islamic religion is incompatible with geometric proofs, philosophical demonstrations, and the laws of nature is an ignorant friend of Islam. The harm of this ignorant friend to Islam is greater than the harm of the heretics and enemies of Islam.*⁵³

The second thesis by al-Afghani, as an implicit response to allegations by Renan called for an approach to restore a fresh civilized interaction and dialogue between Islam and the West. Both forms of communiqué must seek common grounds shared by the two great civilizations. Hitherto, the avowal by Hazim Shah (2002) that can be authenticated with both of al-Afghani theses is:

*The interaction between Islam and the West has had a long history, stretching back to the Middle Ages. The encounters took various forms; namely military battles which determine political boundaries between the Islamic and Western worlds, the exchange in learning and knowledge between Islam, Greek learning and medieval Christendom, and more recently through colonialism and imperial expansion. The relationship has rarely been on equal terms, with either side gaining the upper hand at different periods of history.*⁵⁴

In rejecting the ‘Clash of Civilizations,’ a thesis that was sponsored by Samuel P. Huntington, Kai Hafez (2000) in “*The Islamic World and the West*” stated how important it was to arrange dialogues between civilizations which involved interactions between the Islamic and Western civilizations so that issues and conflicts between these

two supreme civilizations, as forecasted by Huntington could be watered down. To this, Kai Hafez had the following to state:

*Religious fundamentalism has inhibited dialogue not only in the West but also in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the potential for positive change does exist. The West has felt no compulsion to date to engage in dialogue due to the unequal distribution of power between the Western industrialized nations and the developing countries of the Islamic world. The Islamic states, for their part, have lost their ability since the end of the East-West conflict to manoeuvre between the blocs and to play off the superpowers against one another... It is not unthinkable, therefore, that the 'Clash of Civilizations' can be avoided-in spite of Huntington's contentions.*⁵⁵

Al-Afghani's third thesis contained his response towards Renan about the gap between faith and religious protagonist's criteria and science. It concluded that regardless of Islam or Christianity, the truth of the matter was that it had been organized or taught by their own respective religious text. If they were to return to the source or religion at its purest form then conflicts, confrontations, colonialism, and oppression would never have transpired to begin with. The past, present or future resistance between religion and the exploration of science should have never occurred. With that, it was important for the Muslim *ummah* to push towards Reformism and Revivalism movements in order to return the *ummah* to the principles of Excellency and its golden era. Similar thesis also ensued amongst the Christian worshippers. The necessity towards the Reformism movement could be observed from a summary by Charles Smith (1983) in *Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: A Biography of Muhammad Husayn Haykal* about the Reformist movement by al-Afghani:

Al-Afghani, though cognizant of positivism and other aspects of 19th century European thought, was presumably seeking to restore to Islam its preeminence within the Judeo-Christian tradition... Equally important for later reformist thought was al-Afghani's Islamic revival with the European reformation and

Martin Luther's leadership of a Christian renaissance which al-Afghani believed to be the basis of European progress in the modern era. ⁵⁶

The return to the true and pure religion (*fundamentalism*) would only serve to further strengthen the *ummah*. This was emphasized by Al-Afghani in *Al-'Urwatul Wuthqa* that was since interpreted and studied by Albert Hourani (1987):

Virtue, civilization, strength are essentially connected with each other.... Al-Afghani resolves the paradox by saying that neither the achievements of Christian nor the failure of Muslim countries are due to their religions. The Christian peoples grew strong because the church grew up within the walls of the Roman Empire and incorporated its pagan beliefs and virtues; the Muslim peoples became weak because the truth of Islam was corrupted by successive waves of falsity. Christians are strong because they are not really Christian; Muslims are weak because they are not really Muslim. ⁵⁷

Aside from its explicit content, there were other circumstances surrounding al-Afghani's response to Renan's lecture on '*Islam and Science*' which indicated al-Afghani's neo traditionalist and revivalist attitude and his estrangement from Islamic orthodoxy. For instance, Renan's rejoinder to al-Afghani, published in *Journal des Debats* on May 19, 1883, indicated that al-Afghani had made an impression on this eminent rationalist philosopher as a man of his own stripe. Muslim authors, like Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq(1966), Mahmud Abu Rayyah(1961), Ahmad Amin(1979), 'Abd al-Qadir al-Maghribi(1948), and Muhammad Basha al-Makhzumi(1965) were accustomed to quoting from this rejoinder in their entirety. The first line was from the publication of Renan's *Islam and Science*. It stated that:

A remarkably intelligent Afghan Sheikh having presented observations on the above lecture, I answered the next day, in the same journal, as follows: We read yesterday with the interest they merited the very judicious reflections that my last lecture at the Sorbonne suggested to Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin. There is nothing more instructive than studying the ideas of an enlightened Asiatic in their original and sincere form. It is by listening to the most diverse voices, coming from the four corners of the globe, in favor of rationalism, that one

*becomes convinced that if religions divide men, Reason brings them together; and that there is only one Reason.*⁵⁸

Prior to it, Renan had said that he met al-Afghani about two months earlier which would have been in March 1883, shortly after his arrival in Paris, through a collaborator of *Journal des Debats*, M. Ghanim. He went on to say:

Few people have produced on me a more vivid impression. It is in large measure the conversation I had with him that decided me to choose as a subject for my lecture at the Sorbonne the relations between the scientific spirit and Islam. Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is an Afghan entirely divorced from the prejudices of Islam; he belongs to those energetic races of Iran, near India, where the Aryan spirit lives still so energetically under the superficial layer of official Islam. He is the best proof of the great axiom we have often proclaimed, namely, that religions are worth the same as the races that profess them. The liberty of his thought, his noble and loyal character, made me believe while I was talking with him, that I had before me, restored to life, one of my old acquaintances-Avicenna, Averroes, or another of those great infidels who represented for five centuries the tradition of human mind. For me there was an especially vivid contrast when I compared this striking apparition with the spectacle presented by the Muslim countries this side of Persia-countries in which scientific and philosophic curiosity is so rare. Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is the best case of ethnic protest against religious conquest that one could cite...

In the learned article of the Sheikh I see only one point on which we are really in disagreement... Everything written in Latin is not the glory of Rome; everything written in Greek is not Hellenic; everything written in Arabic is not an Arab product; everything done in a Christian country is not the effect of Christianity; everything done in a Muslim country is not a fruit of Islam... These sorts of distinctions are necessary if one does not wish history to be a tissue of approximations and misunderstandings...

*One point on which I may have appeared unjust to the Sheikh is that I did not develop enough the idea that all revealed religions manifest themselves as hostile to positive science, and that Christianity in this respect is not superior to Islam. This is beyond doubt. Galileo was no better treated by Catholicism than Averroes by Islam.*⁵⁹

Renan then went on to say that his opinion on this point was well known, and that he often stated:

The human mind must be free of all supernatural belief if it wishes to work on its essential work, which is the construction of positive science. This does not imply violent destruction nor brusque rupture. The Christian does not have to abandon Christianity nor the Muslim Islam. The enlightened parties of Christianity and Islam should arrive at that state of benevolent indifference where religious beliefs become inoffensive. This has happened in about half of the Christian

*countries, let us hope it will happen in Islam. Naturally on that day the Sheikh and I will agree in applauding... There will be distinguished individuals (though there will be few as distinguished as Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin) who will separate ourselves from Catholicism. Certain countries, with time, will more or less break with the religion of the Koran; but I doubt that the movement of renaissance will be made with the support of official Islam.*⁶⁰

Finally, Renan noted quite justly that al-Afghani had provided additional arguments in favor of his own basic points:

*Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin seems to me to have brought considerable arguments for my two fundamental theses: During the first half of its existence Islam did not stop the scientific movement from existing in Muslim lands; in the second half it stifled in its breast the scientific movement, and that to its grief.*⁶¹

2.4 CONCLUSION

To conclude, we may state that al-Afghani's response to Renan's arguments on Islam, science and modernity in 19th century thought indicated his beliefs in Islam compared to other religions, that it was the one true, complete, and perfect system of life, which could satisfy all the desires of the human spirit and needs. Like other Muslim revivalists and reformists of his day, he was willing to accept the judgment on Christianity given by European free thinkers like Renan; that it was unreasonable and was the enemy of science and progress. But he wished to show that these criticisms did not apply to Islam; but on the contrary, Islam was in harmony with the principles discovered by scientific reason, and was indeed the religion demanded by reasons and proofs. Citing Renan's argument, Christianity had failed, he said; but Islam, being neither irrational nor intolerant, could save the secular world from that revolutionary chaos, the thought which haunted French philosophers and thinkers of his time.

It was one of the secrets of al-Afghani's attraction that he could show other Muslims the Islam which again carries a universal mission. If we remember that this was al-Afghani's arguments and view of Islam, therefore there is no reason to doubt al-Afghani conviction towards Islam. Indeed it was impossible to understand his thought or religious and political activities, unless we appreciate his acceptance of the principle and fundamental teachings of Islam that include 'aqidah, syari'ah and akhlaq. That in all his mind and might: the existence of God, the existence of prophecy, that Prophet Muhammad SAW was the last, the seal and the greatest of the prophets of God sent to all mankind; and that the *al-Quran* contained the word of God; unaltered and uncorrupted. Al-Afghani could have also made many adjustments to modern thought,

but he did nothing of that sort. It was precisely because he believed in the truth of Islam; however, he was insistent that it should be interpreted accurately. What then was the true and genuine Islam? First of all, it was the belief in a transcendent God, the creator of the universe, and a rejection of all those creeds which maintained that the universe was self-created and that the world of man was a fit object of worship. For al-Afghani, this was the essence of Islam; though he was tolerant of divergences in the doctrine of law, he would not tolerate any attack on the fundamentals of Islam.

In his response to Renan, al-Afghani concluded the following:

- i. Islam traditional center, as a cultural hub is better than the traditional Western center, Christianity and the West became great only by borrowing from Islamic culture. There were the Islamist pride: The Muslims and Arabs developed science, technology and philosophy in '*The Golden Age of Islamic Intellectual Era*', which the West had borrowed;
- ii. revivalist and reformist Muslims' main role was to emphasize Islam as an ideology - to strengthen its position as a focal point for identity and solidarity against the attacks of the West, and to use it as a rallying point for the repulsion of Western conquerors; and
- iii. al-Afghani showed an approach to the Muslim *ummah*, which allowed them to adopt philosophical and scientific ideas from the West without abandoning their religious identity or pride in their own Islamic traditions and legacies.

NOTES

- 1 See Abu-Rabi', M. Ibrahim. 1998. *Al-Afghani's Contribution to the Intellectual Awakening of the Ummah*. Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research. P. 3.

For further information on Modern Arab or Muslim attitudes on the West please refer to Abu-Rabi', M.Ibrahim. 1997. *The Concept of the Other in Modern Arab Thought: From Muhammad Abduh to Abdullah Laroui. Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. Vol.8 (1) 1997. Pp. 85-97.

See also Laroui, Abdullah. 1976. *The Crisis of the Arab Intelligentsia: Traditionalism or Historicism?* Berkeley: University of California Press. P.vii.

See also Djait, H. 1986. *Europe and Islam*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp.137-8.

- 2 See Abu-Rabi', M. Ibrahim. 1996. *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*. New York: State University of New York Press. P. 2.

- 3 See Sharabi, Hisham. 1970. *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1875-1914*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press. Pp.3-6.

See also Baharuddin, Azizan. 1998. *Al-Afghani and Scientific Spirit*. Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research. Pp. 1-2.

- 4 Baharuddin, Azizan. op.cit. P. 2.

- 5 See al-Maghribi, 'Abd al-Qadir. 1948. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Zikriyyat wa Ahadith. (Conservation with Al-Afghani and Recollection about him)*. al-Qahirah: Dar al-Ma'arif bi Misr. Pp. 44-5.

- 6 See Kaloti, Sami Abdullah. 1974. *The Reformation of Islam and The Impact of Jamal al-Din, al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh on Islamic Education*. A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. P. 32.

- 7 Sharabi. 1970. op.cit. Pp. 6-7.

- 8 See Waarderburg, Jacques. 1996. *Some Thoughts on Modernity and Modern Muslim Thinking about Islam in Islam and the Challenge of Modernity: Historical and Contemporary Contexts*. edited by Sharifah Shifa al-Attas. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC. P. 317.

- 9 Sharabi. op. cit. Pp. 6-8.

- 10 Ibid. Pp. 7-10.

See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. 1966. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani Tarikhuhu wa Risalatuhu wa Mabadi`uhu*. al-Qahirah: al-Majlis al-A'la li al-Syu`un al-Islamiyyah. Pp. 13-15.

See also Fazlur Rahman. 1958. *Muslim Modernism in the Indo-Pakistan Sub-Continent*. Bull, *School of Oriental and African Studies*. Vol. xxi, 1958. P. 91.

See also Ashraf, Syed Ali. 1979. *The Predicament of the Muslim Intelligentsia. Islamic Quarterly*. Vol. 23, 1979. no. 4. Pp. 161-172.

See also Adams, Charles C. 1968. *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muhammad Abduh*. New York: Russell & Russell. P 1.

The term Islamic modernism or Muhammadan modernism was coined by Charles Adams and used by scholars in this broad, imprecise sense. In this context, Adams emphasized that Islamic Modernism as follows;

“It constitutes an attempt to free the religion of Islam from the shackles of a too rigid orthodoxy, and to accomplish reforms which will render it adaptable to the complex demands of modern life...”

See also Sharabi. op. cit. Pp. 6-7.

11 Ibid. P. 24.

See also Rida, Muhammad Rashid. 1931. *Tarikh al-Ustaz al-Imam al-Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh*. Vol.1, al-Qahirah: Matba’ah al-Manar. P.79. Rashid Rida wrote on al-Afghani in *Tarikh al-Ustaz* as follows;

He was the first reformer of al-Azhar and the first reform Muslim education...and he would have brought Egypt’s political transformation...

See also Bennabi, Malek. 1988. *Islam in History and Society*. Trans. by Asma Rashid. Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute. P. 26.

See also al-Makhzumi, Muhammad Basha. 1965. *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Husayni*. Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr al-Hadith. Pp. 161-162.

See also Amin, ‘Uthman. 1955. *Ra’id al-Fikr al-Misr, Muhammad ‘Abduh*. al-Qahirah: Maktabat al-Anjalu al-Misriyyah. P. 24.

He mentioned that *...some writers have compared the movement of Islamic reform to the Protestant revolt...*

See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. 1961. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*. al-Qahirah: Dar al-Ma’arif bi Misr. Pp.15-18.

See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. 1966. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani Tarikhuhu wa Risalatuhu wa Mabadi`uhu*. al-Qahirah: al-Majlis al-A’la li al-Syu’un al-Islamiyyah. Pp. 13-16.

See also Amin, Ahmad. 1979. *Zu’ama` al-Islah fi al-‘Asr al-Hadith*. al-Qahirah: Maktabah al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah. P. 89.

al-Afghani recognized by Ahmad Amin such as follows:

Despite that, al-Afghani was, among many Muslims, even regarded as a great hero who devoted his life to defending Islam from Western’s onslaught not only religiously, intellectually, and culturally, but also politically.

See also Adams, Charles C. 1968. op. cit. Pp 34-35.

Charles C.Adams point out the important al-Afghani’s attitude towards traditionalism and modernism approaches such follows:

After he had read the ancient Arabic authorities in this way and imparted new life to them, he introduced his pupils to a number of modern works on various sciences, which had been translated into Arabic. Thus, still another world was opened before the gaze of Muhammad Abduh, that of to be scarcely a less decisive influence in his life than was the independent attitude of thought towards the ancient authorities which Jamal exemplified in his teaching.

See also Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1951. *Islam Confronted by Western Secularism* in D.S.Franck. ed. *Islam in the Modern World*, Washington D.C.: *The Middle East Institute*. Pp 4-9.

Cantwell Smith mentioned that al-Afghani as the catalyst of Islamic Revolution in the 19th century.

See also Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1957. *Islam in Modern History*. Princeton. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Pp. 48-49.

Smith has pointed out that Afghani's activities active in both internal reform and external defense. He inspired political revolutionaries and venerable scholars. He advocated both local nationalisms and pan-Islam."

See also Badawi, Zaki. 1978. *The Reformers of Egypt*. London: Croom Helm. P. 19.

Zaki Badawi observes that Afghani as the epithet of the Awakener of the East' with which Rashid Rida often prefaces the name of al-Afghani is probably on exaggeration. He, however, was not alone in attributing to al-Afghani a major role in the disturbed reaction of the Muslim world to European expansion in the last quarter of the 19th century.

See also 'Uthman, Fathi. 1998. *The Impact of al-Afghani's Thought on the Liberation Movement*. in *International Conference on Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Asian Renaissance*. Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research. Pp.2-3.

12 Sharabi. op. cit. Pp. 35-37.

See also Kaloti. op.cit. Pp. 34-36.

See also Muhammad Qutub. 1987. *Waqi'una al-Mu'asir*. Jeddah: Muassasat al-Madinah li al-Sohafah wa al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nasyr. Pp. 15-18.

13 See Badawi, Zaki. 1978. op.cit. P.29. See also Gibb, Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen. 1972. *Modern Trends in Islam*. New York: Octagon Books. P. 29.

See also Rida, Rashid. 1931. op.cit. Pp. 82-83.

See also 'al-Maghribi,'Abd al-Qadir. 1948. op.cit. P. 95.

14 Haim, Sylvia. 1976. *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*. Los Angeles: University of California Press. P.7.

15 See Keddie, R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialisme: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani'*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. P.39.

See also Hourani Albert. 1987. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge & London: Cambridge University Press. P. 112.

See also Azra, Azyumardi. 1998. *Al-Afghani's Political Thought* in *International Conference on Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Asian Renaissance*. February, 23 1998. Kuala Lumpur: Institute for Policy Research. Pp. 1-2.

See also Tibi, Bassam. 1981. *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry*. Edited and translated by Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett. London: Macmillan. P.142.

16 Haim, S. op.cit. Pp.3-5.

See also Azra, A. op.cit. Pp.2-8.

See also Lee,S. Dwight. 1942. *The Origin of Pan-Islamism. The American Historical Review.* Vol 48, No.2, 1942. P. 283.

See also Goldziher, Ignaz. 1965. "Djamal ad-Din al-Afghani," in *The Encyclopedia of Islam.* Vol.II, New Edition, edited by B.Lewis, Ch.Pellat and J. Schacht. Leiden: E.J.Brill. Pp.416-417.

See also Landau. M. Jacob, 1990. *The Politics of Pan-Islam, Ideology and Organization.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. P. 13.

- 17 See Al-Afghani.1925. *ar-Radd 'ala al-Dahriyyin.* Al-Qahirah : al-Matba'ah al-Rahmaniyyah. A translation of *The Refutation of the Materialists* by Nikki R.Keddie and Hamid Algar. 1968. in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism, Political and Religious Writings of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani.* Berkeley & Los Angeles : University of California Press. Pp. 175-180.

- 18 See al-Makhzumi. Khatirat. op.cit. P.155.

See also Kaloti. op. cit. P. 59.

See also Amin, Ahmad. op.cit. P.114. *Ahmad Amin pointed out of Afghani's attitude on Islam and science which was as follows;*

He declared that religion should not contradict scientific facts. If it appeared to do so than it must be re-interpreted. He decried the ignorant and rigid ulema of his day whose attitude led to the accusation that the Quran contradicts the established scientific facts, but the Quran is innocent of what they say and the Quran must be regarded as too noble to contradict scientific facts especially with regard to general principles.

- 19 Al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din. 1882. *Lecture on Teaching and Learning.* translated from Persian by Nikki R. Keddie and Hamid Algar in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani* op.cit. P.107.

On this point, see Mohd Hazim Shah Abdul Murad. 2002. *The Encounter between Islam and the West: Changing Relationships in Knowledge and Power, with special reference to the history of Science.* in *Seminar on Islam, Globalization and the Knowledge Economy: Issues and Challenges.* 26 March 2002, Shah Alam. Pp.30-31.

From historical argument we have true picture that Muslims contributed to various fields of sciences and the Islamic religion is the closest of religions to science, and the foundation of Islamic faith. We also proved that based on historical argument that Islamic faith and culture are very compatible with science and technology.

To quote Hazim Shah (2002:30-31):

Muslim have often argued for the compatibility of science and technology with the Islamic faith and culture by pointing out to the glorious achievements of the Muslims in science, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy from 9th to the 14th centuries. Examples abound and a casual survey would reveal to us names such as Ibn Haytham (physics), Al-Khwarizmi (mathematics), Ibn Shatir (astronomy), Ibn Sina (medicine), Al-Razi (chemistry) and Ibn Rushdn (philosophy). In fact the Islamic world took the lead in those fields of learning until about the 14th century. Had Islam been incompatible with the study of the natural sciences, it is often argued, then, the scientific leadership of the Islamic world which lasted for about five centuries in the medieval period, would not have been possible. What are we to make out of this? Can this historical argument be validly used in order to argue for a similar compatibility between Islam and modern science and technology?

See also Yeo, Richard. 1993. *Defining Science: William Whewell. Natural Knowledge, and Public Debate in Early Victorian Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.3.

20 See Butterworth, E.Charles. 1982. *Prudence Versus Legitimacy: The Persistent Theme in Islamic Political Thought*. in *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*. Edited by Ali E. Hillal Dessouki. New York: Praeger Publishers. P.88.

21 See Keddie, R. Nikki. 1972. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp.63-64.

See also Ali, Sheikh Jameil. 2002. *Sayyid Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani and the West*. New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors. Pp.94-95.

See also Berkes, Niyazi. 1964. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: Mc Gill University Press. Pp.180-181.

Niyazi Berkes describes a background of Afghani's speech at *Dar ul-Funun* as follows:

The opening ceremony took place on February 20, 1870. Speeches were given in Turkish by Saffet Pasa (Minister of Education), by Munif (President of the Council of Education), and by Tahsin (Director of the Dar-ul-Funun); in French by Jean Aristotle's (an Ottoman Greek member of the council of education, professor in the Greek gymnasium, and later ,professor of ethnography and history of art in the Turkish Academy of Fine Arts. The Final speech was in Arabic and by one Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a man of excellence and perfection from Afghanistan, who has recently been, in Istanbul by way of traveling," as the official communiqué put it.

See also Browne, G. Edward. 1966. *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*. London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd. P.6.

22 Berkes, H. op.cit. P.182.

23 ibid. Pp.181-182.

See also Esposito, L. John. 1988. *Islam the Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press. P. 131.

According to Esposito, Thus in Istanbul, Al-Afghani seems to have supported the ideas of 'modernizers', but his style was different from others. He supported the reformation on modern lines for self-strengthening ends,to arouse Muslims to need for intellectual revival and rational attitudes. He wanted to advance scientifically and technically in order to combat the West without adopting Western attitudes. He exhorted Muslims to realize that Islam was the religion of reason and science - a dynamic, progressive creative force capable of responding to the demands of modernity.

24 See Watt, William Montgomery. 1991. *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and misperceptions*. London and New York: Routledge. P.119.

25 See Al-Husry, S. Khaldun. 1966. *Three Reformers: A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought*. Beirut: Khayats. Pp.117-119.

26 See Dessouki, Ali E. Hillal. ed. 1982. *The Islamic Resurgence: Sources, Dynamics, and Implications in Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World*. New York: Praeger Publishers. Pp.4-5.

See also Yusuf Ali, A. 1983. *The Holy Qur`an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Brentwood, Laryland USA : Amana Corp. Surah XIII/11. P. 606.

The meaning of the verse 11 Surah XIII : God is not intent on punishment. He created man virtuous and pure; He gave him intelligence and knowledge; He surrounded him with all sorts of instruments of His grace and mercy. If, in spite of all this, man distorts his own will and goes against God's Will, yet is God's forgiveness open to him if he take it. It is only when he has made his own sight blind and changed his own nature or soul away from the beautiful mould in which God formed it, that God's Wrath will descend on him and the favorable position in which God placed him will be changed. When once the punishment comes, there is no turning it back. None of the things which he relied upon – other than God- can possibly protect him.

27 See Dessouki. op. cit. 1982. P. 5.

28 See Arkoun, Mohammed. 1988. *Arab Thought*. translated by Jasmer Singh. New Delhi: S.Chand and Company. Pp.78-79.

On Islam and Modernity, see also Rahman, Fazlul. 1982. *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp.6-9.

29 See 'Ammarah, Muhammad. 1984. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Muftara 'alayh*. al-Qahirah: Dar al-Syuruq. P.107.

30 Kaloti. *ibid*, P.42.

31 Butterworth, E.C. op.cit. P.81.

32 Abu Rabi'. 1996. op. cit. P.9.

See also Djait, H. op.cit. Pp. 137-138.

H. Djait comments on the phenomenon of nahdah by saying that,

It must be acknowledged that the cultural phenomenon of the nahdah (renaissance) paved the way for both these forms of development by reconstructing the Arab heritage, by restoring the connection to the splendors of an age now given classic status, in a word, by spreading an atmosphere and ideology of renaissance.

See also Dekmejian, R. Hrair. 1985. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World*. New York: Syracuse University Press. Pp.18-19.

According to Dekmejian, Islamic reform equal by Salafiyyah, He emphasized that,

Ottoman misrule and decline in the face European imperialism engendered reformist reactions during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The outstanding catalyst of this intellectual movement was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani who preached Pan-Islamic solidarity and resistance to European imperialism though a return to Islam in a scientifically modernized setting.

See also Husain, Mir Zohair, 1995. *Global Islamic Politics*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers. *The Meaning of Islamic Revivals*. Pp.1-4.

See also Esposito. 1999. *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* Third Edition, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp.48-49.

Esposito mentioned that... *By the 19th century a clear shift of power had occurred, as the decline of Muslim fortunes reversed the relationship of Islam to the West. Increasingly, Muslims found themselves on the defensive in the face of European expansion. Whereas the primary challenge to Islamic identity and unity in the 18th and 19th centuries was generally seen as internal, the real threat of the West was not experienced until the late 19th and early 20th century.*

- 33 See Al-Sa'idi, 'Abd al-Muta'al. 1956. *Al-Mujaddidun fi al-Islam min al-Qarn al-Awwal ila al-Rabi' 'Asyar*. al-Qahirah: Maktabat al-Adab. Pp. 493-495.
- See also Vatikiotis, P.J. 1969. *The Modern History of Egypt*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. Pp.176-178.
- See also Ahmed, Jamal Mohammed. 1968. *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*. London: Oxford University Press. Pp.15-17.
- See also 'Abd al-Fattah, Muhammad. 1958. *Asyhar Masyahir 'Udaba' al-Syarq*. al-Qahirah: al-Maktabah al-Mahmudiyah al-Tijariyyah. Pp. 47-48.
- See also Blunt, Wilfred Scawen. 1965. *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*. London: T.Fisher Unwin. Pp. 100-103.
- See also Browne, G. Edward. 1966. *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*. London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd. Pp. 6-11.
- 34 See Sabra, Abdul Hamid. I. 1987. *The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement*. Hist.Sci. XXV. (1987). P.229.
- See also al-Tawil, Tawfiq. 1968. *Al-'Arab wa al-'Ilm fi 'Asr al-Islam al-Zahabi*. al-Qahirah: Dar al-Nahdah al-'Arabiyyah. P.77
- See also Lindberg, David C. ed. 1988. *Science in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. P.55.
- 35 Beatty, John Louis and Johnson Oliver A.eds. 1982. *Heritage of Western Civilization*. Fifth Edition, Volume II, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. Pp 121-124.
- 36 Beatty and Johnson. 1982. op. cit. P.123
- 37 See Watt, W.Montgomery. 1983. *Islam and Christian Today: A Contribution to Dialogue*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Chapter 8, *Islam and Christianity Today: Contemporary Problems and Responses*. Pp.141-143.
- 38 See Baumer, Franklin L. 1977. *Modern European Thought; Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600-1950*. New York: Macmillan Publishers. London: Collier Macmillan Publishers. Pp.305-306.
- See also Aiken, Henry. D. 1956. *The Age of Ideology: The 19th Century Philosophers*. New York: The New American Library, Inc. P.115. Chapter VI: *The Father of Positivism, Auguste Comte*.
- What follows is similar to the criteria of New Enlightenment in 19th century thought devised by Aiken in this book. P.115.
- In the meantime, however, the intransigent secularist spirit of the Enlightenment still remained alive, and in the age which followed there were many philosophers who were opposed to even such attenuated reinterpretations of the Christian world-view as the idealists had proposed.*
- See also Merz, John Theodore. 1965. *A History of European Thought in the 19th Century*. Vol.1, New York: Dover Publication, Inc. Pp.75-89. Merz emphasized that 19th century thought is the scientific and philosophical century.
- 39 Sharabi. op. cit. Pp.66-67.
- 40 Ibid. Pp.67-71.

See also Renan, Ernest J. 1891. *The Future of Science: Ideas of 1848*. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd. Preface. Pp.v-vi.

See also Hourani, Albert. op.cit. Pp.113-114.

See also Renan, Ernest. 1866. *Averroes et L'Averroisme Essai Historique*. Paris: Michel Levy Freres Libraires Editeurs. Reprinted by Georg Olms Verlag. Hildesheim, Zurich and New York. 1986.

- 41 See Amin, Ahmad. op.cit. Pp.92-93. See also Al-Bahi, Muhammad. 1960. *Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadith wa Silatuhu bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi*. Second Edition, al-Qahirah: Maktabat Wahbah. P.86.

See also Hourani, Albert. op. cit. Pp.120-123.

See also 'Abd al-Raziq, Mustafa. 1983. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghan*, in *al-'Urwat ul-Wuthqa* by Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din and 'Abduh, Muhammad. Bayrut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi. Pp.23-24.

See also Kedourie, Ellie. 1966. *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*. London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd. Pp. 41-45.

See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. op.cit. pp. 128-132. See also Keddie, R. Nikki. op.cit. Pp. 84-97.

- 42 Amin, Ahmad. op. cit. Pp.92-93.

- 43 Keddie. op. cit. Ibid. P.85.

- 44 See 'Abd al-Raziq, Mustafa. 1966. *Tamhid li Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah*. al-Qahirah : Matba'ah Lajnah al-Ta`lif wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nasyr. Pp.11-12.

'Abd al-Raziq quoted that explanation from Renan's thesis. 1866. *Averroes et L'averroisme*. op.cit. in preface. Pp.7-8 and p.11.

See also Hourani, Albert. op. cit. Pp.120-121.

- 45 See Hourani. Ibid. Pp.121-122.
See also Keddie. op. cit. Pp.85-86.

- 46 Bassam, Tibi. op. cit. P.65.

- 47 See Renan, J.Ernest. op.cit. p.43. Renan mentioned that;

The study of Greek science and philosophy had already produced an analogous result among the Mussulmans in the Middle Ages. Averroes may be considered a rationalist pure and simple. But this splendid onward movement was checked by the rigid Mussulmans. The numbers and the influence of the philosophers were not sufficiently large to carry the day, as was the case in Europe.

- 48 Keddie, R. Nikki. 1972. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. op. cit. P.87.

- 49 Kaloti. op.cit. Pp.76-79.

- 50 See Al-Nasyar, 'Ali Sami. 1962. *Nasy`at al-Fikr al-Falsafi Fi al-Islam*. Iskandariyyah: Al-Ma'arif bi al-Iskandariyyah. Pp.25-26.

See also Keddie. op. cit. P.88.

- 51 Ibid. Pp.88-89
- 52 See Hooykaas. R. 1972. *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*. Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, P.xi.
- 53 See Al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din. 1882. *Lecture on Teaching and Learning*. in Keddie. Ibid. Pp.107-108.
- 54 See Hazim Shah. op.cit. Pp. 24-25.
- 55 See Hafez, Kai. ed. 2000. *The Islamic World and the West*. Leiden, Boston and Koln: Brill. Pp.15-16.
- See also Watt, W. M. *Muslim-Christian Encounters*. op.cit. Pp. 125-126.
- See also Watt, W. M. *Islam and Christian Today*. op.cit. Pp. 144-146.
- 56 See Smith, D .Charles. 1983. *Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: A Biography of Muhammad Husayn Haykal*. Albany: State University of New York Press. P. 16.
- 57 See Hourani. op. cit. Pp. 127-129.
- See also, Al-Afghani. *al-'Urwatul Wuthqa*. op. cit. p.89.
- 58 See Keddie.1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*. op. cit. Pp. 91.
- 59 Ibid. P. 92.
- 60 Ibid. Pp. 92-93.
- 61 Ibid. P. 93.
- See also 'Abd al-Raziq, Mustafa. in *al-'Urwat ul-Wuthqa*. op. cit. Pp. 23-24.
- See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. op. cit. Pp.40-43.
- See also, Amin, Ahmad. op. cit. Pp.97-99.
- See also al-Maghribi. op. cit. Pp.126-128
- See also al-Makhzumi. op. cit. Pp. 113-117.

CHAPTER 3

SAYYID JAMAL AL-DIN AL-AFGHANI'S RELIGIOUS AND INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

3.1 LIFE AND WORKS

Sayyid Jamal al-Din bin Sayyid Safdar (1838-1897) commonly known as al-Afghani, al-Asadabadi as well as al-Husayni was an outstanding figure during the end of the nineteenth century. He was considered and held by the East and the West, as a person of high reputation as a defender, a reformer, a new traditionalist and revivalist of Islam. As a result, he was looked upon as a pioneer and an apostle of Islamic Revivalism, especially of anti-imperialist activism, known both for his wide-ranging thought and for his advocacy of Pan-Islamic unity as a means to strengthen the Muslim world against the West.

According to Ludwig W. Adamec (2001) in *Historical Dictionary of Islam* and Vali Nasr (2006) in *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Asadābādī and commonly known as Al-Afghani was regarded as a political activist and Islamic ideologist in the Muslim world during the late 19th century, particularly in the Middle East, South Asia and Europe. One of the founders of Islamic Modernism and an advocate of Pan-Islamic unity, he was seen as someone who has less interested in theology than he was in organizing a Muslim response to Western pressure. ¹

Perhaps some of the most lasting contributions of al-Afghani to the Muslim world lie in his intellectual discourses, philosophical ideas, and the religious movement,

much more so than his social and political contributions. Al-Afghani's contributions must be viewed in the context of intellectual history of the Muslim world in the 19th century. And because of al-Afghani's brilliance and critical thinking, many of the discussions which he initiated, could still be found in the discourses of contemporary Muslim intellectuals. Much of al-Afghani's reputation in the Muslim world is posthumous, and he was far less known in his lifetime than post-death; a tragedy shared by many other influential historical figures.

He was also recognized in Arabic literature especially by distinguished Arabic and Muslim scholars like Muhammad Abduh (1925) in *Ar-Radd 'ala al-Dahriyyin*, Jirji Zaydan (1970) in *Tarajim Mashahir al-Sharq fi al-Qarn al-Tasi* 'Ashar, Mustafa 'Abd al-Razziq (1983) in *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*, Rashid Rida (1931) in *Tarikh al-Ustaz al-Imam al-Sheikh Muhammad Abduh*, Ahmad Amin (1979) in *Zu'ama' al-Islah fi al-'Asr al-Hadith*, Mahmud Abu Rayyah (1966) in *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Tarikhuhu wa Risalatuhu wa Mabadi'uhu*, Muhammad Basha al-Makhzumi (1965) in *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Husaini*, Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1971) in *'Abqari al-Islah wa al-Ta'lim al-Imam Muhammad 'Abduh*, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Maghribi (1960) in *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Zikriyyat wa Ahadith*, Muhammad al-Bahi (1960) in *Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadith wa Silatuhu bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi* and Murtadha Muttahari (1982) in *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah fi al-Qarn al-Rabi* 'Ashar al-Hijri, as *Mujaddid, Muslih, Hakim al-Sharq* or *The Sage of the East*.²

Edward G Browne (1966), wrote about him in *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* :

Sayyid Jamal al-Din, a man of enormous force of character, prodigious learning, untiring activity, dauntless courage, extraordinary eloquence, both in speech and writing, and an appearance equally striking and majestic. He was once a philosopher, writer, orator and journalist, but above all politician and was regarded by his admirers as a great patriot and by his antagonists as a dangerous agitator. He visited at one time or another, most of the lands of Islam and a great many of European capitals and came in close relations, sometimes friendly, more often hostile with many of the leading men of his time, both in East and West. ³

W.C. Smith (1951) from Mc Gill University in his article: *Islam confronted by Western Secularism*, named al-Afghani as one of the most interesting Muslim personalities of the 19th century. With his ideology of Pan-Islamism and his involvement in every seemingly significant movement of the Muslim world, he was certainly a revolutionist who reacted against the West. He was also a crucial figure in the struggle against despotism, imperialism and the blind imitation of the West. In such pursuits he was regarded if not the initiator, as the catalyst of Islamic revivalism of the century.⁴

But there are many aspects of al-Afghani's life that remained elusive while a number of malicious accusations had been recorded about his life and thrown the reputation of this *prodigy of the East* into uncertainty and, at times, slanderous associations. There had been a furious debate surrounding the origins of al-Afghani, whether he was an Afghani or a Persian. There were differing opinions on his place of birth and his school of thought (his being *Sunni* or *Shi'i*). There are two leading theories explaining his birth and nationality. The first theory suggested that he was born and brought up in the village of Asadabad near Kanar, a dependency of Kabul in Afghanistan and was the progeny of the Sayyid family (a descendent of Prophet Muhammad SAW). His father's name was Sayyid Safdar, whose lineage could be

traced back to the eminent ulama` Sayyid Ali Tirmizi, who came to India with Babar and died in 1583. This theory was supported and originated by al-Afghani himself and his famous Arab disciple, Muhammad Abduh.⁵ Other contemporary biographical accounts, written by Arabic writers such as Jirji Zaidan, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida published shortly after the death of al-Afghani in 1897, also reinforced this conjecture that he was an Afghan by birth. In this respect, they believed that al-Afghani was *Sunni* Afghan.⁶

Another supposition regarding al-Afghani's birthplace was that he was born and brought up not at Asadabad near Kabul, but in fact in the village of Asadabad near the town of Hamadan, a town located in the West of Iran. This was a claim favored by many Iranian scholars and some Western scholars like Nikki R. Keddie, Albert Hourani and Elie Kedouri. They had even produced documental proofs to further substantiate this theory.⁷ Al-Afghani's nephew Sayyid Lutfullah Asadabadi and his son Sifatullah Asadabadi in their two volume books, *Haqiqat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, stated that their prominent uncle Al-Afghani was born in the month of Sha'aban 1254 (October-November 1838) in the village of Asadabad near Hamadan, Iran. ⁸

In addition to that, Browne (1966) had the following to say about al-Afghani:

*It was affirmed by all Persian scholars and by so great an authority on Persian affairs as General Hountum Schindler, that Afghani was in reality born not at Asadabad near Kabul, but at Asadabad near Hamadan in Persia, in which case he can hardly have been so closely associated with Afghan politics in 1857-68 as he asserts. It has been suggested that, being in reality a Persian, he claimed to be an Afghan, partly in order to be able to pass more conveniently as an orthodox Sunni Muhammadan and partly in order to withdraw himself from the dubious protection accorded by the Persian Government to its subjects.*⁹

There were other Western scholars who also deliberated that al-Afghani concealed his Iranian origin. The early biographies of al-Afghani, written in Arabic by his disciples, were skewed both for expedient reasons. Al-Afghani often distorted his own life by hiding his Persian Shi'i background, especially in his last fifteen years, not wishing to publicize his ideas that were at odds with the normative Islam.

Likewise, the argument concerning the early life of al-Afghani in regards to his school of thought prolongs until today. The controversy surrounding the birthplace of al-Afghani is far from solved due to his alleged practice of presenting himself differently to different people. This is because he feared of being caught in clandestine political activities. His only concern was on liberating Muslims from European encroachments and to reform their lives and politics. The stories he told about himself were largely useful in achieving these larger goals. Thus, the background of the native birth of al-Afghani not is important for us as a means to understanding his education and growth, what more since he was a scholar who has enlightened the contemporary legacy of the Muslim world, even when he belonged neither to the Afghanistan nor Persia.¹⁰

Interestingly, al-Afghani had managed to avoid revealing his affiliation with any specific school of thought, for it would have been contrary to the principles of his mission: Unity. Thus, he seemed to have always preferred being non-controversial in this regard. He avoided himself from being associated with any particular school and simply rather preferred to be called a Muslim, picking up different schools on different issues. Leaving aside the controversy of his sectarian affiliations, it is little to doubt on the fact of him being a Sayyid, a descendent of the Prophet SAW. According to Elie

Kedourie (1966) in *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* and Vali Nasr (2006:103) in *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, among the reasons why Al-Afghani was thought to have had less than deep religious faith, was his lack of interest in finding theologically common ground between Shi'i and Sunni (despite the fact that he was very interested in political unity between the two groups).¹¹

The sources were unanimous about the fact that al-Afghani, acquired a substantial expertise in almost all the field of education known at the time. Those who believed that he was brought up in Afghanistan agreed that at the age of eight, his father himself undertook the responsibility of his education. Al-Afghani, since his early childhood, was very intelligent and had an acute skill in discernment whereby within ten years of his studies embraced almost the whole range of Muslim sciences; namely Arabic grammar, philosophy and rhetoric in all their branches. This included history, Muslim theology in all its branches, also; Sufism, physics, metaphysics, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and anatomy.¹²

And those who believed Persia as his birthplace asserted that from age 5 to 10, al-Afghani was said to have studied at home with his father. During that period he quickly learned Arabic and the *Quran*. At the age of ten, he was taken by his father to Qazvin school for studies. In Qazvin city of Persia, al-Afghani and his father remained for a brief period and later left for Tehran and finally reached the holy Shrine city of Najaf and Karbala where al-Afghani continued his education. In Najaf, al-Afghani was said to have studied with Sheikh Murtaza Ansari for four years. Sheikh Murtaza gave al-Afghani an *ijazah* (certificate of advance knowledge) and paid his expenses during

the three years of education.¹³ According to Edward Mortimer (1982:11) in *Faith and Power*, the followers of Shaikh `Ahsa`i, a revivalist cleric have been greatly influenced by the thinking of reforms initiated by al-Afghani.¹⁴ After his early education in Islamic traditions, al-Afghani, while he was in India, became acquainted with modern Western knowledge.

However, there were controversies regarding al-Afghani's religious orthodoxy, and occasionally even irreligion, unbelief or atheism which were primarily raised and supported by some orientalist. Elie Kedourie with the support of Nikki R. Keddie and Sylvia G. Haim, had tried to create doubt about al-Afghani's religious orthodoxy. They tried to imply that both al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, while showcasing their piety, really held esoteric beliefs which were incompatible with orthodox and traditional Islam.¹⁵

The thoughts of al-Afghani encompass multiple sources of knowledge ranging from religious sciences to rational knowledge. He discussed all of the knowledge according to different situations whilst time and again referring them to the main source of knowledge taught by the Prophet who had passed it to his followers. In this regard al-Afghani insisted:

*I saw that this world was only an unreal mirage and appearance. Its power was precarious and its sufferings unlimited, hiding a venom in every delight, an anger in every benefit. Thus I was inevitably led to remove myself from these tumults and to break all my ties of attachment. And thanks to God and all those who were near him, I was saved from the world of shadows and penetrated the universe of devotion, resting on the sweetness of the cradle of lights. Today I have chosen for company the Prophet SAW and his companions.*¹⁶

The statement above reaffirmed the development of al-Afghani's thoughts and his belief; thus, squashed and proved that every accusation created by some orientalist about his belief as baseless and trite.

It was also reported by a number of sources that suggested al-Afghani travelled to India in his late teens, when he was about seventeen or eighteen (1856-1858). Some biographers in fact stated that he stayed in India for *a year and some months*, whilst others proposed that he spent almost *five years* (1856-1860). In an autobiographical account written in himself himself himself himself 1866, al-Afghani said that he had been wondering for five years, including five years in India and this document also suggested that he stayed in India for a few years until 1861.¹⁷

It was clear that his first journey to India influenced al-Afghani to a large extent. He became acquainted with modern Western knowledge. It was his experience in India that influenced his subsequent path of strongly opposing British's colonials and life-long hatred of imperialism. As the situation of Indian Muslims deteriorated, British gradually eliminated the Muslim ruling class; allaying him on the path of strong opposition against them and a hatred for imperialism. There were discriminations and atrocities against the Muslims of India throughout, causing him to be overwhelmed by a by a growing concern on the plight of Indian Muslims.

Following his first stay in India, al-Afghani performed pilgrimage to Macca, making stays at several places along the way. He travelled to Iraq, Persia, Baluchistan and probably Istanbul. Finally, he arrived in Afghanistan in 1866. It was also reported that he arrived in Afghanistan earlier and entered the service of Doast Muhammad

Khan, the ruler of Kabul from 1841-1863 and participated in the latter campaign against Herat. From 1861 to 1868, al-Afghani served as an advisor to three kings of Kabul; Doast Muhammad, Shir Ali and Azam Khan.

In Afghanistan, al-Afghani played a leading role in Afghan politics. It was in Afghanistan, that al-Afghani really came into the limelight in his capacity as the special advisor to Azam Khan (1866-1868). During that period, al-Afghani began instigating Azam Khan against the British Government in India and succeeded in giving a ruinous blow to British ambitions, designs and influence in Afghanistan. Thus, after becoming a menace to British imperial interests, al-Afghani had been put under the strict surveillance of the British Government.¹⁸

In 1869, Azam Khan was ousted by his half-brother Sher Ali, who showed indifference towards al-Afghani. As a consequence, al-Afghani's influence on Afghan politics ended. He hoped to win over Sher Ali with his anti-British program, a hopeless task in view of British support for the new *amir*. So, he left Afghanistan in dismay. Sher Ali refused al-Afghani's request to be allowed to go to Bukhara, and he, for that reason set out for Macca by the way of India in 1869. There, he was received with honor by the Indian Government, which, however, prevented him from meeting the Indian Muslim leaders. He was placed under their strict supervision. A month after his arrival, they cast him in one of its ships to Suez. Some biographies had even given more detailed account of this period and stated that; British asked or coerced him to leave India and kept him under strict surveillance during his stay in India so as to prevent him from doing any harm to British interests in India. Consequently, instead of going to Macca he

visited Cairo for the first time and then decided to visit Constantinople (Istanbul), where he was well received by the Ottomans.¹⁹

In July 1869, al-Afghani reached Cairo, where he stayed for forty days and he frequented the leading Al-Azhar University. He held numerous conversations with many lecturers and students, as well as giving lessons to out-standing (selected) numbers of students.²⁰ Al-Afghani later made his way to Istanbul, Turkey, in late 1869 where he received a warm welcome by the Prime Minister, Ali Pasha, and the President of the Science Academy, Munif Effendi. Within six months in Istanbul, al-Afghani was elected as a member of Turkish Academy. Al-Afghani's stay in Istanbul coincided with the last stage of the *Tanzimat*, literally the reorganization of reformed period. Thus, in Turkey he was more concerned with the issue of modernization such as the scientific and educational advancement of the West which was seen as a new kind of threat to the Muslim world.

In February 1870, al-Afghani was chosen to deliver a speech at the opening ceremony of the Darul Funun University. In this speech, he urged Muslims to wake up from their long slumber of neglect, and to support the Reformation on modern lines. Finally, al-Afghani's lecture in November 1870 at the Darul Funun had brought about his expulsion from Turkey.²¹ After the episode in Istanbul, al-Afghani returned to Cairo, where he arrived on March 22, 1871. He apparently was invited by Riyad Pasha, the then Prime Minister of Egypt Government and he stayed on for eight years from 1871 until his expulsion in August, 1879. Perhaps, it was the most fruitful period of his life.

During the early period of his stay in Egypt, he was for the most part engaged in teaching at Al-Azhar University and at his residence. He taught people, especially the Al-Azhar students using the most advanced text-books on various Islamic subjects, philosophy, jurisprudence, astronomy and mysticism. Al-Afghani's magnetic personality and wide range of knowledge attracted many eager followers among young Egyptians who attended his lectures as disciples. These men later played important roles in Egypt. Among his students were Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Ahmad and Said Zaghul.²²

During that period, Egypt was ruled by Khedive Ismail, who on the one hand helped modernize Egyptian society, while on the other reduced Egypt to virtual bankruptcy and Western control. The situation soon became desperate and demanding forcing Al-Afghani to concentrate on teaching and preaching revolutionary ideas of resistance against Western domination through Muslim solidarity until 1878. He taught them several things, among others: The danger of European interventions, the need for national unity in resisting it, the need for a broader unity of the Islamic people, and of course, the need for a constitution to limit the ruler's power. He encouraged his disciples to write articles on various subjects including literature, philosophy, religion and politics to form a public opinion and to publish them in newspapers. Through them, he had a part in bringing about the first stirrings of national consciousness, by making a strong public opinion viable.²³

After 1876, al-Afghani's criticism of Government policies and foreign activities in Egypt through the press began to intensify. He became more involved in local politics. He gave quite a number of speeches and wrote a number of articles, arousing

Egyptians into action, and encouraged publications of journals, such as *Misr* and *al-Tijarah*. By 1877 al-Afghani began to enter directly involve in politics, through speeches and lectures both to the educated elite and to the masses; and through journalism.

Al-Afghani continued his anti-British stance by publishing a long article in *Misr* on the English and the Afghans, *Al-Bayan fi al-Ingliz wa al-Afghan* and also wrote a book on the history of Afghanistan, *Tatimmat al-Bayan fi Tarikh al-Afghan*, apparently written in late 1878, deduced from some of his references, to the beginning of the Anglo-Russian war in 1878. The main purpose of this work was to incite the Egyptians against British hegemony by highlighting Afghans struggle against British.

Khedive Ismail was then deposed in 1879. His fall was brought about by the British and French. He was later succeeded by Khedive Taufiq, with whom al-Afghani seems to have had ties. Whatever promises of reformation and personal influence al-Afghani may have had, or thought he had, had come to nothing. Taufiq (1879) saw al-Afghani's presence in Egypt as dangerous and, instigated by the British Government, ordered al-Afghani's expulsion from Egypt. According to al-Afghani's statement this was caused by the British pressure. Browne had mentioned that Lord Vivian, the British Consul-General, suspicious of al-Afghani's political activities, succeeded in influencing Taufiq Pasha to order his expulsion from Egypt, together with his faithful disciple and servant, Abu Turab or Arif in September, 1879.

After his banishment from Egypt, al-Afghani went to India; where he spent some time in Hyderabad, but was kept under surveillance by the British Government in

India. There, al-Afghani's role began to evolve to an Islamic reformist, defender of Islamic fundamentalist thought and Pan-Islamic idea to carry the banner of Islamic solidarity. In Hyderabad, India, al-Afghani strongly condemned the naturalist sect, led by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, in his speeches and writings. Al-Afghani also wrote the *Refutation of the Materialists*, originally in Persian in 1881. This book was entitled *The Truth about the Neicheri Sect and an Explanation of the Neicheris*. The *neicheris*, a term coined by followers of Sayyid Ahmad Khan; literally meant the followers of nature. Muhammad Abduh and Abu Turab later translated this book into Arabic in 1866 entitled "*Ar-Radd 'ala ad-Dahriyyin*". In this book, al-Afghani presents himself as the passionate defender of religion in general and Islam in particular against the attacks of the *neicheris* and the unorthodox, including his attack on the men of the Tanzimat who had befriended him in Istanbul, Turkey. It is this work that has often been used by both the East and the West, as proof that al-Afghani was a strong defender and champion of Islam against the heretical and Western liberal tendencies.²⁴

In India, al-Afghani wrote other articles mostly in Persian and translated into English as follows:

- i. *The Benefits of Newspapers*
- ii. *Teaching and Education*
- iii. *The True Causes of Man's Happiness and Distress*
- iv. *The Philosophy of National Unity and the Truth about Unity of Language*
- v. *The Benefit of Philosophy*
- vi. *Commentary on the Commentator*
- vii. *Lecture on Teaching and Learning.*

These articles were written in Persian and translated into English, published in the Hyderabad Journal, *Mu'allim-i-Shafiq* from the first issue in December, 1880, through its tenth issue in October, 1881. Two articles," *Commentary on the Commentator*," and "*Lecture on Teaching and Learning*" which al-Afghani delivered on November 1882 in Calcutta at Albert Hall, were then collected and published by Abd al-Ghafur Shahbaz in Calcutta in 1884 entitled *Maqalat-i-Jamaliyyah* or al-Afghani's Articles.

In Hyderabad, al-Afghani did not participate in political activities. However he attempted to reform religious, social and educational conditions of Indian Muslims. Nonetheless, he continued propagating his anti-Western revolutionary ideas through his writings and speeches. As developments in Egypt took a serious turn, al-Afghani was kept under surveillance by the British Government of India and then summoned from Hyderabad to return to Calcutta and subsequently detained and kept under house arrest for some time. In Calcutta, he formed a small circle of admirers; wrote some articles and delivered a lecture at the Albert Hall. He was apparently kept under watch by the Government in Calcutta, until the ongoing war in Egypt was over and Egyptian nationalist or 'Urabi movements were defeated, with Egypt occupied by the English. Subsequent to this in 1882, al-Afghani was permitted to leave for a destination of his own choice. He left Calcutta in late 1882 and after a visit to England; he reached France and stayed in Paris in January 1883.²⁵

In France, al-Afghani wrote several articles in different newspapers, such as *The Orient and The Orientals*. *Answer to Renan* notably was written in response to a lecture

by Ernest Renan on *Islam and Science*, in the *Journal des Debats* of May 18, 1883, *Letter to India* April 24, 1883, and *the Mahdi* in December, 1883. He was later joined by his disciple Muhammad Abduh, who was exiled from Egypt after the failure of Urabi's movement. He started a journal *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa* which became famous in 1884, and was considered as the organ of the society *Jama'at al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*. This journal was mainly concerned with political, religious, social issues of the Muslim world. Its contents were of philosophical articles, yet strongly condemned the Westerners, mainly British imperialism. However, the journal's publication was short lived when it suddenly ceased publication. Only eighteen issues were published between March and October 1884. The reasons of the journal abrupt end were the lack of funds, and mainly due to the British Governments antagonistic approach towards its publications. They stopped its distribution from entering India and Egypt. According to Browne, the next number (No.18) was the last as the British Government was alarmed at the fierceness of its attacks and at its growing influence and subsequently stopped its entrance into India. They had probably employed other means to put an end to its existence.²⁶

Whilst in Paris, al-Afghani remained occupied with a number of other things. In addition to journalism, he also remained involved in political plans concerning Sudanese Mahdi, the British Government, the Ottoman Sultanate and the Russian expansion in central Asian Muslim countries. It was philo-Arab Englishman Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the author of *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*, who got al-Afghani involved in the British Government negotiations to seek settlement schemes for the Egyptian questions and of the Sudanese Mahdi uprising. Al-Afghani tried to remain a conduit between the British Government and the Sudanese Mahdi. For this

very purpose, in response to an invitation by W.S. Blunt, al-Afghani visited England in July 1885 where he met up with Randolph Churchill, Secretary of State for British Government in India, and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff.²⁷ Sadly, these plans which al-Afghani prepared with his British counter-parts had come to nothing.

During that period in England, al-Afghani developed contacts with Sultan Abdul Hamid II, The Ottoman ruler. Through emissaries and letters, al-Afghani offered his services as a wandering Pan-Islamic messianic emissary who endorsed Sultan Abdul Hamid II as the symbol of Muslim unity. Finally, he left London in 1885 and then went to Persia where he stayed only for a shorter period. During this short period he wrote several articles, such as “*The Suckling Baby*”, “*On the Personal Pleasures of Human Beings*” and “*On Pride*”. These articles were present in Sifatullah Tehran edition of *Maqalat-i Jamaliyyeh*. Nasir al-Din Shah, uncaused by al-Afghani’s fearless manner and his strong views on Islamic revivalism, forced him to leave Iran. Al-Afghani then arrived in Moscow, May 1887. The visit was arranged by Kartkov, the prominent Russian chauvinist editor and publisher of Moscow Gazette.

In Russia, al-Afghani rendered great services to the Muslim subject of Russia by persuading the Tsar to allow them to print the *Quran* and other religious books. That aside, al-Afghani was also collaborating with other anti-British elements, particularly Dalip Singh, son of Ranjit Singh, the famous Sikh leader. They collaborated in issuing manifesto updates from Moscow, signed by the executive of the Indian Liberation Society, which were printed and distributed with Fenian help in Paris. The duo began instigating an uprising in India against the British. However, Elie Kedourie reported that

with Katkov's death in 1887, al-Afghani and Dalip Singh's efforts were abruptly halted.

In 1889 al-Afghani met Nasir al-Din, Shah of Persia on his third trip to Europe. In Munich, Germany, the Shah urged him to return to Persia and even offered him the post of Prime Minister. Browne attested that when the Shah urged the Sayyid (al-Afghani) to return with him to Persia, offering to make him Prime Minister, al-Afghani first declined, on the ground that he wished to visit the Paris Exhibition. Nonetheless, he was finally overwhelmed by his insistence despite the warnings of his friend Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir al-Maghribi, who said to him, "How can he invite you to fill such a position, seeing that you are notorious for your efforts to strengthen the Sunni faith?" To this the Sayyid replied, "Mere fancy and folly on this part," but eventually, he accompanied the Shah to Persia and remained there for some time.

After a while, however, after observing an unfavorable change in the Shah's attitude towards him, he asked permission to return to Europe, which was refused with some discourtesy. Thereupon he took refuge in the Shrine of Shah 'Abdul 'Azim, where he remained for seven months. His hostility towards the Shah was now declared: he denounced him in speech and writing, campaigned for the Shah's impeachment, and surrounded him with disciples, of whom twelve were especially prominent. Amongst these were Shaykh 'Ali of Qazwin, Mirza Aqa Khan, Mirza Riza of Kirman (who shot Nasir al-Din Shah on May 1, 1896, and was hanged in Tehran on August 12, 1896), and Mirza Muhammad 'Ali Khan of Tehran.

Subsequently, al-Afghani through his speeches and writings expanded his protests and criticisms and even began to indulge in more open attacks on the

Government for its selfishness, autocracy and selling out Iran to foreign interests, as well as the infiltration of Western ideas of Government reform. Al-Afghani was very much supported by a number of prominent disciples, mostly '*ulama`*' who held secret meetings, in which al-Afghani put forth his aim of reformation and combating autocracy. He found Iranian soil to be more fertile in receiving his ideas of resisting Western encroachment; mainly due to the '*Ulama`*'s support.

This open opposition of the Shah finally convinced him to deport al-Afghani from the country even though it involved serious steps of violating the renowned sanctuary he himself had provided to al-Afghani. The Shah sent 500 horsemen to arrest him (even when he was, at the time confined to his bed by illness), and brought him under escort to the Turkish frontier. This act caused great indignation amongst al-Afghani's admirers, and apparently, was one of the chief causes which brought about the death of Nasir al-Din Shah in 1896.

Afterwards, al-Afghani went initially to Baghdad, followed by Basra and from there to London. In Basra and Baghdad, al-Afghani wrote letters to his followers and to prominent '*ulama`*', asking them to rise against the Shah, and his policies which consequently sold Iran to foreign interests.

In the autumn of 1891, al-Afghani arrived in London where he continued his struggle; giving several lectures and wrote several articles in different newspapers. He joined Malkum Khan, an Iranian reformer and European educator, who was dismissed from the Government by the Shah in relation to his numerous propagandas and attacks on the Iranian Government. During his stay in London, al-Afghani contributed several

articles in February and March, 1892 to an Arabic periodical entitled *Ziya` ul-Khafiqayn`* (*The Light of the Two Hemispheres*). The articles were *The Reign of Terror in Persia*, attacking the Shah's character and even his sanity with great violence.

Finally, al-Afghani was invited by Sultan Abdul Hamid II (The Ottoman Caliph) back to Istanbul, which he finally accepted in summer of 1892 with the intention to perform public service, Muslim regeneration unity and reform. The motive of the Caliph in inviting him was not clear; most probably the Sultan's invitation was to control and keep him under surveillance and to use al-Afghani for his own ostensible interest. Al-Afghani in expecting these, had said that he did not fear prison because in the past, they have imprisoned me physically but as for my thought, it is not in their power to imprison it.²⁸

In Istanbul, al-Afghani was well received and initially well-treated by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. During this period, he exercised his influence on the Ottoman Sultan and his court, and enjoyed his favors. At the same time, al-Afghani wrote letters to all of the prominent *ulama`s* urging them to support the Sultan's claim to the Caliphate. This was to bring a working understanding between the Turkish Sunnis, the Persian and Iraqis Shi'ite, based on the recognition, especially by the Persian *ulama`s* of the Ottoman Caliphate, and recognition by the Turks of the Shah of Persia as head of Shiites. The working understanding also included the abolition of sundry practices on both sides, tending to keep the existing hostility between these two great divisions of Muslim Ummah and to unite them against the common enemy, the West. The idea of al-Afghani's Pan-Islamism to promote the Caliphate Plan gained support of Sultan Abdul Hamid II and received warm welcome from many quarters of Shiites and

Sunnites *ulama*'s, but failed to produce favorable results due to the caliph's vested interests as he had by then realized that the plan endangered him too. This aroused the caliph's animosity further against al-Afghani and his followers.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II asked al-Afghani to stop his violent public attacks on Nasir al-Din Shah, the Shah of Persia. To this al-Afghani replied, quoted by Browne, "*In obedience to the command of the Caliph of the age, I forgive the Shah of Persia*". Since then al-Afghani was not allowed to publish anything against the Shah, and even his agitate activities against British were apparently kept in check by Sultan Abdul Hamid II during al-Afghani's resident in Istanbul.

After the assassination of Nasir ul-Din Shah of Persia on May 1, 1896 by al-Afghani's disciple Mirza Riza Kirmani, the relationship between al-Afghani and the Sultan of Ottoman deteriorated badly. Adding fuel to their relationships was the hostility towards him by Sheikh Abu al-Huda, staunch opponent of al-Afghani, who denounced him as a heretic and a deceiver to the Sultan. The secret meeting between al-Afghani and Khedive of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi, made the Sultan more suspicious about al-Afghani. Abdul Hamid II presumed that they were discussing an Arab Caliphate under the control Khedive of Egypt and even thought of al-Afghani as supporter of Arab Caliph, which he was not. Thinking of al-Afghani as dangerous, he kept him under strict surveillance. Al-Afghani tried to leave Istanbul but was not allowed. Consequently, he was forced to spend his remaining time as a prisoner of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, during which his political importance was marginalized.

After the death of Nasir ul-Din Shah, Iranian Government accused al-Afghani as the man behind the assassination and demanded his extradition from the Turkish Government. Sultan Abdul Hamid II refused the surrender of al-Afghani for reasons not known. But his three Persian disciples were extradited as part of the demand to the Persian authorities. They were imprisoned and secretly put to death at Tabriz.

Finally, on March 9, 1897, al-Afghani died. The cause of his death remains mysterious but the Ottoman Government claimed that he died of cancer in his chin for which he was operated on several times. His doctor evidently attributed the problem to his heavy cigarette smoking and tea drinking habits. Still, there were others who believed that al-Afghani was poisoned by the Sultan's orders. Al-Afghani was inoculated in the lip with some poisonous matter by the Sultan's surgeon, causing pathological conditions superficially resembling cancer. At the time of his death, his Christian servant, Jurji Kuchi attended to him. Al-Afghani was buried quietly and with a little ceremony in the cemetery of Sheykhler Mezarlighi near Nishan Tashi. In late 1944, due to the request of the Afghan government, his remains were taken to Afghanistan and laid in Kabul inside the Kabul University and a mausoleum was erected for him there. In Tehran, the capital of Iran, there is a square and a street named after him (*Asad Abadi Square* and *Asad Abadi Avenue* in Yusef Abad).²⁹

3.2 RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT OF AL-AFGHANI AS MUSLIM REVIVALIST AND NEW TRADITIONALIST

The question of what influences a thinker or philosopher or activist is almost always trickier than it might appear at a first glance. As already noted, al-Afghani voiced ideas related to internal reform on pan-Islam and external defense against Western imperialism that were first put forward by the Young Ottomans or the revivalist movements. They were influenced by al-Afghani's Islamic revivalism. As the pioneer of Islamic revivalism whose influence was felt in several countries, al-Afghani influenced a variety of trends that rejected both pure traditionalism and pure Westernize. Although al-Afghani in his later life and since his death had been associated with pan-Islam, his pan-Islamic writings occupied only part of the key decade of the 1880s. In the course of his lifetime, he promoted a variety of often contradictory viewpoints and causes, and his thought had some affinities with various trends in the Muslim world. These included the advocacy of Islamic revivalism movement, especially by his Egyptian disciple Muhammad Abduh; the proposal of the traditionalist Islamic revivalism in different forms by Abduh's follower Rashid Rida; by the Muslim Brethren with Hassan al-Banna at helm; and by various contemporary Islamist movements, the Young Ottoman movement, as well as pan-Arabism and other forms of nationalism. Although al-Afghani's influence on these movements was often exaggerated, his interpretation of Islam in contemporary modern life and often political terms displayed a mode of thought that became increasingly popular in the Muslim world over the years.

As a result of colonial domination, the Islamic world experienced cataclysmic changes in the field of economic and social relations, as well as on the ideological front.

The Western imperialism precipitated them as both religious, and political crisis. For the first time, much of the Muslim world had lost its political and cultural sovereignty to Christian Europe.³⁰ From the initial stages of European expansion into the Islamic world, Muslims in many places forcefully resisted the new situation. Many great personalities of the Islamic world responded and struggled against the Western imperialism. In this respect, al-Afghani was regarded as one of the important personalities and original leader who endeavored to reinterpret traditional Islamic ideas so as to meet the agonizing problems brought by the then ever growing intent incursions of the West into the Middle East.

Al-Afghani gave his blood and sweat to defend Islam and all the Islamic countries, threatened by the danger of European expansion. He is remembered as an indefatigable fighter, a tireless activist, who roamed amongst the Muslim world, calling for internal reforms in order to defend, and eventually drive out the West. Albert Hourani (1987) in *“Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939”* emphasized that al-Afghani did not belong to the quietist majority of Muslim thinkers who believed that they should protest against injustice but submit to it. He rather accepted the view of the minority who believed in the right of revolt.³¹ The anti-imperialistic attitude remained strong and ingrained throughout his life.

Probably, it was during al-Afghani first travel to India and the influence of Indian experiences that set him on the path of strong opposition to Western imperialism, which characterized and influenced much of his life. The Indian Muslims were among the first in the modern world to have faced the problem of the conversion of a former abode of Islam by foreign conquest, into an abode of war. Actually, al-Afghani’s first

stay in India, around 1856-1858 was in the period right after the unexpected British conquests of further Indian territory, and his stay probably coincided with Mutiny 1856, a major incident in the Indian history known to be as the first war of independence. During this event, Muslim leaders played a primary role in calling for *jihad* against the British. Al-Afghani also experienced the aftermath of mutiny; when Muslims were regarded by the British Government as major threat to their imperialist policy in India. British official policy was to disfavor and distrust the Muslims, largely due to their role in the Mutiny.

Al-Afghani regarded British imperialism more dangerous than any other Western powers. In later years, al-Afghani frequently voiced the idea that the British were out to destroy Islam and to convert the Muslims to Christianity. In an article "*The Materialists in India*", written in "*Al-'Urwa ul-Wuthqa*", al-Afghani started by criticizing and denouncing the British imperialistic designs in India. In the article, al-Afghani blamed British imperialists who aimed to destroy the Muslims in India as they were the only obstacle in their way to complete subjugation. Al-Afghani regarded the British as "The enemy of the Muslims" not only because of their military attacks that he feared, but also because of other subtler ways that were utilized. They had conquered India by deception insinuating themselves into the Moughal Empire under the pretext of helping the Moughals. They sowed the seeds of division which weakened their belief, subtly exposing the British designs to undermine Muslims of India. Hence, al-Afghani throughout his life criticized the British occupations of India through his writings, speeches and even made plans and clandestine activities to liberate India from the British colonialism.

During al-Afghani's second visit to India between 1879 and 1882, it became clear from his discourses that he advocated Muslim-Hindu cooperation against the British. In this respect, al-Afghani gave a lecture in Calcutta in 1882 entitled the "*Lecture on Teaching and Learning*". In this lecture, while glorifying the Indian past, al-Afghani appealed to the Muslims in the country to take pride in Indian history, thereby advocating the policy of Indian National Unity and solidarity against the foreign rule all along with the Muslim unity.

In his April, 1883 article entitled "*Letter on India*", submitted to the Paris newspaper "*L'Intransigeant*", al-Afghani strongly criticized the British rule of India by stating that the dominant aim of the British in recent years had been to become masters of all the routes to India. British knew that all Indians regardless their caste, class or religion hated them and that a single shot fired by a foreign power on or near the Indian frontier would be sufficient to set off a nationwide uprising. So, al-Afghani, in that article of his stressed for a Muslim-Hindu unity rather than a separate Muslim action in India against the British. He desired to unite the opponents of the Great Britain in order to liberate India from British's control. Al-Afghani also indicated his hope for a Franco-Russo-Ottoman alliance against British expansionist designs.

Nikki R. Keddie (1972) in "*Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*", pointed out that al-Afghani; throughout his life supported the Indian cause and criticized British occupation of India. It was in Afghanistan between 1866 and 1868 that al-Afghani came out openly and actively against the British schemes. He gave counsels to King of Kabul, Azam Khan to follow anti-British course, during which the British ambitions in Afghanistan was ruined.³² Peter Mansfield (1976), in "*The Arabs*"

mentioned that al-Afghani in his later period of stay in Egypt remained more involved in political activities against the local titular government and their Western imperialists. Egypt, in the 1870's was going through a crisis brought about by increasing indebtedness to end dependence on European bankers and capitalists, but was worsened by the opening of Suez Canal in 1869, which had given the Western powers increasing interest in the control of Egyptian Government and its finances.³³ The deteriorating situation of Egypt and increasing control of foreign powers, especially British and France, convinced al-Afghani to come forward as a political agitator and proponent of change.

Al-Afghani, up to the years before 1878 in Egypt seemed to have concentrated and continued his teaching while widening his circle of acquaintances. In the late 1870's, he encouraged his disciples to launch newspapers to propagate his ideas and to have discussions on relevant political issues of the day. During these years, political interest of Egyptians rose dramatically. Al-Afghani used journalism as a tool to arouse public opinions against the Western capitalization of Egyptian Government. Hourani wrote, "He encouraged his disciples to write, to publish newspapers, to form a public opinion, and through them he had a part in bringing about the first stirring of national consciousness and discontent under Ismail."

Al-Afghani in 1878 and 1879 had also chosen to deliver fiery public speeches with strong focus on Western imperialists, especially British, and was in favor of preserving Egyptian independence. In his speech in Alexandria, al-Afghani was reported to have said:

*“Oh! You poor-fellah! You break the heart of the earth in order to draw substances from it and support your family. Why do you not break the heart of your oppressor? Why do you not break the heart of those who eat the fruit of your labor?”*³⁴

The tantalizing speeches of al-Afghani had predominantly influenced Egyptians to rise against governmental and foreign oppression. In a recorded speech given by him on a visit to Alexandria, “*Hakim al-Sharq*” or “*The Sage of the East*”; a laudatory title under which he had come to be known in Egypt, as supported by *Misr*, al-Afghani was reported to have said that the spirit of nationality (*jinsiyyah*) of the Eastern people had been weakened and this had caused the weakness of all classes and of the political bodies.

He used other political methods in Egypt to oppose the policies of Khedive Ismail and the growing Western dominance over Egypt. He used Egyptian free Masonic lodge as a vehicle for political intrigue and change. At times, it is also reported that al-Afghani resort to clandestine political methods. He, for instance, incited the youth against authority. Jamal M. Ahmed (1968) in “*The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*,” wrote;

*”Soon after his arrival in Egypt, the young patriots launched a campaign of nocturnal circulars against Riaz Pasha’s Government; on one occasion the streets of Cairo were littered with thousands of anonymous sheets attacking the Khedive and his foreign supporters”.*³⁵

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1922) in *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*, mentioned that Muhammad Abduh told him in 1903 that al-Afghani was interested in the assassination of Ismail and that he (Abduh) himself strongly approved.³⁶

Finally, Khedive Ismail who had done so much to mortgage Egypt to private European interests, abdicated in June 1879. His abdication was brought about by the British and French, who then became the power behind Khedive Taufiq, the son of Ismail and also his successor. Al-Afghani at that time favored the ousting of Khedive Ismail and had expected Taufiq to favor him and to follow his program to reform and lessening the Western control unlike his father. However, he soon became disillusioned, and the violent speeches against foreigners that he had been making since 1878, apparently resumed in the summer of 1879.

Al-Afghani left no stone unturned in Egypt in stopping Western intervention. His followers continued their struggle even after his expulsion from Egypt and several of them joined the *Urabi* movement and worked for the *Urabi* Government after it took power. Then again, they were subsequently exiled after the British victory and occupation of Egypt in 1882.

In order to resist common danger of Western expansionism, al-Afghani preached the message of Islamic solidarity, which the Westerners call as Pan-Islamism. According to Dwight E. Lee (1942) in "*The Origin of Pan-Islamism*," al-Afghani was given credit for being perhaps the earliest and greatest intellectual founder and leader of Pan-Islamism.³⁷ Using his skill as an orator and his tireless efforts to awaken the Muslims in struggle for a better future, al-Afghani was also considered one of the most convincing champions of Pan-Islamism ideas.³⁸ During his lifetime, he toured the Muslim countries and then Europe with lengthy spells of residence in several of them. His travels included Persia, Afghanistan, India, Turkey, Hijaz, Egypt, France, England, and Russia.³⁹ Al-Afghani called upon Muslims, rulers, '*ulama`*' and the people alike to

strive for this solidarity and unity, without which the Muslims could never survive and flourish. He regarded the lack of unity among Muslims as the main cause of their downfall. According to al-Afghani, the *ummah* in its great days had all the necessary attributes of a flourishing civilization: social development, individual development, belief in reason, unity and solidarity but sadly, all had been lost. He however believed what had once been achieved could be achieved again by restoring the unity of the *ummah*. The reassertion of Muslim identity and solidarity was prerequisite for the restoration of political and cultural independence of *Ummah*. He also called on the Muslims to forget their internal rivalries. In the wake of growing political penetration of European powers, especially Britain, al-Afghani reiterated to Muslims the Quranic verse: “*All the Muslims are brethren*”, and called the Muslims to forget their internal wrangles, be it political or religious; and unite themselves to withstand outside dangers.

Jurji Zaydan (1970) in “*Celebrated Men of the East*” remembered al-Afghani as:

*“It will be gathered from this brief summary of his life and deeds that the goal towards which all his actions were directed and the pivot on which all his hopes turned, was the unanimity of Islam and the bringing together of all Muslims in all parts of the world into one Islamic Empire under the protection of one supreme Caliph. In this endeavor he spent all his energies and for this end, he abandoned all worldly ambitions taking to himself no wife and adopting no profession.”*⁴⁰

Al-Afghani actually started campaigning for Islamic unity early during his stay at Makkah, where he founded a Pan-Islamic society named “*Umm ul-Qura*”, which was aimed at enhancing the concept of Islamic unity with the whole Islamic World under one caliph. Al-Afghani’s letter to the Ottoman Sultan, clearly illustrated the appeal of Islamic unity or what was termed by the Western, Pan-Islamic appeal, as the only tool to resist the Western intervention into the Muslim lands. Al-Afghani strongly

emphasized on holy-wars or *jihad* as the only way to achieve Islamic unity or Pan-Islamic goal.

The concept of Islamic unity and anti European policies adumbrated from 1871 to 1881 under the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Aziz and carried out by Sultan Abdul Hamid II from 1876 onwards for their own political ends. In fact, al-Afghani's concept of Islamic unity or Pan-Islam was incompatible with that of a despot like Abdul Hamid II.⁴¹ For al-Afghani, it was only for the sake of Islam and dependence against acquisitive foreigners.

During al-Afghani's first brief stay in London, the newspaper "*An-Nahla*" published several of his articles, such as "*English Policy in Eastern Countries*" and "*The Reason for the War in Egypt*". In these articles, al-Afghani strongly attacked British policies in India and Egypt, and stated that the true reason for the British invasion of Egypt was that the British was in fear of Sultan Abdul Hamid II success in striving to have all Muslims adhere to the firm bond of the caliphate. The British was concerned for the continuity of their rule over Indian Muslim, and awaited the right occasion to tear apart the Islamic solidarity. The British thus sent in boats and troops to suppress *Urabi*'s movement primarily as a move against the rising Muslim solidarity, which the British knew would endanger their influence in the East and their rule in India.⁴² This was the first time that al-Afghani used the word "*al-Urwat ul-Wuthqa*" or the firmed bond to apply to the Sultan's caliphate, and later on, in Paris, al-Afghani, Abduh and others founded an association known as "*al-Urwat al-Wuthqa*." Later, it published an Islamic unity magazine "*al-Urwat al-Wuthqa*" in 1884 from Paris. The main themes of the magazine were hostility towards the Western imperialism, advocacy

of Islamic unity and interpretation of Islamic principles to demonstrate their applicability to urgent contemporary needs.

Al-Afghani declared in *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa* that there is no nationality to which the Muslims belong except Islam.⁴³ He regarded that the religious tie between Muslims was much stronger than any racial or linguistic tie. Thus, he considered religious unity as the only unity that the Muslims of the world could have. The divisions among the Muslim states were caused by the deviation of their leaders from true Islamic principles as followed by the first generations of Muslim. If they should ever return to the ways of the first orthodox caliphs, God would soon reward them with comparable power. At another place in "*al-'Urwat*", al-Afghani said that all of those tragedies that befell Muslims were the direct result of their own discord, against which Allah repeatedly warned them. Had they done their duty in conformity with their trust in that great word, Allah's word (Quran verses), and foreign powers would have never been able to divide their countries nor defied the Muslims. They would have been in a position of strength to face their challenge.

According to al-Afghani, in the past, Islamic communities had been held together by the political institution of the caliphate and by the '*ulama`*' who preserved accurate doctrine. Unfortunately, under the Abbasids, caliphs and '*ulama`*' had become apart from each other, and consequently wiped the caliphates from existence. Independent kingdoms arose in its place, and the '*ulama`*' remained as the only organ of unity. But they too in time had been split by differences in belief and all, except for a few who had diverged from the truth into false doctrines. As a result, the community had in fact dissolved. Abstract conviction was not enough to hold it together; it must be

reinforced by real human needs and impulses. There must be a unity of heart and deeds, for it could not exist in common convictions' expressed only in dreams and images. In fact, this was what had actually happened, when a Muslim in one country heard about the misfortunes of those in others, he felt no urge to help them actively, only the kind of ineffectual regret one had when thinking of the dead.

Al-Afghani rejected the Western concept of nationalism as a tool to divide and suppress the Muslim nations and their religion. However, he did not deny the importance of national or other natural ties. On the contrary, he even used the word “*jinsiyyah*” for nationality in his addresses delivered in Egypt, India and Iran, as a concept unifying local people for specific purposes, including political or cultural interests.

Al-Afghani also rejected the Sunni-Shi'i division in Islam, and called upon the Muslim '*ulama*' to bridge the gulf between those two sects. He said that this split had been caused by selfish kings who wanted their people to remain ignorant and desired an excuse to launch wars as a means of expanding their territories. Thus, Shi'i and Sunni rulers exaggerated the differences between their followers causing them to be only the ones who shared the essential belief in the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet of Islam. Today the split only has served to divide and weaken the Muslims.⁴⁴

By 19th century, a clear shift of power had occurred. According to John L. Esposito (1992) in *The Islamic Threat; Myth or Reality?*, the West had dominated and threatened the Muslim world politically, economically and culturally, thus Muslims had found themselves on the defensive. Since 18th and early 19th centuries, the real threat

and primary challenge to Islamic identity and unity had generally been internal and the challenge to Islamic identity from the West was not experienced until the late 19th and early 20th century.⁴⁵

W. C. Smith (1957), in *Islam in Modern History* regarded al-Afghani as the first Muslim revivalist to use the concepts of “Islam” and “the West” as connotation, correlative and of course antagonistic historical phenomena with “The specter of West as an accusing, menacing power”. It was through al-Afghani that this became explicit; and that the response to it became active.⁴⁶ Al-Afghani, having a very broad knowledge of the Western culture and deep comprehension of Islamic traditions,⁴⁷ thus was the first man to notice with his clear sight and intelligent realism, the dangerous influence and domination of Westerns in the Eastern lands in general and particularly, to Islamic nations. He realized the extent of this danger and its ruinous consequences. Therefore, he adopted diverse means and styles to stop the Western incursions, with self-sacrificing spirit; he resolutely endeavored to remove it and, wherever he went his heart-full words impressed listeners’ heart and inspired them with his fiery and revolutionary thoughts.

Al-Aghani’s greater part of life was dedicated to the defense of Islamic countries threatened by the danger of Western expansions, but his thought was not exclusively political. It was of course the power and pressure of Europe which gave him a new urgency to make Muslim countries politically strong and successful in order to stop Western incursions. He strived on how to persuade Muslims to understand their religion accurately and lived life in accordance with its teaching. If they did so, al-Afghani

believed that their countries would out of necessity become stronger as they had once been.⁴⁸

For the advancement and reformation of *Ummah*, al-Afghani had strongly opposed blind imitations of the West, and believed that those people of the nations who imitate the non-Muslims blindly and follow them in their modes of life, were actually paving the way for their intrusion. Their intellect suffered from superstitions. The people, who imitated the West in their daily practices, were overpowered and dominated by the foreigners' false superiority of culture and those who were not conventional were looked down. Such imitators became the cause of ruin of their nations, as they conceived their people as backward and downtrodden and if any of the patriots came out with the qualities of greatness and boldness, they were strongly opposed and suppressed. The objective of their effort was to eradicate the qualities of one's boldness and made him emotionless. According to al-Afghani, these people (the imitators) were tools of the foreigners.

According to 'Abd al-Qadir al-Maghribi (1948), in *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Zikriyyat wa Ahadith*, a journal harnessing a series of conversations with al-Afghani and recollections about him:

*Islamic reformist thought was determined by its traditionalist starting points. All the leading figures of the Islamic reform movement had in common an awareness of the need to overcome the intellectual and spiritual inertia of traditionalism, but the positive aspect of this awareness remained prescribed in both scope and relevance. Its first step was the transition from blind obedience to traditional interpretation into a new and freer approach.*⁴⁹

Refutations of the Materialist was by and large al-Afghani's most famous and major work, in which he strongly condemned the "materialists" or "Naichiris", the name given to modernist Sir Ahmad Khan and his followers. Al-Afghani regarded them as partisans of the enemy, the British, as they were destroying the beliefs of Indian Muslims and thereby preparing them to accept the religious as well as the political and cultural domination of Western imperialists.⁵⁰ It was because Syed Ahmad Khan, like the rest of the reformers of the period, saw that the Indian Muslims could regain their social stability, firstly by inspiring confidence in the British Government in India as to their loyalty, and secondly by adopting Western modes of life and by acquiring British style education and encouraging them to enter government service in growing numbers.

The *Refutations of the Materialists* was the first writing by al-Afghani in which he presented himself as a champion of Islam against heretical and the Western liberal tendencies. Those whom he attacked under the name of "naturalists" or "materialists" included all, from Democritus to Darwin with their equivalents in Islam, who gave an explanation of the world without giving any regard to the existence of a transcendent God. Not only he considered these people as detrimental to the truth, but also regarded them a danger to social well-being and human happiness.⁵¹ Thus, the decay of nations was the result of the corruption of these essential beliefs and qualities caused by the teachings of the naturalists.

The first part of "*Refutations*" contained the description and criticism of philosophers who held a naturalistic or materialistic view of the universe, man and society, from the time of the early Greeks down to the middle of 19th century. He included and made special references to Democritus, Epicures, Leibniz, and Darwin.

Besides that, references were also made to those who were from Persia to Mazdak and Babism; among the Muslim schools to Batinites, Ismailites and the Assassins; and in France to Rousseau and Voltaire, and among the modern general passing remarks about communism, socialism and nihilism.

Al-Afghani repeatedly claimed that the religion is good for people as it supports the social fabric, while the Neicheris or materialists like other sectarians bring dissension and finally political ruin to the community. While revering religion as compared to materialism, al-Afghani went on to discuss three beliefs and three qualities which formed the basis of the progress of a nation. The first was the belief that man is the noblest among God's creation; the second was man's certainty "*that his community is in error and deviation.*" The third was the firm belief that man has come into the world in order to acquire accomplishment worthy of transferring him to a world more excellent, higher, vaster, and more perfect than this narrow and dark world that really deserves the name of the abode of sorrows.

Thus, in his book of "*Refutation of the Materialists*", al-Afghani clearly rejected materialists and their new ideologies, and reinforced pride in Islam as the best religion capable of solving all problems of society and, provided Muslims with a useful counter weight to the West's claim of cultural superiority. He showed clear antagonistic approach towards those like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his followers, who rendered their services to foreign enemies, cooperated with British and imitated their ways. Thus from the above statements and comments of al-Afghani, it was obvious that he was fully alive not only to the political events taking place in the West, but also the various

ideologies shaping the Western culture and society, and responded to them as an Islamic scholar and intellectual.

As far as science was concerned, al-Afghani criticized the conservative Muslim ‘*ulama*’ for their blindness and hostility towards modern science and technology. In his lecture in Calcutta, 1882 “*On Teaching and Learning*”, he said;

The strange thing of all is that our ‘ulama` these days have divided science, and one European science. Because of this they forbid others to teach some of the useful sciences. They have not understood that science is that noble thing that has no connection with any nation, and is not distinguished by anything but itself. Rather, everything that is known is known by science, and every nation that becomes renowned becomes renowned through science. The father and mother of science are proof and proof is neither Aristotle nor Galileo. The truth is where there is proof, and those who forbid science and knowledge in the belief that they are safeguarding the Islamic religions are really the enemies of that religion. The Islamic religion is the closest of religions to science and knowledge, and there is no incompatibility between science and knowledge, and the foundation of Islamic faith. ⁵²

Al-Afghani regarded science as necessary for reform and development, without which Muslims cannot compete with the West. In a speech delivered at the opening ceremony of a new university in Istanbul, the Dar ul-Funun, his first recorded speech in February 1870, al-Afghani said:

My brothers! Open the eyes of perception and look in order to learn a lesson. Arise from the sleep of neglect. Know that the Islamic people (milla) were (once) the strongest in rank, the most valuable in worth. They were very high in intelligence, comprehension, and prudence. They faced up to the most difficult things with respect to work and endeavor. Later this people sank into ease and laziness. It remained in the corners of the madrasas and the dervish convents; to such a degree that the lights of virtue were on the point of being extinguished; the banners of education were about to disappear. The suns of prosperity and the full moon of perfection began to wane. Some of the Islamic nations came under the domination of other nations. The clothes of abasement were put on them. The glorious milla was humiliated. All these things happened from lack of vigilance, laziness, work too little and stupidity. ⁵³

Thus, in Istanbul, al-Afghani seemed to have supported the ideas of “modernizers”, but his style was somewhat different from others. He supported the reformation on modern lines for self-strengthening ends, to arouse Muslims towards intellectual revival and rational attitudes. He wanted to advance scientifically and technically in order to combat the West without adopting the Western mentality.

The first Muslim had initially no scientific curiosity but thanks to the Islamic religion, a philosophic spirit arose among them, and due to this philosophic spirit did they begin to discuss the general affairs of the world and human necessities. This was why they were able to acquire in a short time all the sciences with particular subjects that they translated from the Syrian, Persian, and Greek into Arabic language at the time of Mansur Davanaqi (The Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur).⁵⁴

Al-Afghani regarded science and technology as a universal necessity that did not belong to any nation. He admitted though that the modern European science had developed from Arab Muslim Science, particularly when Europeans translated Arab Science into their languages. Science had continuously changed its capital, sometimes moving from the East to the West, and at other times from the West to the East. To al-Afghani, science was the potential force which had made a nation strong and prosperous. Yet, apathy towards it had made it weak and poor. He further held;

*The Chaldeans, Egyptians, Phoenicians Greeks and the Europeans of modern age have conquered lands and dominated the world not because of their military power but because of their sciences. The military conquests are not of the French or the English, but it is science projecting its magnificence and glory and ignorance has no other way except to admit its inferiority and servitude to science. Thus in reality, kingship has never deserted the house of science. However, this real king has always changed its capital-sometimes it has traveled from the East to the West and sometimes from West to the East.*⁵⁵

3.3 CONCLUSION

In this particular endeavour we can see that al-Afghani as either a revivalist or neo- traditionalist. Truly, he was his own person. His early grounding in philosophical subjects as well as logic or *mantiq* in the colleges of Persia seemed to have prepared him well in articulating his position vis-à-vis philosophy and science. In his elaborate arguments as well as in his explication and definition of science, al-Afghani was truly expressing the meaning of internal strength that was sorely needed by the Muslims at the time of abject conditions. Al-Afghani's scientific temper could also be seen in his argumentative writings where he relied on pure logic, especially against the materialists.

He was a personality from the West Asia region dispensing a multitude of universal ideas as well as spiritual and humanitarian messages. Al-Afghani also greatly influenced a culture that emphasized on the eradication of ignorance and the awakening of the people of the region, and endeavored the challenge of persuading the people and the clergy or '*ulama`*' to reform their societies on the basis of their own norms and values. In this regard, al-Afghani was considered to be one of the pioneers of reform in the Islamic world during the past 150 years, whom universal ideas had such relevance that they could serve as a model for the solidarity of Islamic countries even today. At the same time, it is to be noted that al-Afghani had a universal message; his ideas were transnational and transgenerational. His interlocutors and his messages were not only for the generation of his time but also applicable to the generation of today as well as tomorrow.

He also tried to develop a new plan in which the societies of Asia in respect of *The Asian Renaissance* could adapt to modernity and constitute civil society, and had a holistic interpretation of Islam which was against extremism. It is for these reasons that he is presented as a great personality of the Islamic world. His legacy surpassed both his geographical location and his era; while at the cultural, civilization, spiritual and religious level, his ideas were taken into account beyond the limited region into the Islamic world as a whole. What remains important today is his intellectual basis which was focused on the renewal of Islam according to the new and changing circumstances, and for this reason his ideas had thematic value, particularly so as they also correspond to the needs of our society at the present time.

The universality and spirituality of his character, coupled with the global nature of his ideas, brought him fame and recognition throughout the world. He did not only belong to the Islamic civilization but to civilization as a whole due to the wide-ranging themes of his thought, as he wished to reconcile tradition with modernity and to encourage people towards democracy based on social norms. He also strived to eradicate colonialism in all its forms, including politics, culture and economy. Believing in the necessity to return to oneself and a reliance on the intrinsic values of Islamic societies, al-Afghani reaffirmed the need to eliminate internal despotism and external colonialism. His theory on the unity of the Islamic world forms a considerable intellectual basis for the reawakening of Muslim nations and the construction of a comprehensive movement in the region of Asia, and even in the entire Islamic world.

Among his beliefs were the reform of the political system structure based on social values and norms; the promotion of public awareness by mobilizing all reference

groups especially the clergy and religious intellectuals, based on his idea that each act of reformism required a pioneer among the social elite. He also believed in the establishment of the linkage between modernity and social traditions, whilst negating modernistic bigotry and religious extremism. He also insisted on the possibility of constructive interaction between patriotism, regionalism and even trans-regionalism. Apart from that, negating ethnic, racial and geographical bigotry was also his focal point. Al-Afghani liberated the social and political aspects of the pure idea of Islam in order to confront the Western negative propaganda. He advocated Pan-Islamism through the convergence of Shiite and Sunni schools of thought and establishing cultural and spiritual unity against ignorance, bigotry and extremism. These would unite them regardless of the existing diverse social and cultural norms of Islamic societies.

Overall, he took a civilizational approach to Islam, seeing it as a religion surpassing geographical borders and having a systematic and dynamic approach encompassing all political, economic, intellectual, cultural and social precepts and perspectives that assured the continuity and sustainability of movements and the right of nations to self-determination.

Central to al-Afghani's view was the importance of Pan-Islamism. He believed the removal of decadent sources and the return of Islamic thought to its origins would unite Islamic world and would enable Islam to withstand any threats to its autonomy, something that Islam had, and has not been able to do as a result of disunity. In addition to the removal of colonial powers and corrupt Islamic leaders, he advocated the construction of an Islamic federation that would counterbalance the influence of the West, while at the same time taking up the latter's technology and utilizing it to this

end. He believed that such a system should have been founded on Islamic law which contained all the elements of civil, administrative and public law, whereby the rulers were bound to serve the interests of the community as a whole. This could be assured through a system of consultation. While he recognized the vital role that educational reform had to play, Pan-Islamism was, in his view, the cornerstone and most effective means for the revitalization of the Islamic world.

Yet, uniting the different Islamic nations also meant that the divide between Sunni and Shiite had to be overcome so as to come together with a focus on marginalizing the common threat of external attack. During his era, according to some scholars, religious identification was usually stronger than national identification. Hence, such an appeal for unity would have struck a common chord. To this end he attempted to convince the ruler of the Ottoman Empire that its autocratic system of government was undesirable and damaging to the interests of the Islamic world, and should instead be replaced by a constitutional monarchy with a consultative body of representatives from the Islamic territories. Similarly he attempted to convince the leaders of Egypt, India and Persia of the benefits of such an Islamic system of governance, but it quickly became apparent that they were uninterested in ceding their respective powers to implement an Islamic reform. As Al-Afghani believed in radically changing the political structures of these countries, which would in turn lead to the reform of their societies, he was perceived as a revolutionary by the political powers of the age. Thus, after his consequent expulsion from Egypt, he, notably through his Paris-based journal *al-Urwat al-Wuthqa*, disseminated his theories of reform to a wider audience of Muslim intellectuals and the public at large. As he later expressed in a personal letter, “ ..Was it not worth more that I sowed the seed of my ideas in the fertile

earth of popular thought rather than in the arid earth of the royal courts? All grows and flourishes in the first and all decays in the second”.

He envisaged that an oppressed people who were bound by racial, linguistic, regional and ethnic antagonisms be replaced by spiritual, cultural and ideological unity. This, as he opined, could lead to an independent region where ignorance, colonialism and despotism would depart while dignity and honor, returned. To that, al-Afghani should have been recognized as the pioneer of reform, especially in the Islamic countries. In his view such a return to Islam did not mean a shift towards fanaticism or fundamentalism, but more towards the reconciliation of Islamic principles with the modern era.

Al-Afghani saw that reform could be attained through an understanding of the following seven axes, namely factors relating to society:

- i. subsistence of society that involved the relations between the individual and society, and the role of the elite;
- ii. social paradigm - the priority of culture and change in people's minds, intellectualism and pragmatism;
- iii. stagnation of Islamic society - the distortion of religious thought, the non-existence of experimental knowledge, incompetent leaders, colonization, lack of cooperation and disunity;
- iv. attributes of the Western progress - religious reform, new science and technology, and civil society;
- v. criticism of the Western colonialism and culture;

- vi. appropriate form of society and governance; and
- vii. life setting of Muslims through political evolution, intellectual resurrection and pragmatic upheaval.

Al-Afghani also taught us that a successful reform movement should have a leader from the avant-garde class who would be capable of awakening the people and bringing them out of ignorance. A populist movement could not attain its objectives without a leader to awaken, guide and encourage the people and provide them with methods with which to fight against despotism and colonialism. At the same time, he believed in the importance of the masses and the general public as well as the elite, and thought that in order to achieve progress in the Islamic world one should always be aware of both these categories. The elites could be divided into two groups, namely the scientific and religious elite, who played an important role in the mobilization of the masses, and the governmental elite, with whom he was in permanent contact. In his own life he realized that he should not solely have relations with intellectuals and political governors, but also directly with the people, although he recognized his limited success in this regard. He also advocated dialogues between East and West, playing a key role in the cross-interactions among civilizations.

In his view, such reform movements in the Islamic countries should lead to the establishment of institutions; a movement that should not remain spontaneous, but rather have a sustainable ideology and a systematic approach to enable it to continue its existence by coming into power. Islamic movements should therefore not always be found solely in the form of civil society, but should move from the public sphere to the sphere of government. The institutionalization of power might not, however, meant that

it should become static. On the contrary, it should endeavour to remain dynamic, in order to be capable of meeting the challenge of reconciling change and continuity, or unity and diversity. This means that there are diverse ways in which objectives may be attained, thus the instruments or means used to attain them can similarly change over a period of time, even while the objectives themselves remain unaltered – that is to say, social reform and the elimination of corruption and alienation.

In this case it is useful to again state that an Islamic movement, although it can be institutionalized as a form of governance, can continue its existence in a dynamic manner so that it is in a position to create waves of reform appropriate to the different characteristics and challenges of each period of time. If such a movement wishes to continue its existence, it should also be understood that it can change its nature to the point of becoming completely transformed. However, at the level of pathology one should endeavour to retain the purity of Islamic movement and in order to achieve this, it is desirable to avoid the influence of foreign ideas which can misguide or divert such a movement.

Several challenges to a successful reformist movement have been identified. Al-Afghani recognized the principles of Islam as comprising a civilization inclusive of such diverse aspects as culture and politics, and not as an “ism”. If Islam were to become Islamism, it would have become ideologies and consequently have its vision narrowed. In contrast, Islam, in actual fact enjoys a broad vision encompassing all aspects, including philosophy, history and culture.

The second problem that may potentially affect a reformist movement is extremist modernism, namely the effort to adapt tradition to modernity whereby Islamic intellectuals may sometimes prefer modernism to tradition, and may unduly be influenced by the attractions of modernism.

Thirdly, a movement may be threatened by incompleteness; that is, it may not continue to struggle for its chosen path. Many movements have existed temporarily and only active during a specific period of time due to certain circumstances, for example the tobacco movement which occurred during the reign of Nasser ed-Din Shah. Once the people and the clergy had attained their objective – the abolition of the tobacco concession – they no longer pursued their endeavors for the reconstruction of a society free from despotism and colonialism.

The fourth challenge that a reformist movement may encounter is by infiltration of opportunists. They may penetrate the revolutionary camp while presenting themselves as believers of the movement, but may finally try to alter it from the inside, diverting it from its objectives.

The fifth issue which may prove a threat to a reformist movement is uncertain future plans. Under such circumstance, the reformist movement may hold ideals but it may not have any idea to realize them for it lacks a clear programme to attain its objectives. As a result, such an ambiguity can work against it.

Al-Afghani was one of the most influential thinkers of the age and a visionary reformist. He was considered the spokesman for the Muslim world during the period, and he surpassed the limitations of national boundaries in not choosing to identify

himself as the national of one particular country, but rather he traveled widely and chose to present himself as an Islamic citizen. He wished to not only safeguard the Islamic heritage in the face of the onslaught of European colonization, but also to possess the dynamism to adapt to the changing world so that Muslims could again take pride in the achievements of their civilization. By utilizing the tools of modernity to achieve unity, the Islamic world would be revitalized and proven as an effective counterbalance to the power of the West. Moreover, he believed that through the means of Pan-Islamism and educational reform, the Islamic world could enjoy another renaissance and Muslims could regain their earlier position as intellectual and scientific innovators of the world.

In his campaign for reform, al-Afghani advocated self-reliance and the taking back of control over one's political life, the active participation in one's destiny, and self-determination, for which Islam served as a "*cultural umbrella*". The effects of his teachings were far-ranging, and he provided the foundation on which Muslim intellectuals developed innovative concepts and approaches to meet the challenges that threatened Islam as a whole, as well as its cohesion and identity.

His thought had a great impact on the Muslim-majority countries and the Middle East, notably in Iran, where he was considered as the pioneer of its constitutional movement in 1906. His movement also became a template for this country's Islamic Revolution in 1979, in which Ayatullah Khomeini appealed to the masses as well as the elite in effort to mobilize the people as a whole. He had a similar intellectual impact on the movement of Arabi Pasha in Egypt which strongly opposed British domination. He established various journals in Islamic countries, and has been called the founder of

political journalism in the Islamic world, as he used these journals as tools in the service to enlighten the people. He also established the association of the Union of Islam in the Ottoman Empire, which was the first such attempt organized in the region, as well as establishing the patriotic association and gathering of *al-Urwat al-Wuthqa* in Egypt.

In fact, al-Afghani has been called the circle in which all the reformists of his epoch are related, particularly on the basis of the following ten themes:

- i. a return to pure Islam and its purification from superstition;
- ii. condemnation of blind traditionalism and mere imitation;
- iii. advocating the unity of Muslims, combating local nationalisms which were weakening Islam in the face of a common enemy and attempting to form a common Islamic identity based on solidarity;
- iv. combating despotism in the region;
- v. attempting to reconcile new sciences and technologies with the precepts of Islam and interpreting these precepts in a scientific and rational manner;
- vi. combating colonialism as the first step in the social and intellectual resurrection of Muslims;
- vii. rationalism;
- viii. the avoidance of a uniform religious vision;
- ix. combating the surrender to determinism and isolationism; and
- x. bringing about openness and expanding the area of *ijtihad* in all relevant issues relating to urban society.

In this connection, we can refer to three main locations in terms of his specific influence on other prominent figures. The first of these has Iran, where he was notably involved in mobilizing opposition to the tobacco concession by writing a letter to Mirza Shirazi, in which he advocated the prohibition of the use of tobacco. Furthermore, through his emphasis on the three concepts of freedom, law and justice, he provoked a spirit of protest in intellectuals such as Sheikh Hadi Najdmabadi and Mirza Mohammad Hussein Naini, who played a key role in the constitutional movement of Iran; and it is for this reason that he is considered not only the pioneer of reformism but also that of constitutionalism and legalism, namely governance through law. The national intellectual movement flourished on the basis of his ideas as a modernist view of religion, which considers Islam as one which contains the principles of democracy.

His second area of influence was Egypt, where he inspired the likes of Muhammad Abduh, in particular to his expression of the acceptance of new sciences as a means to renew the life of Islam. Other reformists he influenced included Rashid Reza in Egypt and Abdurahman Kawakabi in Syria. Finally, turning to the Indian sub-continent, a prominent reformist who was inspired by his thought was Muhammad Iqbal, who wrote a book on the revitalization of religious thought, which constituted a great step in the elaboration of Islamic epistemology.

Lastly, al-Afghani enjoyed a very comprehensive and insightful understanding of the problems facing the Islamic world which was well adapted to his era. He did not only understand the exact problematic region, but also realized that knowledge of his audience and interlocutors, who were both the public and the elite, was necessary. The reappraisal of his ideas in the present situation can undeniably clarify the pioneering

role of Muslim countries in the process of integration of the Islamic world, the promotion of the historical place of Islamic culture and civilization, and the preservation of its intangible and spiritual heritage. In the changing global circumstances in which the need persisted for the integration of Islamic countries, the necessity of reviewing the ideas of great thinkers such as al-Afghani is reaffirmed. Thereon, the present generation may benefit from their intellectual contributions in the perspective of the solidarity of the Islamic world.

He played a key role in initiating dialogues among civilizations, advocating such a dialogue between the East and the West, and it is important to scrutinize his philosophy and the universal message which he tried to disseminate around the world. His message continues to be relevant in the present day as we are currently witnessing many movements attacking Islam and the culture of the region. This is a manifestation of Islamic phobia, which disseminates a distorted image of Muslims in the world, and particularly in the West Asia. Equally, at this time, there are certain movements which attempt to portray Islam as anti-science and progress, as opposed to the thought of Islamic scholars such as al-Afghani. He emphasized that there was no such contradiction between Islam and science. We can find responses to many of these current problems through examining his life which still contains many unrevealed truths; such an academic and comprehensive view of his life and works which can shed light on the way of reform, Islamic society and those who are devoted to the spiritual and material progress that when truly adhered to, can lead the Muslims to prosperity. He can, thus serve as a valuable model for the education of a new generation who live life in unity, solidarity and in an integrated Islamic world.

NOTES

- 1 See Ludwig W. Adamec. 2001. *Historical Dictionary of Islam*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press. P. 32.

See also Vali Nasr. 2006. *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*. New York: Norton. P. 103.

- 2 See 'Abduh, Muhammad. 1925. in *Ar-Radd 'ala al-Dahriyyin*. by Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and translated into Arabic by Muhammad Abduh, al-Qahirah: al-Matba'ah al-Rahmaniyyah. Pp.5-19.

According to Abduh, al-Afghani will be found to be a great philosopher, he also a man of important ideas and activities and of major and continuing influence in Islamic world.

See also Zaydan, Jurji. 1861-1914. 1970. *Tarajim Mashahir al-Sharq fi al-Qarn al-Tasi' 'Ashar*. jil 2, Beirut: Dar al-Maktabat al-Hayah. Pp. 70-84.

See also 'Abd al-Razziq, Mustafa. 1983. In *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*. wrote by Al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din and Muhammad 'Abduh, Foreword by Mustafa 'Abd Razzaq. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi. Pp.17-29.

See also Rida, Muhammad Rashid. 1931. *Tarikh al-Ustaz al-Imam al-Sheikh Muhammad Abduh*. Volume 1, *Rashid Rida mentioned that al-Afghani as the revivalist of the East, the vanguard of Islamic resurgence and Mujaddid of Islam*, al-Qahirah: al-Manar. Pp.25-101.

See also Amin, Ahmad. 1979. *Zu'ama' al-Islah fi al-'Asr al-Hadith*. Al-Qahirah: Maktabat al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah. Pp.63-128.

See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. 1966. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Tarikhuhu wa Risalatuhu wa Mabadi'uhu*. Al-Qahirah: al-Majlis al-A'la li al-Shu'un al-Islamiyyah. Pp.23-54.

See also Al-Makhzumi, Muhammad Basha. 1965. *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Husaini*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr al-Hadith. Pp.4-9.

See also al-'Aqqad,'Abbas Mahmud. 1971. *'Abqari al-Islah wa al-Ta'lim al-Imam Muhammad 'Abduh*. Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi. Pp.96-114.

See also Al-Maghribi,'Abd al-Qadir. 1960. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: Zikriyyat wa Ahadith*. al-Qahirah: Dar al-Ma'arif. Pp.9-12.

See also Al-Bahi, Muhammad. 1960. *Al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadith wa Silatuhu bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. Pp.55-63.

Al-Bahi considered that al-Afghani was the first modern Muslim activist to utilize the power of Islam explicitly in his political appeal. That is, his main goal was political, but he recognized the power of religion and made use of it. Moreover, by recognizing the appeal of Islam, he was able to integrate his calls for internal reform into an Islamic context. Rather than perceiving reform to be a Western imposition, he viewed it as a return to the genuine Islam.

See also Muttahari, Murtadha. 1982. *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah fi al-Qarn al-Rabi' 'Ashar al-Hijri*. Tehran: Wizarat al-Irshad al-Islami. Pp. 22-40.

- 3 See Browne, E.G. 1966. *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*. London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd. Pp. 2-3.

- ⁴ See Smith, Wilfrid Cantwell. 1951. *Islam Confronted by Western Secularism*. in Frank, Dorothea Seelye. *Islam in the Modern World*. Conference on Middle East Affairs, sponsored by the Middle East Institute, March, 9-10, 1951. Washington D.C.: Middle East Institute. Pp.19-30.
- ⁵ Quoted from Anwar-Moazzam. 1984. *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Muslim Intellectual*. New Delhi: Concept Publication Co. P.133.
- ⁶ See Zaidan, Jurji. op.cit. Pp.73-77.
- see also Abduh, Muhammad. *Al-Radd 'ala al-Dahriyyin*. op.cit. P.7.
- see also Rashid Rida, Tarikh al-Ustaz al-Imam. op.cit. P.31.
- ⁷ See Keddie, R. Nikki. 1972. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press. Pp.10-22.
- See also Hourani, Albert. 1983. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.108.
- See also Kedouri, Ellie. 1966. *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*. London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd. Pp.6-7.
- ⁸ See Asadabadi, Lutf Allah Khan. 1986. *Haqiqat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*. Juz 1, translated into Arabic by Dr 'Abd al-Na'im Hasanayn. Misr, Al-Mansurah: Dar al-Wafa`. Pp.38-41.
- ⁹ See Browne. op. cit. Pp.3-4.
- ¹⁰ See 'Abd al-Razzaq, Mustafa. op.cit. P.18.
- See also Kudsi-Zadeh, Albert. 1970. *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: An annotated Bibliography*. Leiden: E.J. Brill. P. preface XIII.
- See also Keddie, Rugozi, Nikki. 1972. *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press. P.8 and p. 41.
- See also Abu Rabi ', M. Ibrahim. 1998. *Al-Afghani's Contribution to the Intellectual Awakening of the Ummah*. in *International Conference on Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the Asian Renaissance*. Kuala Lumpur : Institute for Policy Research. Pp. 1-2.
- See also Keddie,R.Nikki. 1995. *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*. in Ali Rahnema, ed. *Pioneers of Islamic Revival*. Kuala Lumpur: S.Abdul Majeed & Co. Pp.11-13.
- ¹¹ See Elie Kedourie. op. cit. Pp. 8-9.
- See also Vali Nasr. op. cit. P.103.
- ¹² See Browne. op.cit. Pp.4-5.
- ¹³ See Asadabadi, LutfuLlah. op.cit. Pp.43-47.
- ¹⁴ See Mortimer,Edward. 1982. *Faith and Power*. London:Vintage. P.11.
- ¹⁵ See Kedourie, Elie. op.cit. Pp.10-11.

- 16 see also Keddie. 1972. Pp.23-25.
See Anwar Moazzam, op.cit. P.14.
- 17 See Keddie. 1972. op.cit. Pp. 22-24.
- 18 Ibid Pp.32-41.
See also Brown, E.G. Persian Revolution. op.cit. Pp. 5-8.
- 19 See Browne. op.cit. P.6.
- 20 See Keddie. 1972. op.cit. P. 58.
- 21 See Berkes, Niyazi. 1964. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: McGill University Press. Pp.180-186.
- 22 See Badawi, Zaki. 1978. *The Reformers of Egypt*. London: Croom Helm. Pp. 19-25.
- 23 See Albert Hourani. 1983. *Arabic Thought in Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.109.
- 24 See Keddie, R.Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp.21-24.
- 25 See Browne. op.cit. P.8.
- 26 See Kedourie. op.cit. Pp.70-88.
See also Browne. op.cit. P.9.
- 27 See Hourani, Albert. op.cit. P. 111.
See also Blunt. op.cit. Pp. 467-468.
- 28 See Keddie. 1972. op. cit. P.371.
For further information about The Pan-Islamic Appeal and relationship between al-Afghani-Sultan Abdul Hamid of The Ottoman Empire see also Keddie, Nikki R. 1966. The Pan-Islamic Appeal: Afghani and Abdul Hamid II in Middle Eastern Studies @ Middle East Studies. Volume 3 (1966). Pp.46-67.
- 29 See Keddie. Biography. op.cit. Pp. 376-380.
See also Browne. op.cit. Pp. 12-13.
- 30 See Esposito, J.L. 1988. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.128.
See also al-Bahi, Muhammad. op.cit. Pp.63-64, 70-72.
- 31 See Hourani. op.cit. P.117.
- 32 Keddie. Biography. op.cit. P.45.
- 33 See Mansfield, Peter. 1976. *The Arabs*. London: Penguin Books. Pp.137-147.
- 34 Hourani. op.cit. P.109.

- 35 See Jamel, Mohammad Ahmad. 1968. *The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism*. London: Oxford University Press. P.16.
- 36 See Blunt, W.S. 1922. *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*. New York. P.369.
- 37 See Lee, Dwight E. 1942. *The Origin of Pan-Islamism* in *The American Historical Review*. Volume 48, No.2, 1942. P. 283.
- 38 See Goldziher, Ignaz. 1913. *Djamal al-Din al-Afghani*. in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*. Volume 1, London: Luzac & Co. 1913. P.1008.
- 39 See Landau, Jacob. 1990. *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology Organization*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. P.13.
- 40 Zaydan, Jurji. Tarajim. op.cit. Pp. 80-86.
- 41 Mansfield. op.cit. P. 164.
- 42 Keddie. 1972. op.cit. P.184.
- 43 See al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din and Muhammad 'Abduh. al-'Urwat ul-Wuthqa. Pp.21-23.
- 44 See Al-Makhzumi. 1965. *Khatirat*. op.cit. Pp.111-112.
- 45 See Esposito, J.L. 1992. *The Islamic Threat; Myth or Reality?* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.51.
- 46 See Smith, W.C. 1957. *Islam in Modern History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp.55-56.
- 47 See Butterworth, C. E.1982. *Prudence Versus Legitimacy*", in *Islamic Resurgence in Arab World*. edited by Ellie Hilal Dessouki. New York: Prager Publishers. P. 87.
- 48 See Hourani. op.cit. Pp.112-113.
- 49 See al-Maghribi. op.cit. Pp.44-45.
- 50 Keddie. 1972. op.cit. Pp. 123-129.
For further information in the respect of clash between An Islamic Response to Imperialism al-Afghani's school of thought with Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his followers.
- See also Ahmad, Aziz. 1960. *Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muslim India*. in *Studia Islamic*. Laruse- Paris. Pp. 55-78.
- 51 Hourani. op.cit. P.125.
- 52 Al-Afghani, *Lecture on Teaching and Learning* Translated from Maqalat-i-Jamaliyyah in Keddie R. Nikki. *An Islamic Response*. op.cit. P.107.
- 53 See Keddie. 1972. *A Political Biography*. op. cit. P. 63.
- 54 See Keddie. 1968. In al-Afghani's lecture on *Lecture on Teaching and Learning*. op.cit. Pp 104-105.
- 55 See Asadabadi, Mirza LutfulLah Khan. 1985. *Haqiqat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*. Volume II, Al-Mansurah, al-Qahirah: Dar al-Wafa` li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'. Pp.93-97.

CHAPTER 4

ERNEST RENAN'S INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

4.1 LIFE AND WORKS

Ernest Renan (28 February 1823 – 12 October 1892) was a French philosopher and writer, devoted to his native province of Brittany, France. He is well known for his influential historical works on early Christianity and his political theories. He shared with his predecessor a belief in individual liberty, in progress and the efficacy of reason. But it grew out of political and cultural upheavals following the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the Romantic Movement instead of merely leading up to them. It had to some extent as a consequence, a religious, enthusiastic and romantic side to it, and thought in terms of the masses more than focusing on individuals.¹

Renan was born in Tréguier of Brittany to a family of fishermen. His grandfather, having made a small fortune with his fishing-shack, bought a house at Tréguier and settled there. His father, captain of a small cutter and an ardent republican, married the daughter of Royalist tradesmen from the neighboring town of Lannion. All his life, Renan was caught in a conflict between his father's and his mother's political beliefs. He was five years old when his father died, and his sister, Henriette, twelve years his senior, became the moral head of the household. Having in vain attempted to keep a school for girls at Tréguier, she departed and went to Paris as a teacher in a young ladies boarding-school.

Ernest Renan, meanwhile, was educated in the ecclesiastical seminary of his native place. His school reports described him as “docile”, patient, diligent, painstaking and, thorough. While the priests taught him mathematics and Latin, his mother completed his education. Renan’s mother was half Breton. Her paternal ancestors came from Bordeaux, and Renan used to say that in his own nature, the Gascon and the Breton were constantly at odds.²

During the summer of 1838, Renan won all the prizes at the college of Tréguier. His sister told the doctor of the school in Paris where she taught, and he gave news to FAP Dupanloup, who was involved in organizing the ecclesiastical college of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, a school in which young Catholic nobility and the most talented pupils of the Catholic seminaries were to be educated together, with the idea of creating friendships between the aristocracy and the priesthood. Dupanloup then sent to Renan, who was only fifteen years old and had never been outside Brittany. “*I learned with stupor that knowledge was not a privilege of the church ... I awoke to the meaning of the words talent, fame, celebrity.*” Religion seemed to him wholly different in Tréguier than in Paris. The superficial, brilliant, pseudo-scientific Catholicism of the capital did not satisfy Renan, who had accepted the austere faith of his Breton masters.

He grew up in the mystical, Catholic French province of Brittany, where Celtic myths combined with his mother’s deeply experienced Catholicism led this sensitive child to believe he was destined for priesthood. He was educated at the ecclesiastical college at Tréguier, graduated in 1838, and then went to Paris, where he carried on the usual theological studies at St-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet and at St-Sulpice. In his *Recollections of Childhood and Youth* (1883), he recounted the spiritual crisis he went

through as his growing interest in scientific studies of the Bible eventually made orthodoxy unacceptable; he was soon won over to the new *religion of science*, a conversion fostered by his friendship with the chemist P. E. M. Berthelot.

Renan abandoned the seminary and earned his doctorate in philosophy. At this time (1848) he wrote *The Future of Science* but did not publish it till 1890. In this work he affirmed a faith in the wonders to be brought forth by science has not yet realized, but which he was sure it would come.

Archaeological expeditions to the Near East and further studies in Semitics led Renan to a concept of religious studies which would later be known as comparative religion. He had an anthropomorphic view, and first publicized in his *Life of Jesus* (1863), in which he portrayed Christ as a historical phenomenon with historical roots and needing a rational, nonmusical explanation.³ With his characteristic suppleness of intellect, he wrote a profound irreligious work which lost him his professorship in the dominant Catholic atmosphere of the Second Empire in France.

The *Life of Jesus* was the opening volume of Renan's *History of the Origins of Christianity* (1863-1883), his most influential work. His fundamental thesis was that all religions are true and good, for all embodied man's noblest aspirations: he invited each man to phrase these truths in his own way. For many, a reading of this work made religion for the first time a living truth; for others, it made religious conviction impossible.

The defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 was for Renan, as for many Frenchmen, a deeply disillusioning experience. If Germany, which he revered could do this to France, which he loved, where did goodness, beauty, or truth

lie? He became profoundly skeptical, but with painful honesty he refused to deny what seemed to lie before him, averring instead that the truth is perhaps sad. He remained sympathetic to Christianity, perhaps expressing it most movingly in his *Prayer on the Acropolis of Athens* (1876), in which he reaffirmed his abiding faith in the Greek life of the mind but confessed that his was inevitably a larger world, with sorrows unknown to the goddess Athena; hence he could never be a true son of Greece, any more than any other modern.

Renan, educated by priests, was to accept the scientific ideal with an extraordinary expansion of all his faculties. He became ravished by the splendor of the cosmos. At the end of his life, he wrote of Amiel, the man who has time to keep a private diary and has never understood the immensity of the universe. To the day of Renan's death, their friendship continued. Renan was employed as an usher only during evenings. However, during daytime he continued his researches in Semitic philology. In 1847, he was awarded the Volney prize, one of the principal distinctions awarded by the Academy of Inscriptions for the manuscript of his *General History of Semitic Languages*. During 1847, he took his degree as *Agrégé de Philosophie* - that is to say, fellow of the university - and was offered a job as master in the *lycée Vendôme*.⁴

Within his lifetime, Renan was best known as the author of the enormously popular *Life of Jesus* (*Vie de Jésus*). This book was first translated into English during 1863 by Charles E. Wilbour which has remained in print for the past 145 years. Renan's *Life of Jesus* was lavished with ironic praise and criticism by Albert Schweitzer in his book *Quest of the Historical Jesus*. The book's controversial assertions that *the life of Jesus* should be written like the life of any other man, and that the Bible could be

subject to the same critical scrutiny as other historical documents caused much controversy, not to mention enraged many Christians at the time.

He also wrote on Averroes; contributed early essays to numerous journals, such as *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and *Journal des débats*, which were subsequently collected as *Etudes d'histoire religieuse* (1857), and *Essais de morale et de critique* (1859). His *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse* (1882) [var. 1883] autobiographical reminiscence of early years included; *Averroes et l'Averroïsme* (1852), doctoral thesis, written in Rome, from 1849; visited Athens, 1852; appointed to MSS Dept of Bibl. Nationale, 1851; headed a government expedition to Phoenicia and Palestine, 1860-61; *Ma Soeur Henriette*, published later (1895), on the death of his sister at that time; Professor of Hebrew, College de France, 1861; chair suppressed after the publication of *Vie de Jésus* (1863), being the first volume of *Les Origines du Christianisme* (1863-82) [var. 83], sold 50,000 in six months; sent by Napoleon III to find Phoenician remains in Middle East; experienced vision of the Greek ideal of human beauty, reason, and divinity at the Parthenon, 1865; other volumes were *Les Apôtres* (1866), *La Vie de saint Paul* (1869); reinstated in College de France after defeat of France, 1870, later becoming Administrator, 1883; *L'Antéchrist* (1873), *L'Évangiles* (1877), *L'Église chrétienne* (1879), *Marc-Aurèle* (1881). *Histoire du peuple d'Israël*, 5 vols. (1887-89); his intellectual framework combined a romantic spiritualism associated with his Celtic origins; a materialism which recognized that the future lay in science; a reluctance to deny a place to the ideal in the universe.⁵

He contributed to the *Revue des deux mondes* from 1851 and the *Journal des débats* from 1853. He received a *docteur ès lettres* in 1852, was elected a member of the Académie des Inscriptions in 1856, and was elected to the Académie Française in 1878.

He was appointed Professor of Hebrew at the Collège de France in 1862, but the course was then immediately suspended until 1870. In 1884 he became administrator of the Collège de France.

Renan's abandonment of his priestly calling was largely determined by the doubts engendered by his philological study of the Bible. After leaving the seminary, he was strongly influenced by Marcelin Berthelot, the chemist, with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship. Another major influence was German idealism, particularly that of G. W. F. Hegel. In one sense, Renan's life's work can be seen as an attempt to expand the horizons of scientific rationalism by incorporating into it what can be validated as an idealist philosophy - principally the theme of development and, in particular the theme of spontaneous evolution of the human mind. It was the historical aspect and the historical emphasis of Hegel's thought that appealed to Renan, for the cast of his own mind was fundamentally historical, not philosophical. Philosophy for him was not a discipline in its own right, rather, it was history and not philosophy that should dominate science; History is the necessary form of science of the future. It is evident that Renan used the word *science* as "knowledge" in its original sense; therefore "science" in this context is not to be equated with the natural sciences. On the other hand, his philological and historical method is rationalistic and critical. He was interested, above all, in the evolution of languages and religions as manifestation of the development of human mind, which, in turn, was the key to the universe. The manifestation and the universe itself, however, are concrete realities to be discovered through observation, experiment, criticism, and disciplined imagination. They are susceptible to this approach because they are the products of interplaying natural causes according to constant laws. Renan denied in principle that there is any mystery in the

world; what seemed mysterious would yield before the advancing frontiers of knowledge. This is the case in humans no less than in natural sciences. Renan, in contact with working scientists, rejected the simplistic notions of natural science characteristics of the Positivism shared by Auguste Comte. He maintained that progress in nature as well as in human science depends on human judgments by balancing the probabilities on the evidence. He further maintained that realities were in some degrees historical, that the natural sciences (paleontology, for example) revealed the remote parts of history, and that human and natural sciences can and must therefore be of mutual help.

Just as he banished all traditional metaphysics from philosophy, Renan rejected any supernatural content in religion. The true religion of humankind, in the sense of a belief accompanied by enthusiasm which crowns conviction with devotion, and faith with sacrifice, is that of science (that is, knowledge). Renan's argument runs as follows: The universe is characterized by change according to laws of progress under which the human mind becomes increasingly conscious of itself and the ideal is increasingly manifested amidst the real: The goal of the world is the development of mind. At the end of the process, God, in the sense is not of a creative providence but of an imminent ideal. Since this ideal consists of complete development of consciousness and in the attaining that consciousness has the full measure of beauty and morality, science must be the great task of humankind. This task must be approached not by mere curiosity nor utilitarianism but in the true religious spirit, in seeking revelation of the divine.

The above sketch of Renan's thought is based mainly on his youthful work, *L'avenir de la science*, (*The Future of Science*) written in 1848 but was first published in 1890. In his later philosophical writing he modified, but did not abandon, the

fundamental position adopted. Political and social events in France, in particular, damped his optimism and strengthened his skeptical and ironical streak. He began to have doubts about the “religion of science” to which he had turned when he abandoned Roman Catholicism. He became less sure that men had the capacity to attain adequate knowledge, and some of his own writing became tentative; cast at times, in the form of dialogue. Yet, in his professional historical work which always remained his chief concern, he stood by his views on the development of rationality out of instinct and on the progressive realization of God on Earth. Even in the new preface that he added to *L'avenir de la science* on its publication late in his life, Renan declared that his religion was still “the progress of reason, which was to say, of science.” He had been too sanguine, too anthropocentric, and not entirely emancipated from Catholicism; the growth of knowledge had not, in fact, clarified human destiny. He confessed that he did not see how humankind could maintain its ideals if deprived of its illusions, but he retained his faith in knowledge as the supreme pursuit.

Ernest Renan as a French author, philologist, archeologist, and founder of comparative religion influenced European thought in the second half of the 19th century through his numerous writings. According to Baumer, Franklin L, (1977), in *Modern European Thought; Continuity and Change in Ideas, 1600-1950*, Ernest Renan, like Comte, aimed at creating a new science of society. Similarly, there was to be a new *religion of science*.⁶

Hisham Sharabi (1970) in *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914* mentioned that there were two currents of European thought that perhaps had the greatest formative impact on Christian intellectualism: first, the impact on rational and liberal tradition of the Enlightenment and second, the nineteenth-century

tradition of Positivism and Liberalism. Among European scholars, especially French writers of the nineteenth century who aroused special interest were Ernest Renan and August Comte. Ernest Renan engendered special interest mainly due to his dominant position in French thought and because of his thesis concerning the decline of Islamic science.⁷

The life of Renan was essentially twofold. He was, on the one hand, a serious and accurate scholar while on the other, a wit and a dilettante. Fortunately, he always valued his scientific activity more highly than his philosophy. He laid far more stress on such contributions as his *History of the People of Israel* and his labors on the *Corpus inscriptionum Semiticarum*, the pyrotechnic of which enraptured the whole of Europe, than on his loose and sprightly philosophical writings. Nevertheless, his less worthy activity was the one which has made him best known both to his contemporaries and for posterity. More and more, as his early ideals proved impracticable, Renan lost his intellectual bearings, ending in an abysmal skepticism which clothed itself in prank and frivolity. The universe was to him a bad joke, and a merry life was its best commentary. They were the quintessence of his philosophy. Like Voltaire, Renan was willing to be “the god of fools”, and unfortunately, did not feel himself above the boldest blasphemy. For a skeptic of this type, moral standards could no longer exist, and religion and ethics were resolved into mere esthetic sensations. Religion was, as he represented, an ineradicable longing of the human soul. It was the esthetic and sensationalistic impulse toward the infinite, whether expressed in the renunciations of great ascetics or in the mystical effusions of lovely Magdalena.

WORKS BY RENAN

Below are listed titles of the most important works by Renan discussed or referred to in this study or was associated to, along with the dates of first publication and the volume numbers of those publications in which they appear:

1852. *Averroes et l'averroïsme*. Paris: Durand.

1859. *Essais de morale et de critique*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

1863. *Vie de Jésus*. Paris: Michel Lévy, Translated by C. E. Wilbour as *The Life of Jesus*. New York: Carleton.

1868. *Questions contemporaines*. Paris.

1876. *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

1883. *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*. Translated by C. B. Pitman. Paris: Calmann-Lévy. 1929. Translated by C. B. Pitman as *Recollections of My Youth*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin.

1890. *L'avenir de la science*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

1891. Translated by A. Vandam and C. Pitman as *The Future of Science*. Boston: Roberts Brothers.

Other works of Renan are of linguistic and historical value. Some of them have run through repeated editions and been translated into many languages. They are as follows:

1855. *Histoire générale et systématique comparées des langues sémitiques*. Paris.

1857. *Nudes d'histoire religieuse*. 1863. English translation *Studies in Religious History*, London.

1858. *De l'origine du langage*. (Eng. transl., London, 1889).

1859. *Essais de morale et de critique*.

1860. *Le Cantique des cantiques*.

1860. *L'Averroes et l'averroisme*.

1863. *Histoire des origines du christianisme* (8 vols., *La vie de Jesus*, 1863, *Histoire des origines du Christianisme* - 8 volumes - (1866-1881).

1873. *L'Antechrist, Les Eangiles*, 1877, *L'lise chritienne*, 1879; *Marc-Aur* 1882, *Index gral*, 1883; Eng. transl. of all except the last volume, London, 1864-99, with numerous translations of his *Life of Jesus* of other dates.

1876. *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques*. Eng. transl., *Philosophic Dialogues*, 1883.

1878. *Mnges d'histoire et de voyages*.

1880. *Confences d'Angleterre*. Eng. transl., *Influences of the Institutions of Rome on Christianity*.

1883. *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunease* Eng. transl. *Recollections of my Youth*.

1884. *Nouvelles des d'histoire religieuse*. Eng. transl., *Studies in Religious History*, 1886.

1887. *Histoire du peuple d'Israel* (5 vols., 1887-1893; Eng. transl., *History of the People of Israel*, 1888-1891). *Histoire du peuple d'Israël - 5 volumes - (1887-1893) History Of The People Of Israel Till The Time Of King David*, Eau de Jouvence (1880)

1896. *Lettres intimes d'Ernest Renan et d'Henriette Renan*. (Eng. transl., *Brother and Sister. A Memoir [of Henriette, by Ernest] and the Letters of Ernest and Henriette Renan*, 1896).

1884. *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*.

1885. *Lectures On The Influence Of The Institutions, Thought And Culture Of Rome On Christianity And The Development Of The Catholic Church*.

1885. *Le Prêtre de Némi. Examen de conscience philosophique*.

1890. *L'avenir de la science*.

1904. Renan's letters from the Holy Land; the correspondence of Ernest Renan with M. Berthelot while gathering material in Italy and the Orient for "*The life of Jesus*"; tr. by Lorenzo O'Rourke.

Work On Renan

Little has been written in English about Renan. Two of the best studies are by Richard M. Chadbourne (1957) *Ernest Renan as an Essayist*., and (1968) *Ernest Renan*.⁸

4.2 THESIS ON THE DECLINE OF ISLAMIC SCIENCE BY ERNEST RENAN WITH RESPECT TO THE QUESTION OF SCIENCE AND MODERNITY

A survey of literature from the nineteenth century onwards demonstrated that the decline thesis had become the preferred paradigm in general academia. In 1883, twenty-one years after the French translation of Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*, Joseph Ernest Renan declared that Islamic science declined after its *golden age* because of racial factors, although he placed greater emphasis on Islam's intolerance as the key reason. Renan, borrowing the idea from Voltaire (1694-1778), stated that the Oriental mind was incapable of rational thought and philosophy and therefore was responsible for blocking the development of science and learning in the Muslim world.⁹

While recognizing that the golden age continued into the second half of the eleventh century, George Sarton (1884-1956), (1927) in *History of Science* postulated that Islamic science culminated in the first half of the eleventh century. Sarton recognized that intellectual activities were still very intense and of a high order during the second half of the eleventh century. However, he assumed that "there was already a perceptible decline both in the quality and the quantity of the effort". This was not recognized at once, because the decline was very small and hidden by the activity of some very great personalities.¹⁰

The decline eventually set in because the Western people found the cure, the only cure, the experimental method; the Eastern people did not find it or did not fully understand it, or neglected to apply it. In addition, he suggested:

perhaps, that the Eastern people, say the Muslims, had reached the limit of their development, that they were like those gifted children who startle the world

*by their precocious achievements and then suddenly stop and become less interesting, while others, at first less brilliant, pass far ahead of them.*¹¹

The decline thesis continued well into the twentieth century with slightly less absurd explanations. For example, in 1929, Sir William Cecil Dampier (1867-1952) in *History of Science and its Relation with Philosophy and Religion* strongly proclaimed that by the turn of the twelfth century, the decline of Arabic and Muslim learning had set in, and henceforth science was chiefly a European activity.¹²

In 1932, Max Meyerhof (1874-1945) in his writing *Science and Medicine in The Legacy of Islam*, edited by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume on the other hand, suggested that the decline of Islamic science began at about 1100, and continued suggesting this in other article entitled, *Science and Medicine*, in which he contradicted himself by stating that the twelfth century marked a standstill (not a decline).¹³

4.3 QUESTIONING RENAN'S THESIS OF THE DECLINE OF ISLAMIC SCIENCE AND HIS EXCHANGE WITH AL-AFGHANI IN PARIS, 1883

The Enlightenment had a tremendous impact on the educated Western nations and Christians of this generation. In the context of Enlightenment thought which popularized Positivism and Liberalism, three French intellectuals were produced. They were August Comte, Ernest Renan and Gustave Le Bon, who played major roles in this regard. Amongst them, Ernest Renan stood out as the most important figure in the context of the encounter between Islamic and Western thought. This is because of the dominant position he held among the French intellectuals. Furthermore, he often produced his own theories on Islam and Christianity. In addition, most of the Christian intellectuals were impressed by his high reputation in the religious historical field, encompassing all three main religions; Islam, Christian and Jew. A passage from the prologue of his book, *The Future of Science: Ideas of 1848*, gave the clear picture concerning his utmost attention towards philosophical and historical thought, and religious issues:

The year 1848 made an exceedingly keen impression upon me... A paper on my study of Greek in the Middle Ages which I had begun in answer to a question of l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres had engrossed all my thoughts... I felt the need of summing up in a volume the new faith which with me had replaced shattered Catholicism... About the time I wrote those lines, M. Victor Le Clerc be thought himself to have me, in conjunction with my friend Charles Daremberg, entrusted with various researches in the public libraries of Italy in connection with the literary history of France and a thesis I had begun on Averroism.¹⁴

The discourse on the relationship between Islam and modern science is now more than a hundred years old if one were to consider the debate by Ernest Renan in Paris in 1883 as a starting point. Al-Afghani's response to Renan's polemic against

Islam was the first Muslim response in the modern era, towards the claim that Islam and science are incompatible. However, since then, the discourse has developed into something far more complex altogether.

One of the most significant events was the controversial debate between al-Afghani-Renan which began with Renan's lecture in Sorbonne, Paris, entitled *Islam and Science*. It was then published by *Journal Des Debates* in 29th March 1883. According to Renan, Islam and science contradicted each other and therefore, by implication, Islam and modern civilization were incompatible with one another. Al-Afghani responded to Renan's lecture that was also published by the same magazine in 18th May 1883. According to Ahmad Amin(1979) in *Zu'ama` al-Islah fi al-'Asr al-Hadith*, there were three main issues being brought forward by Renan namely:

- i. the Arabs had never given any contribution towards science and technology advancement. Yet while the Arabs mastered governing science, its civilization was in fact controlled by Persians. Various fields of philosophy and science were mastered by Christian Nestorians while famous philosophers, such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Ibn Rusyd are not from the Arabs,
- ii. Renan claimed that Islam disapproves of science, philosophy, and free thinking. What has being discussed by Islam has really about supernatural things and our faith towards *qada'* and *qadar*, and
- iii. the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate in its early days, supported and dominated by the Persian as well as the supporters of science elements and Greek philosophy, has galvanized the innovation of science and philosophy. The

Abbasids, coming from an age known as *The Golden Age of Islamic Intellectual* and are influenced by non-Arab elements have by then become the patron of science. This makes the development of scientific thoughts and philosophy during the 120-year reign of The *Rashidun* Caliphate or The Rightly guided Caliphates of Prophet Muhammad and The Umayyad Caliphate, which have been under the control and domination of the Arabs deemed less prominent.¹⁵

In connection to this, Nikki R. Keddie concluded a part of Renan lecture entitled *Islam and Science*, which had stated that early Islam and the Arabs who professed it were hostile to the scientific and philosophic spirit, and that science and philosophy had only entered Islamic world from the non-Arab sources. The science and philosophy that were often called Arab were actually Greek or Persian. Only one of the great Islamic philosophers was an Arab by birth, and to call their philosophy Arab, just because they wrote in Arabic, makes no more sense than to call medieval European philosophy Latin.¹⁶

Next, Keddie concluded that Renan's argument, as well as noted by Al-Afghani in his '*Answer*,' has two major points:

- i. the first is a racist one: The Arabs by nature and temperament are hostile to science and philosophy, and these subjects were only taught in the Islamic world by non-Arabs, especially people of Indo-European or '*Aryan*' origin; and

- ii. the second is that Islam is essentially hostile to science. This hostility was dominant when the Arabs ruled. Later under the Turks, it was temporarily and precariously overcome, but only during the short period when Greek and Persian influences were strong.¹⁷

Pertaining to this, Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq (1966) in his book, *Tamhid li Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah*, and Albert Hourani(1987) in *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* explained Renan's thesis in *Islam and Science* in more detail:

*Renan admitted indeed the existence of so-called Arabic philosophy and science, but they were Arabic in nothing but language and Greco-Sassanian in content. They were entirely the work of non-Muslims in inner revolt against their own religion; by theologians and rulers alike they had been opposed, and so had been unable to influence the institutions of Islam. This opposition had been held in check so long as the Arabs and Persians had been in control of Islam, but it reigned supreme when the Barbarians-Turks in the east, Berbers in the west-took over the direction of the umma. The Turks had a total lack of the philosophic and scientific spirit, and human reason and progress, the state based on a revelation. But as European science spread, Islam world perish, and elsewhere Renan prophesied that this would happen soon. As an example of the way in which Muslim minds were opened by their contacts with Europe, he gave Tahtawi's description of Paris, which was known to him. Renan of course was thinking of Catholicism, and of religion in general, when he wrote of Islam. For him Islam, like Christianity, although in a different way, was an example of the tragic result of confusing two realms. Reason should dominate human action, having it as its final because human perfection and the triumph of civilization and in the modern world science was the form in which reason expressed itself.*¹⁸

In a reply by no means lacking in perspicacity, al-Afghani met Renan on his own ground. A significant point of al-Afghani's response to Renan was that in many ways, it seemed more in line with 20th century ideas than Renan's original argument. Al-Afghani commented on Renan's statement that the Muslim religion was opposed to science but pointed out that no one in its

earliest stages accepted neither science nor philosophy. It was true, he agreed, that while religions were necessary to draw men out of barbarism, they tended to become intolerant.

Afterwards, this was only a phase through which religions passed; of which in a later phase, men began liberating themselves from the chains imposed on their reason. They had done so in Christendom at the time of the Reformation; but in the case of Islam it was several centuries younger and its reformation was still to arrive. Islam needed a Luther; this indeed was a favorite theme of Al-Afghani and perhaps he saw himself in the role. Once this reformation took place, Islam was as fit as any other religion to play its essential role of a spiritual and moral guide. Al-Afghani emphasized that the past of Islam proved this: it could not be summed up as Renan had suggested, as a blind triumph of orthodoxy over reason. The rational sciences had flourished, and they had been truly Islamic and Arab; it is precisely language which constitutes nations and distinguishes them from one another, and sciences expressed in Arabic must be called Arab. Thus, the Arabs can claim Ibn Sina and Ibn Rusyd as theirs in exactly the same way as the French claim Mazarin and Napoleon. It is true, the conflict between religion and philosophy will always exist in Islam, but that is because it has always been in existence in the human mind.

Al-Afghani's answer to Renan pictured his understanding towards the background of Western thought that has its roots from the Renaissance in the 15th century, the Enlightenment era in 18th century and the *New Enlightenment Era* in the 19th century. The *New Enlightenment Era* that was rooted in imperialism, Positivism, and Scientism, is truly thick with its Eurocentric orientation that assumes the superiority

of Western civilization. It denies the position of non-European civilizations, especially Islamic civilization. Renan's thesis presumed Islam as incompatible with science and civilization. Bassam Tibi (1981) in *Arab Nationalism: a Critical Enquiry* described Renan's thesis and its impact on al-Afghani as follows:

*Al-Afghani vigorously opposed the racist notions then current in Europe which claimed that only Europe could produce a culture and civilization, and ignored all highly developed non-European cultures including Islam. Among the supporters of this point of view was the influential philosopher Ernest Renan, who considered Islam incompatible with science and culture. This thesis so affronted Al-Afghani, who was then in Europe, that he decided to challenge Renan's assumptions publicly in the Journal des Debats.*¹⁹

Renan in *The Future of Science* proved and emphasized his conviction towards Eurocentric's and how he held to it:

*Islamism which, by a strange fate scarcely constituted as a religion in its earlier years has since then marched onward constantly acquiring new degrees of strength and stability, Islamism, I say will perish without striking a blow by the sheer influence of European science, and history will point to our century as the one in which the first causes of that immense event began to appear on the horizon. The Turkish and Egyptian youth coming to our schools in search of European science will take back with them those inseparable corollary, the rational method, the spirit of experiment, the sentiment of the real, the impossibility of belief in religious traditions evidently conceived beyond all sphere of criticism. Rigidly orthodox Musulmans are already growing uneasy at this and pointing out the danger to the emigrating younger generation. Sheikh Riffaa in the interesting narrative of his journey in Europe lays great stress on the deplorable errors that disfigure our books on science, such as for instance, the motion of the earth, etc.; and still deems it nor utterly impossible to cleanse them of this poison. It is, however, patent that these heresies will shortly prove stronger than the Koran with minds initiated to modern methods. I fancy that there also will occur a Renaissance analogous to that of Europe in the fifteenth century, and which will be due, not to our literature, which has no more meaning to the Oriental than had the literature of the Greeks to the Arabs of the ninth and tenth centuries, but to our science, which, like that of the Greeks, having no stamp of nationality, is a pure work of the human intellect.*²⁰

Al-Afghani's answer to Renan was wholesome, not in any way racist, prejudiced, nor tainted with animosity. As a matter of fact, his speech was a correction of Renan's interpretation of the decline of Islamic and Arabic science. Al-Afghani saw Christian history had also confronted with the awakening of the science, philosophy, and modernism protagonist group. The same goes for the Islam *ummah*'s history while faced the same problem. In addition, al-Afghani admitted the superiority of modern Western intellectuals. But people of the West and Christian worshippers should have realized that Christianity had gone through an evolution process to achieve its superiority that started with its encounter with the Islamic civilization in the middle period. Al-Afghani stated that:

*All religions are intolerant, each one in its way. The Christian religion, I mean the society that follows its inspirations and its teaching and is formed in its image, has emerged from the first period to which I have just alluded; thenceforth free and independent, it seems to advance rapidly on the road of progress and science, whereas Muslim society has not yet freed itself from the tutelage of religion. Realizing, however, that the Christian religion preceded the Muslim religion in the world by many centuries, I cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely in the path of civilization after the manner of Western society... I plead here with M. Renan not the cause of the Muslim religion, but that of several hundreds of millions of men, who would thus be condemned to live in barbarism and ignorance. In truth, the Muslim has tried to stifle science and stop its progress.*²¹

Thesis by al-Afghani disproves Renan's claim that religious dogma has resulted in the gloom of scientific thoughts. With regards to it, al-Afghani reiterated that it was Prophet Muhammad who has encouraged and exhorted the *ummah* to use their brain power to explore the various fields of science. To that effect, The Golden Age of Islamic Intellectual has practically pioneered by Islamic scholars who have mastered various fields of science. One of them, Jabir bin Hayyan Abu Mūsā Jābir ibn Hayyān (al-Barigi / al-Azdi / al-Kufi / al-Tusi / al-Sufi), often known simply as *Geber*, (c.721–

c.815) was a prominent polymath: a chemist and alchemist, astronomer and astrologer, engineer, geographer, philosopher, physicist, and pharmacist and physician. Born and educated in Tus, he later traveled to Kufa. Jābir is held to have been the first practical alchemist.

Jabir bin Hayyan or Geber was a religion scholar who had gained knowledge from a renowned religious figure, Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq in Medina during the tail end of the `Abbasids and early age of the Umayyads. Ibn al-Nadim compiled *the Kitab al-Fihrist* which mentions Jabir as a spiritual follower and as a companion to Jafar as-Sadiq (he is not listed among the students of Jafar as-Sadiq but many of the writings of the Jabirian corpus are dedicated to Ja'far as-Sadiq).²²

Similarly, Abū Alī al-Husayn ibn Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā (c. 980 – June 1037), commonly known as Ibn Sīnā or by his Latinized name *Avicenna*, was a Persian polymath, who wrote almost 450 treatises on a wide range of subjects, of which around 240 have survived. In particular, 150 of his surviving treatises concentrate on philosophy and 40 of them concentrate on medicine. His most famous works are *The Book of Healing*, a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and *The Canon of Medicine*, which was a standard medical text at many medieval universities. *The Canon of Medicine* was used as a text-book in the universities of Montpellier and Leuven as late as 1650. Ibn Sīnā's *Canon of Medicine* provides a complete system of medicine according to the principles of Galen (and Hippocrates). His corpus also includes writing on philosophy, astronomy, alchemy, geology, psychology, Islamic theology, logic, mathematics, physics, as well as poetry. He is regarded as the most famous and influential polymath of the Islamic Golden Age. Ibn Sīnā was a devout Muslim and

sought to reconcile rational philosophy with Islamic theology. His aim was to prove the existence of God and His creation of the world scientifically and through reason and logic. Avicenna wrote a number of treatises dealing with Islamic theology. These included treatises on the Islamic prophets, whom he viewed as "inspired philosophers", and on various scientific and philosophical interpretations of the *Qur'an*, such as how Quranic cosmology corresponds to his own philosophical system.

Ibn Sīnā memorized the *Qur'an* by the age of ten, and as an adult, he wrote five treatises commenting on suras from the *Qur'an*. One of these texts included *the Proof of Prophecies*, in which he comment on several Quranic verses and holds the *Qur'an* in high esteem. Avicenna argued that the Islamic prophets should be considered higher than philosophers. According to his autobiography, Avicenna had memorized the entire Qur'an by the age of 10. He learned Indian arithmetic from an Indian greengrocer, and learned more from a wandering scholar who gained a livelihood by curing the sick and teaching the young. He also studied *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) under the *Hanafi* scholar Ismail al-Zahid.²³

The thesis by al-Afghani was by all means supported by a renowned Western scholar; R. Hooykaas (1972). In his book *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, he asserts that the grassroots of European civilization were influenced by elements of Judaism and Christianity or Judaeo-Christian assimilated from the sacred scriptures of *Samawi* religion. This was traced through their presence in religious scriptures or Biblical Tradition, which among others, debate about the creation of the universe, mankind and living creatures.²⁴

What had been stressed by Hooykaas was also shared by Al-Afghani in his lecture on *Teaching and Learning* that emphasized:

*The Islamic religion really is the closest of religion to science and knowledge, and there is no incompatibility between science and knowledge and foundation of the Islamic faith... As for Al-Ghazali, who was called the Proof of Islam, in the book Deliverance from Error, he says that someone who claims that the Islamic religion is incompatible with geometric proofs, philosophical demonstrations, and the laws of nature is an ignorant friend of Islam. The harm of this ignorant friend to Islam is greater than the harm of the heretics and enemies of Islam.*²⁵

Aside from its explicit content, there are other circumstances surrounding Al-Afghani's response to Renan's lecture on '*Islam and Science*' which indicate Al-Afghani's new traditionalist and revivalist attitude and his estrangement from Islamic orthodoxy. For instance, Renan's rejoinder to Al-Afghani, published in the *Journal des Debats* on May 19, 1883, indicates that Al-Afghani impressed this eminent rationalist philosopher as a man of his own stripe. Muslim authors like Mustafa 'Abd al-Raziq, Mahmud Abu Rayyah, Ahmad Amin, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Maghribi, and Muhammad Basha al-Makhzumi are accustomed to quoting from this rejoinder in their entirety. The first line is from the publication of Renan's *Islam and Science*, which reads as follows:

*A remarkably intelligent Afghan Sheikh having presented observations on the above lecture, I answered the next day, in same journal, as follows: We read yesterday with the interest they merited the very judicious reflections that my last lecture at the Sorbonne suggested to Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin. There is nothing more instructive than studying the ideas of an enlightened Asiatic in their original and sincere form. It is by listening to the most diverse voices, coming from the four corners of the globe, in favor of rationalism, that one becomes convinced that if religions divide men, Reason brings them together; and that there is only one Reason.*²⁶

Renan mentioned that he met al-Afghani about two months before. Probably, it would have been in March, 1883, shortly after his arrival in Paris, through a collaborator on the *Journal des Debats*, M. Ghanim. He went on:

Few people have produced on me a more vivid impression. It is in large measure the conversation I had with him that decided me to choose as a subject for my lecture at the Sorbonne the relations between the scientific spirit and Islam. Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is an Afghan entirely divorced from the prejudices of Islam; he belongs to those energetic races of Iran, near India, where the Aryan spirit lives still so energetically under the superficial layer of official Islam. He is the best proof of the great axiom we have often proclaimed, namely, that religions are worth the same as the races that profess them. The liberty of his thought, his noble and loyal character, made me believe while I was talking with him, that I had before me, restored to life, one of my old acquaintances-Avicenna, Averroes, or another of those great infidels who represented for five centuries the tradition of human mind. For me there was an especially vivid contrast when I compared this striking apparition with the spectacle presented by the Muslim countries this side of Persia-countries in which scientific and philosophic curiosity is so rare. Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is the best case of ethnic protest against religious conquest that one could cite....

In the learned article of the Sheikh I see only one point on which we are really in disagreement... Everything written in Latin is not the glory of Rome; everything written in Greek is not Hellenic; everything written in Arabic is not an Arab product; everything done in a Christian country is not the effect of Christianity; everything done in a Muslim country is not a fruit of Islam... These sorts of distinctions are necessary if one does not wish history to be a tissue of approximations and misunderstandings...

One point on which I may have appeared unjust to the Sheikh is that I did not develop enough the idea that all revealed religions manifest themselves as hostile to positive science, and that Christianity in this respect is not superior to Islam. This is beyond doubt. Galileo was no better treated by Catholicism than Averroes by Islam.²⁷

Renan also recorded his opinion on this point and stated that:

the human mind must be freed of all supernatural belief if it wishes to work on its essential work, which is the construction of positive science. This does not imply violent destruction nor brusque rupture. The Christian does not have to abandon Christianity nor the Muslim Islam. The enlightened parties of Christianity and Islam should arrive at that state of benevolent indifference where religious beliefs become inoffensive. This has happened in about half of the Christian countries; let us hope it will happen in Islam. Naturally on that day the Sheikh and I will agree in applauding... There will be distinguished individuals (though there will be few as distinguished as Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin) who will separate ourselves from Catholicism. Certain countries, with time, will

*more or less break with the religion of the Koran; but I doubt that the movement of renaissance will be made with the support of official Islam.*²⁸

Finally, Renan noted quite justly that Al-Afghani had provided additional arguments in favor of his own basic points:

*Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin seems to me to have brought considerable arguments for my two fundamental theses: During the first half of its existence Islam did not stop the scientific movement from existing in Muslim lands; in the second half it stifled in its breast the scientific movement, and that to its grief.*²⁹

Aydin Sayili(1960) in his writings *The Causes of the Decline of Scientific Work in Islam* in *The Observatory in Islam and its Place in the General History of the Observatory*, was perhaps the first scholar to devote an entire appendix to the causes of the decline as well as seriously attempted to define 'decline' and to explore its possible causes. Sayili defined the decline of Islamic science as a *decrease of dynamism in science* which does not mean a decrease in the amount of knowledge in circulation or available for circulation. It is a decline in the magnitude of scientific work and achievement, in scientific productivity, in the frequency of occurrences of original contributions to scientific knowledge... a gradual, if not uniform decrease, both in the intensity of production of first-rate work, and in the frequency of appearance of first-class scientist ... who did not disappear during the later centuries, but they became increasingly rare.³⁰

Sayili also recognized that the decline was not always conspicuous. At times it was not uniform and continuous, and it was not simultaneous or of equal magnitude in all scientific fields and geographical regions.³¹ This marked a significant departure from previous scholarship.

In 1987, Abdelhamid Sabra continued to frame the fate of Islamic science in terms of decline but suggested that the decline occurred because the philosophers' view of knowledge was replaced by the instrumentalist view proposed by al-Ghazali. He also claimed that the decline did not happen in the context of orthodox opposition (as usually thought) but in the context of acceptance and assimilation. Decline set in when the sciences came to be accepted and practiced only to the extent that they were legitimated by the instrumentalist view.³² This suggestion, Sabra noted, was not intended to be an explanation of the phenomenon of decline, but rather as a relevant and possibly illuminating observation that might help future research by directing our attention towards a certain and more focused direction.³³

It is interesting to note however, that like Sayili, Sabra rejected the notion of a general or uniform decline of Islamic science as characterized by decline theorists. Instead, he raised three fundamental issues:

- i. assigning a date of decline is difficult due to the fact that Islamic Empire covered a vast geographical area of which not all centers of scientific activity were in the same phase of development at the same time;
- ii. decline in one branch may coincide with progress in another;
- iii. more specific research is needed before reliable general conclusions can be made.

These were important remarks because though Sabra accepted that decline did in fact occur, he seemed to reject the conventional theory that stipulated a general decline.³⁴ This marks a return to proper scholarship. It is unfortunate that Sabra showed no awareness of Ibn Khaldun's observations, though.

In 1992, David C. Lindberg in *The Beginning of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Contexts, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1450*, stated that Islamic science went into a decline during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and that by the fifteenth century little was left. He claimed insufficient research had been done to allow us to provide a more satisfactory explanation for this decline. However, Lindberg offered several possible causal factors:

- i. outright opposition by conservative religious forces;
- ii. alteration of the character of scientific activity by the imposition of a very narrow definition of utility; and
- iii. disappearance of peace, prosperity and patronage as a result of continuous, disastrous warfare among factions and petty states within Islam and attacks from outside.

Lindberg also put forth handmaiden thesis for the cause of decline. He opined that science became naturalized in Islam - losing its alien quality and finally becoming Islamic science, instead of Greek science practiced on Islamic soil by accepting a greatly restricted handmaiden role. This meant the loss of attention to many problems that had once seemed important. ³⁵

A year later, Toby Huff (1993) in *The Rise of Early Modern Science* argued that the end of the thirteenth century marked the decline of Islamic science. He recognized there were in fact significant scientific events after the thirteenth century but treated them as minor in comparison to what was taking place in Europe. He explained that, while research during the previous three decades provided us with a better understanding of Arabic science, it failed to explain the reasons for the decline. Huff offered, therefore religious, legal, cultural, and institutional factors as possible causes for the decline.³⁶

In 1999, James E. McClellan III and Harold Dorn in *Science and Technology in World History* continued to echo the decline theory, but they recognized scholarly disagreement on when the vitality of scientific activity started to lose its vigor. They also recognized, as Sabra did, that important new science continued to progress in the East until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. However, despite acknowledging these important observations, they continued to cling to the idea that Islamic science declined around the year 1000.³⁷

According to Mohammed Abdalla (2003) in *The Fate of Islamic Science between the Eleventh and Sixteenth-Centuries: A Critical Study of Scholarship from Ibn Khaldun to the Present*, George Saliba on the other hand rejected the idea that Islamic science suffered a uniform decline. Although he conceded some branches may have declined, he sought answers to specific questions such as which science has declined, at what time, under what conditions, what political, economic, social reasons? He also rejected the common explanations for the supposed decline, including the claim that scientific inquiry ran afoul with Islamic religious authorities. He criticized this explanation as flawed, for example, the argument that al-Ghazali was to blame for the decline of Islamic science based on the historical fact that scientists produced "*the best*

mathematics, the best astronomy and the best medicine after al-Ghazali". He also argued that if some branches of Islamic science declined, it may have been the result of the industrial leap forward that Europe achieved, particularly after the discovery of America. Since then onwards, the Islamic world seemed to be in a race with Europe; and not only did it fail to catch up, but the gap between them became ever more apparent.³⁸

In contrast a 2003-publication by Sabra and Hogendijk in *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives* argued that Islamic science flourished well beyond the eleventh century. The Islamic tradition in the exact sciences continued well into the nineteenth century, and abundant source materials were in fact available in the form of unpublished manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, and other languages in libraries all over the world. In the last decades, many researchers have worked on the Islamic scientific tradition, and since then, the views of this tradition have been rapidly changing as a result of recent discoveries. This process will hopefully continue because there are still numerous important sources which have not been identified and properly studied.³⁹

This reinforces Saliba's argument that the decline was not homogeneous, and that more focus and specific research are needed before any reliable general descriptions, let alone plausible explanations, can be made. In relation to this, it should be noted that Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the North African philosopher-cum-historian who was considered the greatest Muslim historian and the father of modern social science and cultural history, and the author of *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, had written a world history which aimed at analyzing historical events. His observations on the fate of Islamic science are significant today as they directly contradict the golden age/decline theory that has since then been neglected by the scholars of the field.

The Muqaddimah, often translated as "Introduction" or "Prolegomenon," is the most important Islamic history of the premodern world. Written by the great fourteenth-century Muslim scholar, this monumental work laid down the foundations of several fields of knowledge, including philosophy of history, sociology, ethnography, and economics. The first complete English translation, by the eminent Islamicist and interpreter of Arabic literature Franz Rosenthal, was published in three volumes in 1958 as part of the Bollingen Series and received immediate acclaim in America and abroad. A one-volume abridged version of Rosenthal's masterful translation was first published in 1969.⁴⁰

In a chapter entitled *Scientific instruction is a craft*, Ibn Khaldun (1967;426) in his masterpiece, explained that scientific instruction in the lands of the *Maghrib* had practically ceased to be cultivated due to the disintegration of the *Maghrib* civilization and its dynasties losing their importance, which consequently resulted in the deterioration and disappearance of the crafts. In other words, Ibn Khaldun theorized that science flourished when there was social and economic demand for it, and declined otherwise. Furthermore, when the civilization of Muslims in Spain was highly developed and sedentary culture was well established, sciences and crafts were greatly cultivated and very much in demand. When they fell into ruin, however, scientific instructions ceased to be cultivated. The emphasis here is on scientific instruction or the education of science and not necessarily its activity.⁴¹ Emphasis on scientific activity can also be found in another chapter, where Ibn Khaldun stated scientific activity disappeared there [the *Maghrib* and Spain], saved for a few remnants among scattered individuals and that are controlled by the orthodox religious scholars.⁴²

Ibn Khaldun explained that with the exception of Baghdad, al-Basrah and al-Kufah, which fell into ruin, the tradition of scientific instruction did not decrease nor cease to be refined in the Eastern part of the Empire. This may be exemplified by our previous statements concerning Baghdad, Cordoba [Spain], al-Qayrawan [the *Maghrib*], al-Basra and al-Kufa. At the beginning of Islam, the civilization (population) was large with sedentary culture existing deep within. The sciences were greatly cultivated then, and the people were widely versed in the various technical terminologies of scientific instruction, in the different kinds of sciences, and in posing problems and (inventing new) disciplines. In fact, they exceeded (all) who had come before them and surpassed (all) who came after. But when the civilization of those cities began to wane and their inhabitants were dispersed, the picture was completely reversed. Science and scientific instruction no longer took importance in those cities, but were transplanted to other Muslim cities. We can, at this time, notice that science and scientific instructions do still exist in Cairo Egypt, because the civilization of (Egypt) was greatly developed and its sedentary culture has been well established for thousands of years. Therefore, the crafts were firmly established there and existed in many varieties. One of them was apparently scientific instruction.⁴³

Overall, Ibn Khaldun suggested three distinct observations:

- i. science and scientific instruction decreased and eventually disappeared or ceased to be cultivated in the Maghrib and Spain simply because these countries were ruined;
- ii. science and scientific instruction in Baghdad, al-Basra, and al-Kufa no longer existed at any significant scale, and were transplanted to other regions of Islam;

- iii. science and scientific instruction existed in other Muslim lands like Egypt at a time when they ceased in certain places and were transplanted in others.

These observations were multi-faceted and signified that, at least between the so-called golden age and the fourteenth century, Islamic science did not totally cease. This was in direct contradiction to the conventional decline theory. One would expect that any scholarly discourse on the fate of Islamic science after the "golden age" would show more awareness toward Ibn Khaldun's observations, and build upon them to provide a more comprehensive answer for the fate of Islamic science. Instead, Ibn Khaldun's observations remained unnoticed except, as it will be demonstrated next, in the work of two scholars, Gustave von Grunebaum and Ahmad Y. Al-Hassan who even so failed to represent Ibn Khaldun accurately. While Von Grunebaum (1946) in *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation* recognized Islamic civilization significant contribution to new inventions, discoveries, and improvements, he mistakenly argued that:

*Conservatism... and the tendency natural to despotism and orthodoxy to discharge revision and reform, combined with Islam's catholic curiosity and receptiveness, are responsible for the lack of integration of the component elements which makes Islamic civilization appeared like a torso ... arrested in its growth during the eleventh century... It stagnated in self-inflicted sterility.*⁴⁴

Departing from the idea that Islamic science declined after the fall of Abbasid Empire or the eleventh century, Ahmad Y. al-Hassan exclusively dealt with factors that led to a decline after the sixteenth century. While asserting that Islamic science maintained its leadership between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, he argued that it also flourished between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and actually maintained its lead, especially in the countries of eastern Islam. To illustrate this, al-

Hassan discussed briefly the case of the observatory in Islam between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The Maragha observatory, he explained, was established in 1259 and continued in operation until about 1304. It contained 400,000 books and a good number of distinguished scientists led by the famous Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, whose team included leading scientists like Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi, Muhayyid al-Din al-Urdi, Muhayy al-Din al-Maghribi and many others. The observatory was essentially an institution of research in astronomy and a scientific academy with excellent opportunities for scientific contact and exchange of ideas. Al-Hassan advocated, with clear evidence, the case that Islamic achievements in science extended until the middle of the sixteenth century. Al-Hassan also demonstrated awareness of Ibn Khaldun's observations:

At the time when scientific communities in Europe were on the increase, all the regions of Islam were witnessing the decline of science and of scientific communities. This phenomenon [sic] is discussed by Ibn Khaldun in more than one chapter in his Introduction (al-Muqaddimah).⁴⁵

His representation of Ibn Khaldun's observations was, however, questioned. Al-Hassan claimed that Ibn Khaldun mentioned that all regions of Islam witnessed decline in more than one chapter of his *Muqaddimah* and that he discussed the factors which were essential for the flourishing of sciences and other professions and the factors which lead to their decline.⁴⁶ Ibn Khaldun, however, did not discuss factors that lead to the decline, although in some contexts he used terms (such as decrease), which could be understood as referring to a local decline. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun clearly stated that different fates awaited Islamic science in different regions at different times.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presents arguments that the decline thesis of Islamic science by Renan and other Western scholars was to an extent a scholarly error that has proven to be remarkably persistent despite the availability of contrary evidence and the attention of ever-growing numbers of concerned scholars. In the absence of an alternative explanation, the decline thesis acquired the status of a paradigm; an analytical model that achieved currency even though it did not satisfy all the facts. A thoughtful reading of Ibn Khaldun and other Muslim scholars' works would have forced rejection, or at least alteration of the much-touted decline thesis. Based on substantial findings, scholars like Saliba, Nasr, Sayili, Sadr, Mustafa Abd al-Razziq and Sabra have rejected the basic claims of the decline thesis.

There is a growing body of evidence which confirmed the rise, rather than the decline of science in the Muslim world after the eleventh century or even after the fall of Abbassid Caliphate on 1258 AD. It is surprising that such a fundamental and obvious feature of Islamic science could have remained obscure and escaped the attention of so many proponents of the decline thesis.

NOTES

1. See Wardman H.W. 1964. *Ernest Renan A Critical Biography*. London: The Athlone Press University of London. P. 5.
2. See Copleston, Frederick. 1977. *A History of Philosophy*. New York: Doubleday. Pp.107-109.
3. Copleston, Frederick. op.cit. Pp.109-111.
4. *Encyclopedia of World Biography*. 1998. Second Edition, Gale; Detroit, USA. Pp. 95-96.

See also Said, W.Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul. Pp.122-66.

In this context of Renan's researches in Semitic philology, Said, W.Edward pointed out and concluded a conclusion as follows: for Renan, it was his adaptation of Orientalism to philology and to the intellectual culture of his time that perpetuated the Orientalist structures intellectually and gave them greater visibility... p.130. Edward Said continued his commentary about Ernest Renan and stated that... Renan came to Orientalism from philology, and it is the extraordinarily rich and celebrated cultural position of that discipline that endowed Orientalism with its most important technical characteristics. P.131.

5. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2006. Borchert, Donald. M. Thomson Gale/Macmillan References USA. Pp.213-223.
6. See Baumer, Franklin, L. 1977. *Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600-1950*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.Inc. Pp. 305-308.
7. See Sharabi, Hisham. 1970. *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press. Pp. 66-68.
8. Wardman, H.W. op.cit. Pp. 219-221.
Encyclopedia of World Biography. op.cit. Pp.95-98.
Encyclopedia of Philosophy. op. cit. Pp. 222-223.
9. See George Saliba. 1998. *Al-Fikr al-Arabi al-Ilmi: Nash'atuhu Wa Tatauruhu*. Beirut: Balamand University. Pp.35-37.
10. See Sarton, George. 1927. *History of Science*. New York: Krieger. P. 738.

Sarton stated as follows: Islamic science here means the natural or exact sciences that originated in or were influenced by the Islamic civilization. Arabic was the main scientific used, but not necessarily the native language of the scientists, who might have been Persian, Turkish, or of other origins. While the terms Islamic science and Arabic science are modern historical terms within the context of Islamic civilization, this science is Islamic in the sense that it suited the new and growing needs of the Islamic civilization; was available entirely in Arabic, which replaced Syriac; and was familiar to an increasing number of translators, students, and scientists. It is in this context that the term Islamic science will be used in this article.

11. Sarton, George. op.cit. P.739.
12. See Dampier, Sir William Cecil. 1929. *History of Science and its Relation with Philosophy and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 76.

13. See Meyerhof, Max. 1931. *Science and Medicine in The Legacy of Islam*. eds. Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume. Oxford: The Clarendon Press. P. 337.
14. See Renan, Ernest J. 1891. *The Future of Science: Ideas of 1848*. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd. preface. Pp.v-vi.
- See also Hourani, Albert. 1987. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge & London: Cambridge University Press. Pp.113-114.
- See also Renan, Ernest. 1866. *Averroes et L'Averroisme Essai Historique*. Paris: Michel Levy Freres Libraires Editeurs. Reprinted by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zurich and New York. 1986.
15. See Amin, Ahmad. 1979. *Zu'ama` al-Islah fi al-'Asr al-Hadith*. al-Qahirah: Maktabah al-Nahdah al-Misriyyah. Pp. 92-93.
16. See Keddie R.Nikki. 1972. *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani : A Political Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press. P. 84-85.
17. Keddie. op. cit. Pp. 84-85.
18. See 'Abd al-Raziq, Mustafa. 1966. *Tamhid li Tarikh al-Falsafah al-Islamiyyah*, al-Qahira: Matba'ah Lajnah al-Ta`lif wa al-Tarjamah wa al-Nasyr. Pp.11-12.
- 'Abd al-Raziq quoted that explanation from Renan's thesis, 1866. *Averroes et L'averroisme*, op.cit.in preface, Pp.7-8. and p.11.
- See also Hourani, Albert. op.cit. Pp.120-121.
19. See Tibi, Bassam. 1981. *Arab Nationalism: a Critical Enquiry*, edited and translated by Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett. London: Macmillan. P.65.
20. See Renan, J.Ernest, op.cit. P.43.
- Renan also mentioned that;*
- the study of Greek science and philosophy had already produced an analogous result among the Mussulmans in the Middle Ages. Averroes may be considered a rationalist pure and simple. But this splendid onward movement was checked by the rigid Mussulmans. The numbers and the influence of the philosophers were not sufficiently large to carry the day, as was the case in Europe.*
21. See also Keddie. *A Political Biography*. op. cit. P.87.
22. See Glick, Thomas F. 2005. *Medieval science, Technology, and Medicine: An Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge. Pp. 415-417.
- See also Haq, Syed Nomanul. 1995. *Names, Natures and Things: The Alchemist Jabir Ibn Hayyan and His Kitab Al-Ahjar*. (Book of Stones). London: Springer. P. 3.
- See also Ibn al-Nadim m.d. 998. *Al-Fihrist li Ibn al-Nadim*. Al-Qahirah: Al-Maktabat al-Tijariyyah al-Kubra. Edited by Bayard Dodge. 1970. *The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim*. London and New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 272-281.
- See also al-Hasyimi, Muhammad Yahya. 1986. *Al-Imam al-Sadiq Mulhim al-Kimiya`*. Beirut: Dar al-Adhwa`. Pp. 28-33.

23. Lenn Evan Goodman. 2003. *Islamic Humanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 8–9.
- James W. Morris. 1992. "The Philosopher-Prophet in Avicenna's Political Philosophy". in C. Butterworth. (ed.). *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*. Chapter 4, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Pp. 142–188.
24. See Hooykaas, R. 1972. *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press. P.xi.
25. See Al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din. 1882. *Lecture on Teaching and Learning*. in Keddie. 1968. Ibid. Pp.107-108.
26. See Keddie. 1968. Ibid. Pp. 91-93.
27. See Keddie. 1968. Ibid. Pp. 92-93.
28. See Keddie. 1968. Ibid. Pp. 92-93.
29. See Keddie. 1968. Ibid. P. 93.
- See also 'Abd al-Raziq, Mustafa. in *al-'Urwat ul-Wuthqa*. Pp.23-24.
- See also Abu Rayyah, Mahmud. op. cit. Pp.40-43.
- See also, Amin, Ahmad. op. cit. Pp. 97-99.
- See also al-Maghribi. op. cit. Pp.126-128.
- See also al-Makhzumi. op. cit. Pp. 113-117.
30. See Sayili, Aydin. 1960. *The causes of the decline of scientific work in Islam* in *The Observatory in Islam and its Place in the General History of the Observatory*. Ankara: Turk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi. Appendix II, Pp. 407-429.
31. Sayili, Aydin. op. cit. Pp. 412-413.
32. See Sabra, I. Abdelhamid. 1987. *The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam. History of Science* 25. Pp. 227–229.
- This apt term was first used by Sabra in his 1987 paper, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement", History of Science, 25, London: Science History Publications Ltd. 1987, Pp. 223-43, reprinted in A. I. Sabra, Optics, Astronomy and Logic: Studies in Arabic Science and Philosophy (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994); the reprint retains the original pagination.*
- See also Renan quoted in Sardar, Ziauddin. 1999. *Orientalism*. . Buckingham: Open University Press. P. 50.
- More peculiar was Renan's claim that the little science and philosophy that Muslims had produced was the result of a rebellion against Islam," and that science could only flourish in Islam in association with heresy. Renan also believed that the Mussulman [Muslim] has the most profound disdain for instruction, for science, for everything that constitutes the European spirit."*
33. See Sabra, I. Abdelhamid.1987. op. cit. Pp. 227-231.

See also Saliba, George. 2002. *Arabic Science Historian George Saliba Rejects Common Explanations of Decline of Science in Islamic World*, Columbia News Video Brief, July 1, 2002. <http://www.colombia.edu/cu/news/media/02/georgesaliba/>.

These arguments can also be found in: George Saliba's *al-Fikr al-Arabi*. op. cit. Pp.163-190.

This view is supported by modern research in the history of astronomy, medicine, and mathematics in Islam between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. In astronomy, the work of George Saliba and others support this observation.

See, for example, George Saliba. 1987. *Theory and Observation in Islamic Astronomy: The work of Ibn al-Shatir*. In journal for the *History of Astronomy* 18 (1987). Pp. 35-43.

Arabic Planetary Theories after the eleventh century AD in Encyclopedia of The History of Arabic Science I (1996). Pp. 58-61.

This view is supported by modern research in the history of astronomy, medicine, and mathematics in Islam between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. In astronomy, the work of George Saliba and others support this observation.

In mathematics, see J. Lennart Berggren.1997. Mathematics and Her Sisters in Medieval Islam: A Selective Review of Works done from 1985 to 1995" in Historical Mathematical 24 (1997).

Ahmad Djebbar. (1996) *On Mathematical Activity in North Africa since the 9th century* in AMUCHMA Newsletter 15 (1995). Pp. 3-24.

In medicine see for example Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medicine* in Encyclopedia of the History of Arabic Science 3 (1996). P. 930.

34. See Sabra, I. Abdelhamid.1987. op. cit. P. 229.

According to Goldziher, this opposition made decisive progress after al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and thus began the decline of Islamic science. This view, which has been cogently called "the marginality thesis" by Abdelhamid I. Sabra, postulated that the scientific and philosophical activity in medieval Islam had no significant impact on the social, economic, educational and religious institutions; that this activity remained itself unaffected by these institutions, except when it was finally crushed by their antagonism or indifference; and that those who kept the Greek legacy alive in Islamic lands constituted a small group of scholars who had little to do with the spiritual life of the majority of Muslims, who made no important contributions to the main currents of Islamic intellectual life, and whose work and interests were marginal to the central concerns of Islamic society.

35. See Lindberg, David, C. 1992. *The Beginning of Western Science: The European Scientific Tradition in Philosophical, Religious, and Institutional Contexts, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1450*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press. Pp. 180-182.

36. Cited in Toby H. Huff, 1993. *The Rise of Early Modern Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. P.53.

The 1993 book by sociologist Toby E. Huff, The Rise of Early Modern Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) which is permeated with "Goldziherism". Huff is by no means the only contemporary scholar who relies on this approach to "prove" that the Islamic scientific tradition existed and survived not because of Islam but in spite of it. Similar formulations exist in numerous histories of science.

37. See James E. McClellan III and Harold Dorn. 1999. *Science and Technology in World History*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. P.113.

38. See Mohammed Abdalla, 2003. *The Fate of Islamic Science between the Eleventh and Sixteenth-Centuries: A Critical Study of Scholarship from Ibn Khaldun to the Present*, PhD Thesis Griffith University. url: www4.gu.edu.au:8080/adt-root/uploads/approved/adtGU2004061/8.091027/public/02Whole.pdf. Pp. 122-123.

According to Muhammed Abdalla as refers to Sabra (1987) *The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement in History of Science*. 25. Pp.238-241:

Sabra states that the decline of Islamic Science occurred because “the philosophers” view of knowledge was replaced by the instrumentalist view proposed by al-Ghazali and science declined not in the context of orthodox opposition (as is usually thought) but in the context of acceptance and assimilation.

See also Saliba, George. op. cit. P.181.

39. See Jan P. Hogendijk and Abdelhamid I. Sabra. 2003. *The Enterprise of Science in Islam: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. P. vii and pp. 23-31.

See also Muhsin Mahdi. 1971. *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 23-33.

40. Ibn Khaldūn (full name, Arabic: أبو زيد عبد الرحمن بن محمد بن خلدون الحضرمي, Abū Zayd ‘Abdu r-Rahmān bin Muḥammad bin Khaldūn Al-Ḥaḍrami, May 27, 1332 AD/732 AH – March 19, 1406 AD/808 AH) was an Arab Muslim historiographer and historian, regarded to be among the founding fathers of modern historiography, sociology and economics. The first complete English translation, by the eminent Islamicist and interpreter of Arabic literature Franz Rosenthal, was published in three volumes in 1958 as part of the Bollingen Series and received immediate acclaim in America and abroad. A one-volume abridged version of Rosenthal's masterful translation was first published in 1969.

Ibn Khaldūn. 1958. *The Muqaddimah : An Introduction to History*. Translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal. 3 vols. New York: Princeton.

Ibn Khaldūn. 1967. *The Muqaddimah : An Introduction to History*. Trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N.J. Dawood. (Abridged). Princeton. NJ: Princeton University Press.

41. Ibn Khaldun, ‘Abd al-Rahman. 1967. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. 2d ed. Princeton. NJ: Princeton University Press. Vol. 2. P.426.

42. Ibn Khaldun. op. cit. Pp. 427-430.

43. Ibn Khaldun. . op. cit. Pp. 429-433.

44. See Grunebaum, G.E.Von. 1946. *Medieval Islam: A Study in Cultural Orientation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. P. 322.

See also Hoodbhoy, Parvez. 1992. *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality*. Pakistan: Zed Books. P.2.

45. Ahmad Y. Al-Hassan. 1996. *Factors behind the Decline of Islamic Science after the Sixteenth Century in Islam and the Challenge of Modernity. Historical and Contemporary Contexts*. ed. Sharifah Shifa Al-Attas. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation. 1996. Pp. 117-118.

46. Ahmad Y. Al-Hassan. op. cit. Pp.119-122.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXCHANGE BETWEEN AL-AFGHANI AND RENAN CONCERNING SCIENCE, ISLAM, AND MODERNITY

5.1 RENAN'S FAMOUS LECTURE ON "ISLAM AND SCIENCE" OR "L'ISLAMISME ET LA SCIENCE"

On a relatively smaller scale, the revealing clash between the secular premises of modern science and the traditional Islamic worldview was brought home to many Muslim intellectuals with the publication of Ernest Renan's famous lecture *L'Islamisme et la Science* that was presented in Sorbonne (1883) during which he argued on the irrationality and inability of Muslims to advance scientifically. For them, his quasi-racist attack on the Islamic faith and crude promulgation of Positivism as the new religion of the modern world made little sense until today. Nevertheless, it was an eye opener for the Muslim intelligentsia of that time regarding the way achievements of modern Western science were presented. According to Alan Pitt (2000) in *The Cultural Impact of Science in France*, despite such negative appraisals of Renan and his alleged Positivism, a more judicious approach to Renan is recommended:

*We should, therefore, be wary of identifying Renan too closely with a narrow positivism. Yet, as we have seen, writers like Brunetiere used him as a symbol for the errors of an unimaginative and stale positivism, a statement typical of social thought after 1890.*¹

The discourse on the relationship between Islam and modern science had been carried out for more than a hundred years old if one were to take into account the debate started by Ernest Renan in Paris (1883) as the starting point. In fact, Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's response to Renan's polemic against Islam that claimed both as incompatible

was the first Muslim response in the modern era. However, since then, the discourse had become far more complex. During the second half of the twentieth century, Islam identifies itself not only to science, but the whole of modern knowledge along with its methodologies and premises. They became the focus of a discourse that had far-reaching implications because the positions taken up in this debate either affect, replace or undermine the very foundations of the Islamic worldview. The fact is that those discourses were not merely a philosophical leisure for some Muslim scholars as it was clear that the impact of modern science was not only restricted to the technologically imposed images and sounds brought to millions of Muslim homes, but its multifarious forms went much deeper and penetrated the very essence of the foundation of the Islamic belief system. As a matter of fact, modern science did not only seek to provide explanation to physical phenomena, but it also claimed to hold the answers to such fundamental questions concerning the universe and the origins of human life.²

While al-Afghani was in Paris in the 1880's, he engaged in the controversial debate with the French orientalist, Ernest Renan. Renan was best known as the author of the enormously popular *Life of Jesus (Vie de Jésus)* and the lecture on “*Islam and Science*” or “*L'Islamisme et la science*” in Sorbonne. They were published on March 29, 1883 in the *Journal Des Debates*. In that lecture, he maintained that Islam and science by implication were incompatible with one another.³

Renan, in his lecture, stated that early Islam and the Arabs were hostile to the scientific and philosophic spirit. From his standpoint, science and philosophy entered the Islamic world only from non-Arab sources. In his mind, Islam was the last religion created by humanity and the least original. The science and philosophy often recognized as belonging to the Arabs were really in truth originated from either Greek or Persian.

Relative to other religious traditions, he considered Islam as having brought forth the heaviest fetter humanity had to endure. For him, there was no such thing as an Arabic science or Arabic philosophy. People thought there was one until we recognized the Greek origin of Arabic science and philosophy. The latter were but a petty translation of Greek science and philosophy. The great intellectual movement that the world witnessed under Islamic rule, as he alleged, owed nothing to Islam. Muslims who happened to be a part of it were internally rebelling against their religion, since Renan believed that Islam always persecuted science and philosophy. ⁴

Despite admiring the original ideas of al-Ghazali (d. 1111), who renounced philosophical rationalism in favor of a life of mysticism, in his book entitled, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Renan blamed al-Ghazali for humiliating science and philosophy. Thus, Renan saw the twelfth century as the end of philosophy in Islam, particularly when Ibn Rushd or Averroes whom he considered to have been the last Muslim philosopher, died in 1198. In this context, Dimitri Gutas (2002) in *The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy* responded defensively by saying that the death of Averroes which signifies the Islamic and Arabic philosophy is in entirety full of false pretences. Gutas went on to reiterate that Renan, through his allegations riddled with boundless historical lineages and wildest ramifications has an oriental approach in them. He then added:

The fourth obstacle, finally, which the orientalist biases that I have just described generated has been the widespread notion until relatively recently that Arabic philosophy ends with Averroes; this is the natural result if one views Arabic philosophy merely as an intermediary between late Greek and high medieval scholasticism, and if one views it from a Eurocentric perspective in which Averroism was indeed the last major theory from the Islamic world to have influenced medieval Western thought. Long before today, and to his undying credit, the French orientalist Henry Corbin demonstrated the falsity of

this view in his by now classic Histoire de la philosophie islamique (1964), a book which was also translated into English (1993).⁵

However, the ideas were fraught with internal contradictions for Renan believed that Islam as a religion was antithetical to science and philosophy. It was both based on the fact that no science and philosophy could have existed under Islam and all the intellectual output was mere translation of Greek texts. Worse still, Islam had its scientists and philosophers, but they were not true Muslims. His inconsistency became even more bewildering when he professed in the same article that Islam killed science and philosophy, yet admitting that it was within the heart of Islam that complete rationalism was developed. He continued to narrate an account of a Spanish theologian who witnessed two sessions conducted by Muslim theologians (*mutakallimun*) in Baghdad during the Abbasid era, and consequently decided never to attend another:

The first session, which I attended, there were not only Muslims of all sorts, orthodox and heterodox, but also religious deviants, Zoroastrian (guèbres), materialists, atheists, Jews, Christians; in short, there were unbelievers/ skeptics (incrédules) of all kinds. Each sect had its own leader, entrusted with the task of defending the opinions they professed ... one of these unbelievers would address the gathering: "we are gathered here to reason, he would say. You all know the rules. You Muslims shall not invoke arguments from your Book [i.e., the Qur'an] or based on the authority of your prophet, because we believe in neither. Each one should limit his arguments to reason." Everyone applauded. — You understand, continued the Spanish theologian, after listening to such things, I didn't return to these assemblies. They proposed that I should visit another, but it was just as scandalous.⁶

One would have thought that the fact that orthodox and heterodox Muslims took part in such gatherings should have given Renan a pause, but coherent analysis of complex issues seemed not to have been his forte. H. Taine held that Renan was simply incapable of formulating a precise formula. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), whose original mind was admired by Renan, would have judged Renan in much harsher terms. He believed

that ignorance and "imbecility were nearer to salvation than a defective intelligence" or arrogance.

One could sense that Renan viewed Islam as a malady. Once it took hold of the mind, it would certainly lead it into infinite fanaticism. According to Renan, by the time of his religious initiation, a Muslim child around the age of ten or twelve:

turns suddenly fanatic, full of an inane pride of possessing that which he thinks to be absolute truth ... This mad pride is the radical vice of the Muslim. ...convinced that God gives fortune and power to those who obey him, irrespective of education or personal merit, the Muslim has the most profound contempt for education, science, and everything that makes up the European mind. This strain inculcated by the Islamic faith is so strong that all the differences of race and nationality disappear by the act of converting to Islam. The Berber, Sudanese, Circassian, Malay, Egyptian, Nubian, once they become Muslims, cease being Berber, Sudanese, Egyptian etc. ... they become Muslims. Only Persia is an exception; it was able to guard its distinct mind.⁷

Thus, emancipating a Muslim from his religion, as Renan alleged, was the best service Europe could offer him. Renan emphasized that only one of the great Islamic philosophers was an Arab by birth, and to call their philosophy as of Arab descent merely because they were written in Arabic was absurd. It made no more sense than to call medieval European philosophy Latin. He admitted indeed the existence of a so-called Arabic philosophy and science but they were in no way Arabic except for the language and Greco-Sassanian in content. Those were entirely the works of the non-Muslim theologians and rulers alike in inner revolt against their own religion. Therein, they had been doomed from the beginning, and so had been unable to influence the institutions of Islam. Those oppositions had been held in check by the Arabs and Persians who had been in control of Islam, but they reigned supreme when the barbarians, Turks in the East and Berbers in the West took over the direction of the

Muslim *ummah*. Renan mentioned about it in *Averroes et l' Averroisme*. According to him, the Turks had totally lack of philosophic and scientific spirit that resulted in the stifling of human reason and progress by the enemy whose state was based on a revelation. In addition to that, Renan prophesied that as European science spread, Islam would perish. This would happen soon elsewhere. Renan mentioned that situation in his "*The Future of Science*" or "*L'Avenir de la Science*". They were as follows:

*Islamism which, by a strange fate scarcely constituted as a religion in its earlier years has since then marched onward constantly acquiring new degrees of strength and stability, Islamism, I say will perish without striking a blow by the sheer influence of European science, and history will point to our century as the one in which the first causes of that immense event began to appear on the horizon. The Turkish and Egyptian youth coming to our schools in search of European science will take back with them that which is its inseparable corollary, the rational method, the spirit of experiment, the sentiment of the real, the impossibility of belief in religious traditions evidently conceived beyond all sphere of criticism. Rigidly orthodox Musulmans are already growing uneasy at this and pointing out the danger to the emigrating younger generation. Sheikh Riffa in the interesting narrative of his journey in Europe lays great stress on the deplorable errors that disfigure our books on science, such as for instance, the motion of the earth, etc.; and still deems it not utterly impossible to cleanse them of this poison. It is, however, patent that these heresies will shortly prove stronger than the Koran with minds initiated to modern methods. I fancy that these also will occur a Renaissance analogous to that of Europe in the fifteenth century, and which will be due, not to our literature, which has no more meaning to the Oriental than had the literature of the Greeks to the Arabs of the ninth and tenth centuries, but to our science, which, like that of the Greeks, having no stamp of nationality, is a pure work of the human intellect.*⁸

As an example of the way Muslim minds were manipulated by their contacts in Europe, Renan referred to the contemporary Egyptian scholar Rifa'e Bey al-Tahtawi (1801 – 1873), whom according to him, did not distinguish between the divine and the world of experience. He even went to an extent to consider European science as heretical doctrine, because it adhered to the principle of invariability of the laws of nature.

According to Hans Daiber (1994) in *Science and Technology versus Islam; A Controversy from Renan to Afghani to Nasr and Needham and its Historical Background*, the past historians of science often gave the impression that Islam was an obstacle to the development of sciences and technology. They referred Muslims to the contemplative character of Islam and to its fatalistic tendency, which ran counter to every belief in progress. This prejudice had a long history, rooted in Christian polemics against Islam during the Middle Ages that subsequently received new impetus during the period of Enlightenment from 17th to 19th century. This negative attitude to Islamic science was apparent in Renan's thought. Daiber mentioned that Renan was deeply influenced by the rationalism of his time and considered religion as the main obstacle to the rise of sciences in Islam. In his opinion, scientific achievements of the early Arabs should be ascribed to Nestorian Christian, while the rationalism of Islam was in reality Graeco-Sassanian and was implanted in the Latin Occident before it disappeared in the East.⁹

In this respect, Albert Hourani in his Tanner Lecture on Human Value entitled "*Islam in European Thought*" delivered at Cambridge University in 1989 emphasized that Renan repeated his thesis in other terms:

Everyone who has been in the Orient or in Africa will have been struck by the kind of iron circle in which the believer's head is enclosed, making him absolutely closed to science, and incapable of opening himself to anything new.

It was the Aryan spirit which had created everything else; political life in the real sense, arts, and literature. The Semitic people had nothing of it, apart from some poetry and above all, science and philosophy. In these matters, "*we are entirely Greek*";

even the so-called Arabic sciences were a continuation of Greek sciences, carried on not by Arabs but by Persians and converted Greeks, the Aryans. Christianity too in its developed form was the work of Europeans. The future of humanity therefore was with the people of Europe, but there was a necessary condition for this; the destruction of the Semitic element in civilization, and of the theocratic power of Islam. This was a strong attack, and there was a metaphorical element in it for Renan was thinking not only of the world of Islam, but of the Roman Catholic Church and the spirituality of Saint Sulpice. His theories provoked a strong response.¹⁰

Renan, while thinking of Catholicism, based this negative view of Islam with his already questionable view of religion in general, especially when he wrote about Islam. He was influenced by the Enlightenment which viewed religion as only serving to console people and to help the weak. For him, although Islam in many ways was different, it was likened to Christianity for both were the tragic results of a clash between two realms. Reason should have dominated human actions since having them was a final cause, human perfection and the triumph of civilization. More so when in the modern world, science was the form in which reason expressed itself. Then again religion was still necessary, but as the expression of a moral ideal¹¹ – the ideal of unselfishness, of which Jesus was the best exemplar. Properly conceived, there was no opposition between them because both had the same enemy.¹² The contradiction only arose when one trespassed into the field of the other as in the French Revolution. Reasons claimed to govern the world without regard to the needs of the heart, or when religions laid claim (as both Christianity and Islam had done) to a divine, and specifically supernatural revelation of truth which therefore placed restrictions on the human mind.

Renan's argument had two major points. One was racial prejudice. As he put it, the Arabs by nature and temperament were a race hostile to science and philosophy, and these subjects managed to advance in the Islamic world only by non-Arab, mainly by the people of Indo-European or Aryan origin. Renan did not admit it, though. The second was about Islam being essentially hostile to science. This essence was dominant when the Arabs ruled, and later when the Turks did. It was temporarily and precariously overcome only during the short period when Greek and Persian influences were strong. Nikki R. Keddie concluded that although it was true that Renan was hostile to all religious dogma, it was not true as it had been claimed, that he was only saying of Islam what he would have said of any other religion. On this, he was explicit about Islam since it united the spiritual and temporal realms and made dogma rule in both. Thus, it was the heaviest chain that humanity had ever borne.¹³

According to Ibrahim Bayyumi Madkour (1984) in *Al-Tawhid: the Study of Islamic Philosophy*, those who attacked and denigrated Islamic philosophy did not stop there. In fact, they went much further to extend their fallacious notions to general racial characteristics, and extended what they said about philosophy and learning to political matters. It was surprising that although the French politically opposed racial discrimination, they were among the people who sowed the seeds of such attitude on such a scale that had continued well into the present century. For example, Renan was the first person who openly stated that the Semitic race was inferior to the Aryan race. Renan's judgment had an effect on some of his contemporaries. Some of his disciples and students repeated his views and published such flawed belief throughout the known world. This was because Renan was regarded as both an unequalled master of the

Semitic languages and an expert of Islamic matters as compared to other researchers of his day. ¹⁴

Advancing the notions of the '*Semitic spirit*' in contrast to the '*Aryan spirit*' by Leon Gauthier (1862-1949) during the early part of the twentieth century was none other than the continuation of the argument made by Renan. In Gauthier's view, the Semitic mind was only capable of comprehending details and particulars. They were disconnected, and yet combined with each other as well as being conceived as incapable of conceiving any coherent order or relationship between details. In other words, the *Semitic spirit* was of division and separation, or in Gauthier's words, *esprit separatiste*. The *Aryan spirit* on the other hand, was the spirit of integration and synthesis. *Esprit fusionniste*, as he called it. ¹⁵

Since the Arabs were inherently able to understand only isolated particulars and facts, it was only natural that they were unable to form any theory, proposition, law or hypotheses. It would be futile therefore to look for any philosophical or scientific investigations on their part. This was particularly true when Islam had since then narrowed their intellectual horizons and closed the doors to any speculative discussions, so much so that Muslim students denigrated and ridiculed science and philosophy.

Those who stated such views held that Islamic philosophy was simply an imitation of Aristotelian philosophy, and Islamic philosophical texts were nothing other than repetitions of Greek ideas in Arabic. The views of Renan, which had been mentioned, were widespread during the nineteenth century. Fortunately, those days when the habits, customs, ethical, moral, and intellectual characteristics of a nation were thought to be products of either its geographical conditions or racially inherited traits

had already lost its popularity. Other attempts in the same vein, for instance formulating so-called 'national psychology' or 'group psychology' also proved to be equally futile.

Moreover, on what ground were claims that Islamic philosophy is a creation of Arab thinking based upon? It is a well established fact that many nationalities such as the Persians, Indians, Turks, Egyptians, Syrians, Barbarians, and Andalusians had contributed to the development and enrichment of Islamic philosophy.

Islamic civilization, at its zenith, did not block the path of science, but instead confirmed and encouraged it. It welcomed and embraced science with open arms. It welcomed opinions and views of every shade and color. How could Islam, which invites mankind to observe the heavens and the earth, and to contemplate and meditate upon their mysteries, oppose discussion and inquiry and restrict the freedom of thought? Even Renan, who expressed the kind of views about Islamic philosophy and science that had been discussed, had admittedly confessed elsewhere that Muslims treated conquered people with an indulgence that was unheard of throughout history. For example, among the Jews and Christians, some accepted Islam while others chose to retain their ancestral faith and still managed to attain high and honored official positions in the courts of the Muslim caliphs and rulers. Moreover, although Muslims differed from the Jews and the Christians in regard to beliefs and religious principles, they still practiced inter-religion marriages in those communities.

Of course, this was not the first time that this French historian and philologist had contradicted himself. In one place, he went to the extent of denying the very existence of such a thing as an Arab (Islamic) philosophy and said:

The only thing that the Arabs (Muslims) accomplished was to learn a Greek encyclopedia of the seventh and eighth centuries.

Then, Renan went on to contradict his denial and asserted that there was in fact a unique Islamic philosophy in which special characteristics had to be given attention.

He later confessed that:

The Arabs (Muslims), like the Latins, through engaging in interpretation of Aristotle's works learned how to formulate a philosophy full of peculiar characteristics and elements in serious opposition to what was taught at the Lyceum.

He then added that:

The original movement in Islamic philosophy should be sought in the various schools of the Mutakallimun (theologians).

These contradictory statements of Renan's and the lack of consistency were evident in Renan's works which was noticed by Gustave Dugat (1868) in *Histoire Des Orientalistes De L'Europe Du XII Au XIX Siecle*, one of his contemporaries. Dugat believed that the quality of thought such as witnessed in Ibn Sina could not result in anything other than original and sophisticated interpretations and views. To him, schools of thought such as the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites were nothing other than original creations of Islamic thought. ¹⁶

In the twentieth century, what was expressed in the form of guesswork and speculation by men like Dugat was found to be irrefutable and proven fact. Gradually, researchers became more familiar with Islamic topics than before, and their understanding of the original and unique characteristics of Islamic thought increased. As they came to know more about Islam, their judgment of it became fairer and more

even-handed. The truth of the matter was that the malicious intent of the nineteenth century European scholars was quite evident in their handling of various Islamic topics. On one hand they admitted that "the works of the Islamic philosophers have not been adequately studied and our knowledge of their substance and content of their writings is incomplete." Yet, in the next breath they made the most general and blanket statements and judgments by saying that Islamic philosophy was none other than an imitation of Aristotle. It was well to keep in mind that these scholars had no direct access to Islamic philosophy as they did not have the original texts at their disposal. Worst still, when the Latin translations that they were accustomed to could not give a full and accurate portrayal of the scope and depth of this philosophy. However, today we can speak with complete certainty of the accomplishments that the Islamic civilization has achieved and claim that there are a large number of topics in Islamic thought which have not yet been fully investigated and discussed.

As to the question of whether or not it was accurate to associate such philosophy as "*Islamic*" or "*Arabic*", such a question was nothing but futile argument over words and names. Although, this philosophy developed and grew in an Islamic environment and was written in the Arabic language, it did not mean that Islamic philosophy was a creation of the Arab element. For once, Muslims who already condemned racism have never claimed it as one. Islam had gathered in its fold, numerous nationalities and all of them contributed to the growth and development of its thought. As for this philosophy being called "*Islamic*", it could not be claimed that it was the product of intellectual efforts of the Muslims alone because the claim would not sit well with the historical evidence available. Historical records showed that the earliest teachers of the Muslims were Nestorian, Jacobites, Jews, and Sabaeans, and that Muslim scholars cooperated

with their Nestorian and Jewish contemporaries in their philosophical and scientific investigations. Lastly, as a reply to Renan's thesis on Islamic Philosophy, Madkour concluded that:

*In any case, I am inclined to call this philosophy "Islamic" because of two reasons. Firstly, Islam is not just a religion it is also a civilization; and the topics of Islamic philosophy, despite the variety of its sources and backgrounds of writers, are rooted in the Islamic civilization. Secondly, the problems, the foundations, and aims of this philosophy are all Islamic, and it was Islam that formed this cohesive philosophy by gathering teachings and views belonging to many different cultures and schools of thought.*¹⁷

Aside from its explicit content, there were other circumstances surrounding Renan-Afghani's exchange of ideas on science, Islam and modernity, notably the ones that indicated al-Afghani's estrangement from Islamic traditionalism. For instance, Renan's rejoinder to al-Afghani, published in *the Journal des Debats* on May 19, 1883. It indicated that al-Afghani impressed this eminent rationalist as a man of his own stripe. Renan granted the improvement al-Afghani had made on his argument by riding it off with the implication that Islam was somehow an even worse religion than Christianity. Under this circumstance, Muslim authors were accustomed to quoting only a few sentences of general praise of al-Afghani from this rejoinder when it was rightfully far more instructive to quote the entire body of Renan's remarks per se. The first line quoted below was from Renan's *Islam and Science*:

A remarkably intelligent Afghan Sheikh having presented observations on the above lecture, I answered the next day, in same journal, as follows:

We read yesterday with the interest they merited the very judicious reflections that my last lecture at the Sorbonne suggested to Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin. There is nothing more instructive than studying the ideas of an enlightened Asiatic in their original and sincere form. It is by listening to the most diverse voices, coming from the four corners of the globe, in favor of rationalism, that one

becomes convinced that if religions divide men, Reason brings them together; and that there is only one reason. ¹⁸

Renan had said that he met al-Afghani around two months earlier, in March 1883 through a collaborator named M.Ghanim. It was shortly after his arrival in Paris and he went on to say:

Few people have produced on me a more vivid impression. It is in large measure the conversation I had with him that decided me to choose as a subject for my lecture at the Sorbonne the relations between the scientific spirit and Islam. Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is an Afghan entirely divorced from the prejudices of Islam; he belongs to those energetic races of Iran, near India, where the Aryan spirit lives still so energetically under the superficial layer of official Islam. He is the best proof of that great axiom we have often proclaimed, namely, that religions are worth the same as the races that profess them. The liberty of this thought, his noble and loyal character, made me believe while I was talking with him, that I had before me, restored to life, one of my old acquaintances- Avicenna, Averroes, or another of those great infidels who represented for five centuries the tradition of the human mind. For me there was an especially vivid contrast when I compared this striking apparition with the spectacle presented by the Muslim countries this side of Persia-countries in which scientific and philosophic curiosity is so rare. Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is the best case of ethnic protest against religious conquest that one could cite...

In the learned article of the Sheikh I see only one point on which we are really in disagreement... Everything written in Latin is not the Glory of Rome; everything written in Greek is not Hellenic; everything written in Arabic is not Arab product; everything done in a Christian country is not the effect of Christianity; everything done in a Muslim country is not a fruit of Islam... These sorts of distinctions are necessary if one does not wish history to be a tissue of approximations and misunderstandings... One point on which I may have appeared unjust to the Sheikh is that I did not develop enough the idea that all revealed religions manifest themselves as hostile to positive science, and that Christianity in this respect is not superior to Islam. This is beyond doubt. Galileo was no better treated by Catholicism than Averroes by Islam. Human mind must be freed of all supernatural belief if it wishes to work on its essential work, which is the construction of positive science. This does not imply violent destruction nor brusque rupture. The Christian does not have to abandon Christianity nor the Muslim Islam. The enlightened parties of Christianity and Islam should arrive at that state of benevolent indifference where religious beliefs become inoffensive. This has happened in about half of the Christian countries; let us hope it will happen in Islam. Naturally on that day the Sheikh and I will agree in applauding... There will be distinguished individuals (though there will be few as distinguished as Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin) who will separate

themselves from Islam, as we separate ourselves from Catholicism. Certain countries, with time, will more or less break with the religion of the Koran; but I doubt that the movement of renaissance will be made with the support of official Islam.

Finally, Renan noted quite justly that al-Afghani had provided additional arguments in favor of his own basic points:

Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin seems to me to have brought considerable arguments for my two fundamental theses: During the first half of its existence Islam did not stop the scientific movement from existing in Muslim lands; in the second half it stifled in its breast the scientific movement, and that to its grief. ¹⁹

In his Science and Islam column, Renan argued that Arab "backwardness" was a direct impact of three main issues in Islam. They were as follows:

- i. Arabs never gave any contribution towards science and technology advancement. Yet, while the Arabs mastered governing science, its civilization was controlled by Persians. Various fields of philosophy and science were mastered by Christian Nestorians. The famous philosophers such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Ibn Rusyd were not Arabs;
- ii. Islam disapproved science, philosophy, and free thinking. What was displayed by Islam were supernatural things and the faith towards *qada'* and *qadar*; and
- iii. As Arab was claimed to be an element and being philosophically free, it had caused a failure to bring forward philosophical debates and science innovation. Still, the element heavily veiled the Khulafa` al-Rasyidins' era. So, when the Persian elements dominated the Abbasiyah government, they shot down the Bani Umayyad whose Arab elements in

philosophy, science, and civilization had thus far shone the Islamic world.

In this respect, it was concluded that Renan's argument, as al-Afghani noted in his '*Answer*,' had two major points:

- i. Arabs were accused by nature and temperament hostile to science and philosophy. They were only advanced in the Islamic world by non-Arabs, as implicated by Renan in not so many ways by people of Indo-European or '*Aryan*' origin; and
- ii. Islam was essentially claimed to be hostile to science. This hostility was dominant when the Arabs ruled, and later under the Turks; it was temporarily and precariously overcome only during the short period when Greek and Persian influences were strong.²⁰

The relationship between Renan's ideas and religion was complex. He criticized it as if it was a system of thought. In the meantime, its importance like the factor of unification of the human societies was affirmed and highlighted with the danger being diverted too hastily. He stood out as the most important figure in the encounter between the Islamic and Western thoughts context. This was due to his dominant position in the rise of French intellectuals. Furthermore, he often created his own theories and assumption on Islam and Christianity. In addition, most of Christian intellectuals were impressed with him due to his perceived, deep knowledge and expertise in the religious historical fields that encapsulated all the three main religions; Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

5.2 AL-AFGHANI'S ANSWER TO RENAN ON MAY 18, 1883 IN *THE JOURNAL DES DEBATS*

The contemporary Islamic discourses and their relation to modernity were very much influenced by al-Afghani. In al-Afghani's response to Renan, the dual encounter with modernity took a slightly different form. In underlying al-Afghani's exchanges with Renan, there was a strong assumption that the modern world necessitates a view of human agency expressed in "*Activism, the freer use of human reason and political and military strength.*"²¹ It was interesting to note that in al-Afghani's case, the critical component in his approach to modernity was weightier than the positivist component. This made sense in view of his commitment to the unorthodox Islamic philosophy. Al-Afghani's most explicit statement of his critical thinking was given in an article published on May 18, 1883, in *Journal des Debats*. This was in response to Ernest Renan's shallow attack on Islam as being inherently against modern civilization. In the essay, al-Afghani demonstrated the blamelessness of Renan's chauvinistic attitude toward the Arabs, and yet praised the superiority of critical thought, i.e. "*scientific*" and philosophical thought over revelation.

Al-Afghani understood that there were numerous negative propagandas that existed during his time concerning Islam. Those propagandas defined Islam as a religion that was deterministic and in opposition to science. Such an attitude was clearly exemplified in Renan lecture on "*Islam and Science*" that was delivered in Sorbonne. Subsequently, it was published in *Journal des Debats* on March 29, 1883. As a response, al-Afghani argued that Islam was not against science, and that the regression of the Islamic world was not due to its nature but was rather the result of the imposition

of colonialism in the region. His reply was published in the *Journal des Debats* on May 18, 1883.

According to Majidi and Dehshiri (2005) in *"The Universal Message of Seyyed Jamal-ed-Din Assadabadi: A Reformist from West Asia"*, and Roxanne L. Euben (2003) in *"A Counternarrative of Shared Ambivalence Some Muslim and Western Perspectives on Science and Reason,"* al-Afghani attempted to present a new form of Islam, and prescribed this as another manner in which to fight colonialism; done not only in the political arena but also in the economic and cultural domains. This *"Answer to Renan"* was evident in the project of Islamic modernism or fundamentalism; a primary nineteenth-century stream of thought whose proponents tended to posit a golden age in the earliest generations in Islamic history, and thus seeking its revival and reform as a bulwark against encroachments upon a decaying Ottoman Empire.²²

Al-Afghani and his followers, especially the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh, shared a conviction that modern rationalist methods and the scientific discoveries they found would be essential for the strength and survival of the Islamic community. In other words, al-Afghani's viewpoint emphasized that the survival of the Muslim community and the truths upon which it was founded as dependent on the compatibility or more accurately, identity of Islam and reason. In awareness, he rejected the division between Islamic science and European science by both Muslim traditionalists and Western rationalists.

In regards to the question of religion being an obstacle for the development of science and philosophy, al-Afghani basically agreed with Ernest Renan that all religions were intolerant in one way or another. They suppressed the *"free investigation"* of

scientific and philosophical truth. He asserted that even though religions had played a vital role in bringing humanity from "barbarism" and myths to the level of advanced civilizations, both Islam and Christianity were still against the free use of reason. As a result, the scientific progress was stifled at some point in their history. Then again, with the rise of the Enlightenment, European nations had freed themselves from the tutelage of Christianity that is religion, thus paving the path to stunning advancements in all fields of knowledge. Acknowledging this, Al-Afghani was more than convinced that there was no reason for Muslims not to hope for similar outcome in the Islamic world.

Al-Afghani wrote his famous answer and response to Ernest Renan whose quasi-racist lecture *l'Islamisme et la science* ("Islam and Science") had sought to prove there was something inherently wrong with the "so called" Muslim religion and the Arabs' attitude in relation to the cultivation of science. Renan however, was disappointed with al-Afghani's eloquent reply which remained accommodating throughout his letter of response. Elie Kedourie (1966) in *Afghani and Abduh; An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* also added further comments and notes on al-Afghani's exchange with Renan's lecture:

It is on an attack of this kind, couched in these harsh and uncompromising terms that Afghani chose to make a public comment. And the comment in effect amounted to an endorsement of Renan's condemnation. Al-Afghani makes no secret here of his belief that religion has been on the whole a force for evil in human history. In the infancy of the race, when the human mind was swayed by nameless terrors, and was incapable of distinguishing good from evil, religion had no doubt proved to have some use. At that time the educators of the race had been compelled to enforce obedience to their necessary rules and orders by ascribing them to a Supreme Being. It was, said al-Afghani, "a most heavy and humiliating yoke", but it was the price which had to be paid for escape from barbarism. ²³

Al-Afghani constructed a case of “warfare” between religion and philosophy. He blamed all religions for being intolerant and being an obstacle to the development of science and philosophy, thus agreeing with Renan. But he rejected Renan’s racial arguments and, in their place, constructed an evolutionary developmental view of people and societies. Al-Afghani then made a strange turn and agreed with Renan on a critical point. Here, al-Afghani seemed to forgo the essential distinction between revelation and its unfolding history differentiates Islam and Muslims. Later on, he concluded his letter by creating a very sharp contrast between religion and philosophy. This was somewhat abrupt and surprising conclusion, leaving many issues unresolved. What was al-Afghani’s position in reference to revelation and normative tradition of Islamic learning? What was his opinion about the relationship between Islam and the scientific tradition it had inspired? But al-Afghani was not alone in this respect. There was a general trend among many Muslim intellectuals of the colonial period who showed unrestrained admiration for modern science. This was understandable, given the political and social conditions in which they lived and worked. Al-Afghani had a firsthand experience of the power of modern science through his travels in the Western world and perhaps more than others. Hence, he was deeply conscious of the domination of the Western powers in world affairs. Al-Afghani was a charismatic man of action; more than his writings,²⁴ it was his “presence”, his message of hope and his personal influence that helped to lose some of the mental shackle that the Muslim intellectuals of the colonial era had found.

Al-Afghani wrote in the nineteenth century during the period when the European powers began to occupy countries in the region. He viewed the decline of the Ottoman Empire as a reason that the European powers were able to intervene so

extensively and, consequently, present a threat to the region and its people. He believed that the internal problems that had led to the decline of the Ottoman Empire must be cured to resist the power and influence of Europe.²⁵ Among these internal problems, Albert Hourani cited the decay of quality leadership during the sixteenth century. This approach, however, had serious limitations. Associating the decline of an entire civilization with poor leadership is problematic. It was unlikely that poor leadership could be attributed as the sole cause of any social decline. Instead, it was more realistic and useful to consider the various factors that contributed to the decline of a society. Among these factors were the roles of foreign powers in the domestic affairs of other countries, the effects that these interventions may have, including the economic displacement of the local populations, and the decline of the arts and popular participation in society and politics, etc. Al-Afghani realized the importance of these other factors in the decline of Middle Eastern society and associated the internal problems in the region primarily with the weaknesses that had developed within Islam. Al-Afghani interpreted the failing Ottoman leadership in Islamic terms, i.e., the faltering leaders were considered as a sign that Allah was displeased with the leaders' actions and the internal situation within the empire. Afghani's fears were realized when the Europeans began to occupy the region. According to Albert Hourani, al-Afghani believed that the central problem during this period was:

*not that of how to make the Muslim countries politically strong and successful; it was rather, how to persuade Muslims to understand their religion a right and live in accordance with its teaching. If they did so, he believed, their countries would of necessity be strong.*²⁶

One of al-Afghani's key priorities was on social unity. Without social unity, al-Afghani believed that the Europeans would completely undermine and dominate the people of the Middle East. He rightly observed that "imitation" of the Western powers

would require the acceptance of Western thought and social morality because he believed that the decay of Islamic social morality was the cause of the weakness of Middle Eastern society. He feared that acceptance of European traditions would further undermine the region internally and also its strength of influence and relationship with Europe. This perspective was highly influenced by al-Afghani's tenure in India where he observed the imperial occupation of the country by the British. To maintain social unity and to prevent the destruction of Islamic society by European powers, he argued that Islam was essential. Furthermore, he contended that absolute emulation of Western modernity would undermine Islamic society. Consequently, al-Afghani had adamantly opposed the idea of the separation of Islam and the state. The separation of the state and the religious establishment became common practice in Europe and at the time after going through centuries of strife between the two. He believed that the conflict between the state and religion occurred when the two tried to exist in a common social sphere.

Hourani wrote:

*The contradiction only arose when one trespassed on the field of the other: when as in the French Revolution, reason claimed to govern the world without regard to the needs of the heart, or when religions laid claim (as both Christianity and Islam had done) to a supernatural revelation of truth, and placed restrictions on the human mind.*²⁷

The problem in the society, for al-Afghani, was not that the state and the religious apparatus were not cooperative with one another. Rather, the difficulties or problems arose when the two were not in balance, in particular when one tried to dominate the other. Hourani noted that the conflict between "religion and philosophy" was not unique to Islam since in normalcy, it had been a conflict of human nature. For al-Afghani, it was difficult to find equilibrium between rationality and the "needs of the

heart.” This concern for balance could also be compared with the tension between individual reason, the product of rationality, and group unity. Al-Afghani found the answer to this disharmony through a blend of reason and Islam. If all individuals were capable of reason, every person would have their own sense of virtues and values. To that effect, the existence of the Prophet was necessary to establish a base for reason for there was a need for a set of common virtues and beliefs. This interpretation of the Islamic tradition was imperative in understanding al-Afghani’s vision of the interplay between reason and social unity in Islamic society. In a letter to Ernest Renan concerning Renan’s work *Islam and Science*, al-Afghani observed that reason and free thought were always caught in a struggle with religion. However, this tension between reason and religion was not unique to Islam.

At the same time, al-Afghani was quite skeptical of Europe, given the political circumstances of the time. Yet, he did believe that it was useful to adopt and reformulate the European idea concerning civilization in Islamic terms. François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787–1874) a French academic and politician during the 1830s and 1840s argued that civilization required the development of both societies and individuals.²⁸ Al-Afghani was greatly impressed by Guizot’s idea of increasing social and individual well-being and believed that this idea could be aptly applied to the idea of the Islamic “*ummah*” or the group of believers. Through the development of society and individuals, al-Afghani was hopeful that a sense of unity could be restored among the people. Even though European thinkers like Ernest Renan thought that reason would undermine Islam, al-Afghani passionately argued that Islam held the keys to preserve the unity of the society.

Al-Afghani did seem, however, to simultaneously reject and accept Western modernity. Still, al-Afghani appealed for support from the Islamic tradition since he saw the acceptance as the key to maintain a strong unity amongst individuals in the Islamic world, whilst contending that reason was inherent within Islamic thought. Nikki R. Keddie (1968) in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* observed this contradiction and offered a plausible explanation for it. Keddie argued that al-Afghani distinguished between adapting elements of Western rationalism and pure emulation of the Western tradition. While he saw positive attributes in Western society like Guizot's ideas of development through social and individual well-being, he believed that replication of Western modernity would continue to undermine the unity of the Arab-Islamic community. According to Keddie, Al-Afghani believed and hoped that the rational attitudes and scientific innovations were necessary to brace against foreigners and could be adopted without the foreigners' cultural and linguistic baggage. He feared that the acquisition in total, would disrupt national and religious unity and encourage passive admiration for foreign conquerors. Here, al-Afghani was concerned with the legitimacy of these new ideas. Due to their different social and historical contexts, ideas must be adapted to respond to the needs of the local culture in which they were being applied to. This idea was very similar to Tahtawi's concept that elements of western tradition must be translated to be an enabler to a variety of social contexts.

Finally, al-Afghani's seeming contradictions illustrated his attempt to balance the necessity to create unity among the masses while allowing a room for progressive thought regarding society. This objective may be most evident in his letter to Renan. In contrast to his writings that seemed to suggest complete rejection of reason, this letter acknowledged the important role that scientific development had played in Arab society

in the previous centuries. He noted that “[Renan] recognized that the Arabs conserved and maintained for centuries the hearth of science”.²⁹ Obviously, he was not completely opposed to the ideas of scientific inquiry and rationalism. Thus, it became apparent that al-Afghani’s concern was not with the development of science or reason within Islamic society, rather his concern was more towards the motives of the Europeans and their application of reason. His observations in India led him to the conclusion that science and reason had been perverted by Western powers to manipulate others.

The new science, Islam, and modernity discourse that emerged from the ruins of the old tradition during the nineteenth century was a colonial discourse, steeped in the great chasm that separated the contemporary world from the traditional Islamic universe that it had inspired and cultivated for almost eight centuries. The colonized had only one thing to set them free from their captors, masters and slave owners, and that was their ability and freedom to think. Freedom was not only enjoyed when the shackles and chains were unlocked from their chaffed wrists and bloodied ankles but also from their minds. The lesson here was that colonial domination required a whole some way of thinking. It was a discourse deemed to be advanced, good and civilized in accordance with European norms and definition. It called on the world to move forward as rapidly as possible, and also to overthrow a master classes’ ideology of progress; one built on violence, destruction and genocide . The first phase of the discourse between Islam and modern science emerged during the colonial era. It was marked by the violent uprooting of the Islamic tradition—an organic relationship between Islam and various branches of knowledge, including sciences that had formed over the course of centuries. This resulted in a chasm between Muslim scientists and their non-Muslim peers. This was

not because modern science came with new facts about nature that could not be reconciled with Islam; rather, this chasm was due to the absence of any grounding of modern science in Islamic intellectual tradition.

Moreover, this colonial-era discourse between Islam and modern science was hindered by extraneous baggage that affected the relationship well into the twentieth century. The strained relation were caused by:

- i. self-assessment of Muslims who saw their subjugation to Europe in terms of having missed the scientific revolution;
- ii. rhetoric that turned the discourse into an apology for Islam; and
- iii. foreign embedded idea about modern science being a product of a foreign civilization that needed to be imported at all costs.

These extraneous issues defined the contours of the Islam and science discourse to such an extent that the real issues were seldom addressed during the nineteenth century, and these three aspects continued to dominate the discourse during the first half of the twentieth century. This heavy overlay expressed itself in two major ways:

- i. through various attempts to “Islamize” modern science; and
- ii. through the production of an extensive literature that attempted to prove the existence of various modern scientific facts and theories in the *Quran*.

Another issue that clouded the discussions pertaining to Islam and science was the discourse about Islam and modernity. This topic was important to the Islamic

revivalism movement of the nineteenth century that was shaped by the works of Muslim reformers and thinkers such as al-Afghani, Rifa‘ah al-Tahtawi, and Muhammad ‘Abduh. Also an issue in question was the decline of science in Islamic civilization. In relevancy, the discussion was dominated by an Orientalist reconstruction of the problem. It was the most widely accepted Orientalist formulation that posited “Islamic Orthodoxy” against science as a portrayal that Islam was anti-modernity.

In addition, the Islam and science discourse of this era was shaped by various secular responses to the general social and political condition of the Muslim world. These included nationalism and Marxism that had been disseminated in the Muslim world as part of its efforts to dislodge the colonial yoke. However, both of the ideologies had not only affected educational scientific and social institutions, but also the Islamic and science discourse.

Evidently, there were hundreds of works dealing with the issues related to various aspects of Islam in the modern world. In most cases, these works posit the challenge of modernity within a social and cultural context and invariably find the question of Islam and science as an integral part of the discourse on modernity. This had led to the emergence of the new science, Islam and modernity discourse in a realm that was not its own.³⁰ This facet cast such a deep shadow on the new discourse that it was almost impossible to separate it from this burden. This heavy overlay expressed itself in various attempts to “Islamize” modern science by proving the existence of various modern theories in the *Quran* through the extensive literature. In this context, in 1976 Bucaille published his book, *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science* which argued that the *Qur'an* contains no statements contradicting established scientific facts. Bucaille argued

that the *Qur'an* is in agreement with scientific facts, while the Bible is not. He states that in Islam, science and religion have always been “twin sisters”. Since the publishing of *The Bible, the Quran and Science*, Bucaillists have promoted the idea that the *Qur'an* is of divine origin, arguing that it contains scientifically correct facts. Another works of Bucaille are *The Qur'an and Modern Science* (1995), and *What is the Origin of Man* (2005).³¹

Among its other formulations were the Islamic revivalism or “*Nahdah*” movements of the nineteenth century that focused on the works of Muslim reformers and fundamentalists such as al-Afghani, Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi, and 'Abduh. The search for a *modus vivendi* was not an easy task. And the dilemmas were nowhere more apparent than in the life and works of al-Afghani, who represented an important link in the changes that took place in science, Islam and modernity discourse. They were the nineteenth century thought and took place during the colonial era. Al-Afghani stood alone in the recent Islamic history as a dim light that urged Muslims to cast away the colonial yoke. His call assumed an enormously different dimension, especially when the historical background of his time was taken into account.³²

The major focus in this study was al-Afghani's famous “*Answer to Renan*” on May 18, 1883. It was in response to a lecture by Ernest Renan on “*Islam and Science*”. Renan's first lecture was delivered in Sorbonne and was later published on March 29, 1883 in the *Journal des Débats*. Al-Afghani-Renan's exchange was pivotal in understanding the making of the new Islam and science discourse. The former was to set the tone for the European discourse on the new Islam and science nexus. The latter showed how a leading Muslim intellectual of the nineteenth century viewed the new science and its relationship with Islam. Renan's case for “*Islam against science*” was

built on the basis of the orientalist studies of the previous two centuries and it, in turn, gave birth to Goldziher's influential doctrine (first published in 1916).³³ It posited a supposedly "*Islamic Orthodoxy*" against "*foreign sciences*." Goldziher's hypothesis, in turn, determined the nature of the twentieth-century Western writings on Islam and science. Written during the formative period of contemporary Western studies of Islamic scientific tradition, Ignaz Goldziher constructed one of the first models of the twentieth century that pitched the so-called sciences of the ancients (*'ulum al-awa'il* or *'ulum al-qudama'*) which included exact sciences against a nebulous and ill-defined "old Islamic Orthodoxy". This formulation was to influence the whole field in numerous implicit and explicit ways throughout the twentieth century, and it was not until the final decades of the century that his authoritarian position was seriously challenged by a few perceptive scholars who found his characterization of Islamic intellectual tradition highly problematic. Renan was thus an important player in the making of this discourse. His main point was that "early Islam and the Arabs who professed it were hostile to the scientific and philosophic spirit" and that science and philosophy 'had' entered the Islamic world only from the non-Arab sources".³⁴ Goldziher had, however, changed "early Islam" to "Islamic Orthodoxy" to restate Renan's position with a sophisticated layer which was absent in Renan's quasi-racist lecture. Renan had sought to prove that there was something inherently wrong with Islam and Arabs in reference to the cultivation of science. In his response, al-Afghani sought to defend Islam by broadening the arguments. He accepted the "warfare model" between religion and philosophy, and blamed all religions for being intolerant and being an obstacle to the development of science and philosophy. With time, he said, all people learnt to overcome these obstacles. However, Islam and Muslims simply have yet to undergo this learning curve.

Since humanity at its origin could not possibly be aware of the causes of the events that passed under its watch and the secrets of things, it was perforce led to follow the advice of its teachers and the orders they gave. This obedience was imposed in the name of the Supreme Being to whom the educators attributed all events without permitting men to discuss its utility or its disadvantages. This was no doubt one of the heaviest and most humiliating yokes as one could not deny that it was by this religious education that all nations had emerged from barbarism and marched toward a more advanced civilization, meant either for the Muslim, Christian, or pagan. If it was true that Muslim religion was an obstacle to the development of sciences, could one affirm that this obstacle would not disappear someday? ³⁵

Al-Afghani's apologetic approach betrayed the weight of the previous three centuries of the Muslim disgrace. Yet he rested his arguments on past glories which he hoped to return to. He knew all the difficulties that the Muslims would have to surmount to achieve the same degree of civilization whereby truth accessible with the help of philosophic and scientific methods was denied to them. At a later age, Renan became "a fanatic, full of foolish pride in possessing what he believed to be the absolute truth" owned to a race that had marked its passage in the world. Ever since the first formulation of arguments by Renan, many Muslim intellectuals had felt obliged to defend their religion against those arguments. As a result, only a few had attempted to recast the entire discourse on a different foundation. They also did not challenge the racist elements in Renan and other writings of the time. Renan was in fact articulating a view generally held by many Europeans. In this instance, Renan believed that in the final analysis, for reasons inherent in Semitic languages, the Semites, unlike Indo-

Europeans, did not and could not possess either philosophy or science. The Semitic race was distinguished almost exclusively by its negative features: it possessed neither mythology, nor epic poetry, nor science, nor philosophy, nor fiction, nor plastic arts, nor civil life. For Renan, the Aryans, whatever their origin, defined the West and Europe at the same time. In such a context, Renan who otherwise fought against miracles as a whole, nevertheless retained one: the “Greek Miracle.” As for Islamic science, “It was ” wrote Renan, “ a reflection of Greece, combined with Persian and Indian influence. In short, Arabic Science was an Aryan reflection.” ³⁶

In his doctoral thesis (1852) *Averroès et l’Averroïsme* (*Averroës and Averroism*), he argued that anything labeled as Islamic science or Islamic philosophy was in truth merely a translation from the Greek. ³⁷ Ergo, Islam, like all religious dogmas based on revelation, was hostile to reason and freethinking. In this context, al-Afghani responded defensively, saying that the blame for the backwardness of Muslims should not fall on Islam per se, but also on the contemporary Muslim misunderstanding of Islam. He believed that Islam was similar to any other religion, except for the fact that it was the only one true, complete, and perfect religion that was capable of satisfying all the desires of the human spirit. Like other Muslim thinkers of his day, he was willing to accept the judgment bestowed on Christianity by European free thought, that it was unreasonable and the enemy of science and progress. At the same time, he wanted to show that these criticisms did not apply to Islam. On the contrary, Islam was in harmony with the principles discovered by scientific reason. It was indeed a religion governed by reasons. Islam needed a Luther. In fact, this was one of al-Afghani’s favourite themes, and perhaps he saw himself as taking up the role of a reformer. Once reformation had taken place, Islam would be able to play its essential role of a moral

guide just as well as any other religion. This was proven by its truly Islamic and Arabic heritage that had enabled the rational sciences to flourish through and through. Certainly the conflict between religion and philosophy would always exist in Islam due to its ever presence in the back of human mind.³⁸ In 1883, when Renan declared that the Semitic mind was inherently incompatible with science and philosophy, al-Afghani replied that clearly religion did hinder sciences, and that Islam was not unique in this matter. His argument was that all religions were intolerant and inimical to reason, and the progress that the West had manifestly achieved was accomplished despite Christianity. Yet, recent statements by Pope Benedict XVI echoed the same premise that had already been discussed and refuted over a century and a half ago. The struggles against Muslims that led to the renewal of thought in the Muslim world were ignored.³⁹ Foreign ideas, in particular, was forced on the Muslim world in full blow. Al-Afghani however took the middle position, seeking the acquisition of the Western science within the larger Islamic framework of reform and renewal (*al-islah wa al-tajdid*).

Al-Afghani constructed a case of “*warfare*” between religion and philosophy. He blamed all religions equally for being intolerant and being an obstacle for the development of science and philosophy, thus agreeing with Renan. But he rejected Renan’s racial arguments and he, as a replacement constructed an evolutionary developmental view of people and societies:

I will say that no nation at its origin is capable of letting itself be guided by pure reason... And, since humanity, at its origin, did not know the causes of the events that passed under its eyes and the secrets of things, it was perforce led to follow the advice of its teachers and the orders they gave. This obedience was imposed in the name of the Supreme Being to whom the educators attributed all events, without permitting men to discuss its utility or its disadvantages. This is no doubt for man one of the heaviest and most humiliating yokes, as I recognize;

but one cannot deny that it is by this religious education, whether, it be Muslim, Christian, or pagan, that all nations have emerged from barbarism and marched toward a more advanced civilization. If it is true that Muslim religion is an obstacle to the development of sciences, can one affirm that this obstacle will not disappear someday? How does the Muslim religion differ on this point from other religions? All religions are intolerant, each one in its way. ⁴⁰

Al-Afghani then made a strange U-turn to agree with Renan on a critical point:

In truth, the Muslim religion has tried to stifle science and stop its progress. It has succeeded in halting the philosophical or intellectual movement and in turning minds from the search for scientific truth. A similar attempt, if I am not mistaken, was made by the Christian religion, and the venerated leaders of the Catholic Church have not yet disarmed so far as I know. They continue to fight energetically against what they call the spirit of vertigo and error. I know all the difficulties that the Muslims will have to surmount to achieve the same degree of civilization, access to the truth with the help of philosophic and scientific methods being forbidden them... but I know equally that this Muslim and Arab child whose portrait M. Renan traces in such vigorous terms and who, at a later age, became “a fanatic, full of foolish pride in possessing what he believes to be absolute truth,” belongs to a race that has marked its passage in the world, not only by fire and blood, but by brilliant sciences, including philosophy (with which, I must recognize, it was unable to live happily for long). ⁴¹

Al-Afghani had a first hand experience of the power of modern science through his experience of travelling to the Western world and perhaps more than others, he was deeply conscious of the domination of the Western powers in world affairs. He was a charismatic man of action depending less on his writings. It was his “presence” through his message of hope and his personal influence that helped to loose some of the mental shackles that had entrapped the Muslim intellectuals of the colonial era. Renan’s condescending rejoinder to al-Afghani, published in the *Journal des Débats* on May 19, 1883, stated that:

There was nothing more instructive than studying the ideas of an enlightened Asiatic in their original and sincere form. ⁴²

He found in them a rationalism that provided him hope that “*if religions divide men, Reason brings them together; and that there is only one Reason.*” He reiterated his racial views, even in praising al-Afghani:

*Sheikh Jemmal-Eddin is an Afghan entirely divorced from the prejudices of Islam; he belongs to those energetic races of Iran, near India, where the Aryan spirit lives still energetically under the superficial layer of official Islam.*⁴³

Renan then admitted that “*he may have appeared unjust to the Sheikh*” in singling out Islam for his attack by stating that “*Christianity in this respect is not superior to Islam. This is beyond doubt. Galileo was no better treated by Catholicism than Averroes by Islam.*” Renan concluded his rejoinder by stating that Afghani had:

*brought considerable arguments for his fundamental theses: during the first half of its existence Islam did not stop the scientific movement from existing in Muslim lands; in the second half, it stifled in its breast the scientific movement, and that to its grief.*⁴⁴

Al-Afghani endeavored to combat fatalism that plagued the bulk of Muslim societies by the turn of the nineteenth century. It was widely accepted then that Muslim decadence was natural as it reflected an advanced stage in the continuous moral decline since the time of the Prophet. It was also believed that this trend was inevitable and beyond human control.⁴⁵ He rejected this interpretation of history, advocated by traditionalists. He insisted that Muslim decadence had been precipitated by moral and intellectual decline. He added that the superiority of the West and its triumph over Muslims was a temporary stage in the continual struggle between the East and the West. He attributed Western military superiority to its scientific advancement, arguing that the French and English were able to conquer Muslim lands not by virtue of being French or English. Instead, it was more because of their superiority and advanced scientific

capabilities. Furthermore, he saw a positive aspect of the rivalry between the East and the West, contending that the Western invasion of Muslim lands had a stimulating effect on the Muslims. According to him, it would eventually awake them from the state of slumber that had dominated their lives for centuries.⁴⁶ He recognized, however, that scientific development could not be achieved merely by training Muslims to use Western technology. Technology and scientific innovations were nothing but artifacts, reflecting the ethos of the people and their philosophical outlook. What was needed for the Muslims to progress was a new spirit and direction.

Al-Afghani ascribed the Muslims' failure to catch up with the West in science and technology to their deficient outlook and faulty perspective. He argued that Islam had created in the early Muslims the desire to acquire knowledge that enabled them to quickly assume a leading role in scientific research. They initially appropriated the sciences of the Greeks, Persians, and Indians before moving these sciences to new frontiers.⁴⁷ He accused contemporary Muslim scholars (*'ulama*) of wasting time and energy on trivial matters instead of addressing important questions and issues confronting the Muslim community (*ummah*). He therefore called the *'ulama* to probe into the causes of Muslim decline rather than occupying their minds with minutiae and subtleties.⁴⁸ Instead of providing strong leadership for the community, the *'ulama*, he proclaimed, have deprived the *ummah* of technology. Thereby, allowing the West to surpass the Muslims in military capacity. "Ignorance has no alternative," he wrote, "but to prostrate itself humbly before science and to acknowledge its submission."⁴⁹

The chief goal that al-Afghani endeavoured to accomplish throughout his life was the unification of the Muslim people under one Islamic government. Establishing a unified Islamic state, could be the first step towards reforming the decadent conditions

of the Muslims. He believed that such a state could revitalize the Muslim *Ummah* and mobilize the masses to meet the European challenge. To achieve this goal, al-Afghani tried first to persuade the rulers of India, Persia, and Egypt, as well as Sultan Abdulhamid, the head of the Ottoman state with whom he had a close personal relationship. He took advantage of these associations to Islamicize the practices and the policies of their governments, but he soon realized that Muslim rulers were neither receptive to his ideas nor interested in Islamic reform. Gradually, he began to address his reformist ideas to Muslim intellectuals in particular, and the public in general. His concern for a political reform, notwithstanding his emphasis were primarily on educational reform as a prerequisite for any sociopolitical change. Ironically, however, most of those inspired by him were interested in political reform. They, had thus paid little attention to reforming the ideas and practices underlying Muslim backwardness.

Over a century ago, al-Afghani set in motion a new Islamic trend and movement. The basic mission of this movement was to revitalize and reform the backward conditions of the Muslim community (*ummah*). He strongly believed that Muslim decadence was precipitated by faulty interpretations of Islam that had led to misperception of the meanings and intents of Islamic principles. Therefore, he insisted that the Muslim decline was intrinsically intellectual in nature, reflecting the failure of Muslim scholars to apply the principles and teachings of Islam to an ever-changing reality. The military defeat of the Muslims at the hands of Europe was only the symptom of the spiritual and intellectual decline of the *Ummah* but never, in any way, its cause.

Although al-Afghani emphasized proper Islamic education as the ultimate means for the revitalization of Muslim conditions, he believed that establishing a united

Islamic state was the best and shortest approach to achieving the desired reform. Toward this end, al-Afghani tried unsuccessfully to employ his influence and personal relationships with Muslim rulers to convince them to adopt his reformist ideas. While his endeavor to bring about change through rulers bore no fruit, he was able to inspire Muslim intellectuals and public opinion leaders. He succeeded in sowing the seeds of revolt among them and his agitation resulted in the rebellion of the Egyptian army in 1882 against Khedive Tawfiq. The rebellion was, however, quickly suppressed by the British forces that intervened to keep Khedive Tawfiq in power.⁵⁰

Al-Afghani traveled throughout the Islamic world from Egypt to India promoting Islamic reform and unity. He called for return to the original sources of Islam and the adoption of Western science, technology, and political institutions. Osman Amin (1966), in *Some Aspects of Religious Reform in the Middle East* concluded that al-Afghani's role as an energetic reformist and fundamentalist were as follows;

*Into the political ferment of the last quarter of the nineteenth century burst the striking personality of al-Afghani, whom Wilfred Scawen Blunt called a "wild man of genius." Although he is known as the originator of political pan-Islamism, he is at the same time the initiator of the renewal of **ijtihad**; for he was an energetic and courageous fighter against the reigning theology, and an eloquent advocate of the complete overthrow of **taqlid** in an attempt to rediscover the original meaning and spirit of the faith.⁵¹*

However, unlike Sayyid Ahmad Khan, al-Afghani advocated himself in overthrowing colonialism and forming an Islamic state. According to Halim Barakat (1993), in *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State* and Esposito, John L. (1984), in *Islam and Politics*:

Al-Afghani believed that Muslim revitalization . . . could be achieved not by ignoring or rejecting the West but by direct, active engagement and confrontation.⁵²

Al-Afghani's goals were political and his approach was activist. Although al-Afghani's pan-Islamic dreams of liberation and reunification of the Islamic world were unattainable, his ideas greatly influenced many Muslim reformers including Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Al-Afghani was perhaps the most significant agent of Islamic fundamentalism and neo-traditionalism who encouraged the idea of pan-Islamism, with strong anti-colonial undertones. In his discourse, the dual encounter with modernity took a slightly different form. In reality, he created two discourses. The first one was what he considered to be the enlightened elite in Islamic societies who pursued the principles of individual subjectivity affirmed as critical thought. He then developed a parallel discourse that appealed more to the "masses" motivated by anti-imperialist goals and in many ways, was in sharp contrast to his first critical discourse. He was interested in adapting religion to the modern world. The compatibility of reason with faith was the core of his argument. Like Luther, al-Afghani attacked religious corruption and decaying religious institutions. He aspired to return to the true origins of religion. Yet, this early reformer was viewed as having his gaze directed towards a dialogue with the West when he was only trying to find answers to issues of societal change.⁵³

5.3 CONCLUSION

I have concluded three epistemological positions within the discourse. The three are ‘*Science*,’ ‘*Islam*’ and ‘*Modernity*’ in 19th century thought. Tagging them are Islamic fundamentalism and neo-traditionalism movements led by al-Afghani vis a vis with the rational and liberal tradition of the Enlightenment. Thus, the nineteenth-century tradition of Western Positivism, Enlightenment and Liberalism represented by Renan was encountered in the al-Afghani-Renan discourse.

In other words, this chapter summarizes the argument that the Islamic movement initiated and cultivated by al-Afghani throughout his life as an elitist movement was unfortunately incapable of attracting the support of the Muslim masses. The failure of the Islamic movement to attract popular support during al-Afghani’s time, and to a lesser extent during the time of the 20th century reformers like Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, could be attributed to two interrelated factors. The first factor was the revolutionary nature of al-Afghani’s message. He led an all-out war against traditionalist ideas and thoughts, describing them as perverted and decadent. He blamed them for Muslims’ inability to face modern challenges. He also took the ‘*ulama to task* for the deteriorating conditions of the ummah and called upon them to rethink and re-evaluate a great deal of their doctrines. Immediately, his call was met with strong opposition from the ‘*ulama* who labeled him an “innovator.” Worse still, the traditionalist ‘*ulama* who believed that Islamic thought had reached its full expansion and refinement a long time ago, saw al-Afghani’s reformist ideas as a threat to the integrity of Islam. Secondly, al-Afghani had to deal with a community suffering from chronic illiteracy and fatalism, as well as a long history of political quietism. Therefore,

messages by Al-Afghani that put an emphasis on political activism and scientific development, were deemed incomprehensible to the Muslim masses.

David Bender (2004) in *'Post-Ottomanism'* pointed out an Eliezer Tauber's conclusion of al-Afghani as an early proponent of modern Islamic reform, in particular, questioned how modern science was *'Western.'* He argued that it had its roots in the East. Thus, for him, science and modernization could not be separated from Islam. In arguing for the universality of science, al-Afghani explained that though it appeared that the most powerful civilization in the world was Europe, in reality, *'it is science that everywhere manifests its greatness and power.'* Thus, rather than Europeans who ruled, the *'true ruler, which is science, continues to change capitals. Sometimes it moves from East to West, and other times from West to East.'*⁵⁴

Al-Afghani articulated a vision of Islam within a framework that posited Islam and modernization were nearly as the same phenomenon.

*The Islamic religion is the closest of religions to science and knowledge, and there is no incompatibility between science and knowledge, and the foundation of the Islamic faith.*⁵⁵

However, Al-Afghani made a clear demarcation between original and genuine Islam that encouraged learning, science and rational philosophy. Unfortunately in the nineteenth century, while in the hands of conservative theologians, Islam had lost its essence, viz., *"evolution and progress"*... as al-Afghani put it... and had become an obstacle to knowledge and sciences. It was indeed to his credit that al-Afghani came out of the controversy with his head held high and even elicited high praise from the pen of his adversaries.

Al-Afghani has made a valuable contribution to the elaboration of the concept of reform, which is opposed to corruption, in the culture of the region. This concept - which is inherently Islamic - connotes social reform, so that the structure of the political system is directed towards good governance and is also compatible with the social and cultural norms of each society. He played an active role in the awakening of Muslims in the 19th century and the 20th century.

According to Safi, Louay (1995) in *From Reform to Revolution: a Critical Reading of the Political Discourse and Actions of the Islamic Movement in Egypt*, al-Afghani knew that the most significant problems of Islamic societies were twofold in that they were the result of both internal despotism and external colonialism. Regarding the first, at that time there existed a widespread sense of fatalism in the Islamic lands in which Muslim decline was accepted as being a natural process.⁵⁶ Moreover, the educational systems in place were ineffective in that they were not conducive to rational investigation and were therefore not adapted to the acquisition of new scientific understanding and progress. Furthermore, the region's rulers were more engaged in the pursuit or consolidation of their own power and self-interest than in the common good and welfare of the communities they administered. Thus, the main crisis afflicting the Islamic world was disunity; the emphasis placed on nationalism led to these lands being submerged in religious, ethnic and sectarian conflicts.

Concerning the second problem with which the region was afflicted, the general decline of the Islamic lands had facilitated the encroachment of colonial powers, whose military invasion and subsequent exploitation of these territories compounded a general sense of defeatism and passivity. While the impact of Western colonialism had thrown the Islamic lands into disarray, al-Afghani dedicated his life to the promotion of the

political consciousness of Muslims concerning the contemporary situation of their civilization. He declared that the manner in which to overcome despotism and colonialism was through the return to Islamic principles and to the people's own roots, a precondition of which he also believed to be the elimination of superstition.

One of the defining characteristics of al-Afghani was that he was a fundamentalist modernist; while defying Western encroachment in the region, he called upon Muslims to learn and adopt the new sciences and technologies of Western countries, as well as to overcome the problems of illiteracy and technical and industrial incapacity. In total, al-Afghani believed the ills afflicting Islamic societies were despotism, ignorance, superstition, disunity and colonialism. To overcome them, he advocated the struggle against despotic monarchs, by learning and adopting of new sciences and technologies, returning to a pure form of Islam through casting off superstition and obscurantism, and the possession of an Islamic ideology with which to fight despotism and colonialism.

Al-Afghani understood that many negative propaganda existed concerning Islam, which defined it as a religion that is deterministic and opposing to science. An example of this attitude was to be found in the lecture of the Orientalist Ernest Renan,⁵⁷ to whom he replied that Islam does not stand against science, and that the regression of the Islamic world was not due to the nature of Islam itself, but was rather the result of the imposed of colonialism in the region.⁵⁸

Al-Afghani stressed the unity of Islam, that is to say, both unity between Shi'i and Sunni, and the unity between the religious and political domains. In emphasizing pan-Islamism, he envisaged the convergence of Shi'i and Sunni schools of thought in which sectarianism would be surpassed, thus leading to the establishment of cultural and spiritual unity against ignorance, bigotry and extremism. He wished to unite them in respect of the diverse social and cultural norms of Islamic societies. In this manner, it would be possible to reestablish the historically glorious period of Islam. To al-Afghani, what was important in this regard was to be moderate rather than extremist, or strict in one's interpretation of religion. In fact, he believed that such religious extremists were an obstacle to the unity and integration of the Islamic world, and advised that they should be controlled by the countries of the region. Overall, Islam should present itself as a moderate religion which is capable of engaging with and entering into dialogue with other religions and societies. Central to his view was the importance of pan-Islamism, in which – by removing the sources of decadence and returning to its origins – the Islamic world would unite and withstand threats to its autonomy, which is presently unable to do as a result of its being riven by divisions. In addition to the removal of colonial powers and corrupt Islamic leaders, he advocated the construction of a federation of Islamic states which, if united, would be able to counterbalance the influence of the West, while at the same time taking up the West's technology and utilizing it to this end.⁵⁹

Al-Afghani recognized the vital role that educational reform had to play. Pan-Islamism was, in his view, the cornerstone and most effective means to revitalize the Islamic world. He saw that reform could be attained through gaining an understanding of the following seven axes, namely: factors relating to society - the subsistence of

society, the relations between individual and society, and the role of the elite; social evolution - the priority of culture and change in people's minds, intellectualism and pragmatism; the reasons for the stagnation of Islamic society – the distortion of religious thought, the non-existence of experimental knowledge, incompetent leaders, colonization, lack of cooperation and disunity; the reasons behind the West's progress – religious reform, new science and technology, and civil society; criticism of Western colonialism and culture; retracing an appropriate form of society and governance; and renovating the life of Islam through according priority to political evolution, intellectual resurrection and pragmatic upheaval. Al-Afghani was one of the most influential thinkers of the age and a visionary reformist. He was considered the spokesman of the Muslim world during this period, and he surpassed the limitations of national boundaries in not choosing to identify himself as the national of one particular country, but rather one who travelled widely and an Islamic citizen.

In fact, al-Afghani has been called the circle in which all the reformists of his epoch are related, particularly on the basis of the following ten themes:

- i. a return to pure Islam and its purification from superstition;
- ii. condemnation of blind traditionalism and mere imitation;
- iii. advocating the unity of Muslims,
- iv. combating local nationalisms which were weakening Islam in the face of a common enemy and attempting to form a common Islamic identity based on solidarity;

- v. combating despotism in the region;
- vi. attempting to reconcile new sciences and technologies with the precepts of Islam and interpreting these precepts in a scientific and rational manner;
- vii. combating colonialism as the first step in the social and intellectual resurrection of Muslims;
- viii. rationalism;
- ix. the avoidance of a uniform religious vision;
- x. combating the surrender to determinism and isolationism; and bringing about openness and expanding the area of ijtiḥād in all relevant issues relating to urban society.

He played a key role in dialogues among civilizations, advocating such a dialogue between East and West. It is important to scrutinize his philosophy and ideology which he tried to disseminate around the world. His message continues to be relevant in the present day as we are currently witnessing many movements attacking Islam and the culture of the region, a manifestation that is Islamophobia, which disseminates a distorted image of Muslims in the world. Equally at this time, certain movements are attempting to portray Islam as being opposed to science and progress, whereas in the thought of Islamic scholars such as al-Afghani, there is no contradiction between Islam and science. We can find responses to many of these current problems through examining his active life, which contains many as yet unrevealed truths; such an academic and comprehensive view of his life and works that can shed light on the

way of reform, Islamic society and those who are devoted to the spiritual and material progress and prosperity of Muslims. He can thus serve as a valuable model for the education of a new generation in the way of unity, solidarity and the integration of the Islamic world.

NOTES

¹ See Pitt, Alan. 2000. *The Cultural Impact of Science in France: Ernest Renan and The Vie de Jesus*. In *The Historical Journal*, 43, 1 (2000). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.100.

² See Stenberg, Leif. 1996. *The Islamization of Science : Four Muslim Positions Developing an Islamic Modernity*. (Lund Studies in History of Religions, No. 6). New York: Coronet Books. Pp. 364-366. Muzaffar Iqbal. 1997, described this book in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 1997.

According to Muzaffar Iqbal that Leif Stenberg's book is the first attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the recent developments in Islam and science debate. It is a "descriptive and analytic undertaking", written in a lucid language with remarkable clarity of thought and intent. The study is based on the assumption that the current debate on Islam and science can be presented through the description and analysis of "Positions" centered around the ideas of exponents. The four exponents whose positions have each been presented in separate chapters are: Syed Hossein Nasr, Maurice Bucaille, Ziauddin Sardar and Ismail al-Faruqi. Each of these four chapters have inter-related themes and structures and a conscious effort has been made to use similar headings so that analysis of comparative.

See also Turner, Bryan, S. 2005. *Classical Sociology: on Cosmopolitanism, Critical Recognition Theory and Islam*. Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No 39. Singapore: National University of Singapore. P. 11.

Turner mentioned that Islamic thought has already, since al-Afghani's famous encounter with Ernest Renan, been deeply engaged with Western thought. It is difficult therefore to see how one could easily classify Islamic social theory as Western or non-Western.

³ See Hourani, Albert. 1962. *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 120.

See also al-Bahi, Muhammad. 1960. *al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadith wa Sillatuha bi al-Isti'mar al-Gharbi*. Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. pp.89-91.

See also Keddie R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 84-86.

See also Keddie R. Nikki. 1972. *Sayyid Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani: A Political Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp.189-195.

In both publications of Nikki R. Keddie describes on debates between Renan and al-Afghani on Islam and science in special focus entitled "The Exchange with Ernest Renan".

See also Adams, C. Charles. 1968. *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*. New York: Russell & Russell. P. 9.

According to Charles Adams during the year 1883 al-Afghani carried on a controversy with Ernest Renan in the columns of Le Journal des Debats on the subject "Islam and Science", the discussion centering about the ability of Islam to reform and adapt itself to modern civilization.

⁴ See Keddie. 1968. *An Islamic Response*. Op.cit. P.85.

⁵ See Gutas, Dimitri. 2002. *The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy*. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol 29, No 1 (May, 2002). Pp. 5-25. Published by Taylor & Francis, Ltd. P. 15.

See also Corbin, Henry. 1993. *Histoire de la philosophie Islamique*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1964). English translation by L. and P. Sherrard. *History of Islamic Philosophy*. London and New York: Kegan Paul. P. 242.

In numerous passages Corbin makes the case in this regard very aptly:

We have ... lamented the fact that it has been repeated over and over again that Averroes was the greatest name and the most eminent representative of what has been called 'Arab philosophy', and that with him this philosophy attained its apogee and its goal. In this way we have lost sight of what was happening in the East, where in fact the work of Averroes passed as it were unnoticed. Neither Nasir Tusi, nor Mir Damad, nor Mulla Sadra, nor Hadi Sabzavari had any inkling of the role and the significance attributed by our textbooks to the Averroes-Ghazali polemic. If it had been explained to them they would have been amazed, as their successors today are amazed. P. 242.

⁶ See Renan, Ernest. 1861. *Averroes Et L'Averroisme: Essai Historique*. Paris: Michel Levy. English version published by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim in 1986. Preface to 3rd ed. P. iii.

⁷ Renan, Ernest. 1861. *Op.cit.* P. iii.

⁸ See Hourani. *Arabic Thought*. *Op.cit.* Hourani point out from Renan, Ernest, *L'Avenir de la Science*. P. 121.

See also Renan, J. Ernest. 1891. *The Future of Science, Ideas of 1848*. London: Chapman and Hall Limited. P.43.

⁹ See Daiber, Hans. 1994. *"Science and Technology versus Islam: A Controversy from Renan and Afghani to Nasr and Needham and its Historical Background*. In *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*. Vol.10, 1994. Pp.119-133.

See also Hourani referred to Renan. *Ernest, Origines du Christianisme*. p.lxiii., p.121. _____, 1863. *The History of the Origins of Christianity*. Book 1. Life of Jesus. London: Mathieson & Company.

See also Schulze, Reinhard. 2000. *A Modern History of the Islamic World*. London & New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers. P.18.

According to Schulze the French philosopher Ernest Renan consistently argued that Islam was responsible for the fact that the Muslims were unable to develop their own progressive concept. The Islamic world was in this way downgraded into a 'backward culture', a 'culture without machinery' and Islam became the byword for the separation between Europe and the Orient.

¹⁰ See Hourani, Albert. 1991. *Islam in European Thought. The Tanner Lectures on Human Value*. Delivered at Clare Hall, Cambridge University on January 30 and 31 and February 1, 1989. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 252-253.

¹¹ See Renan, Ernest. 1891. *The Future of Science*. *Op.cit.* pp.445-460.

- ¹² See Renan, Ernest. *Origines du Christianisme*. Op.cit. *The History of the Origins of Christianity*. op.cit. P. ixiii.
- ¹³ See Keddie. 1972. *A Political Biography*. Op.cit. P. 190.
- ¹⁴ See Ibrahim Bayyumi Madkour. 1984. *Al-Tawhid: The Study of Islamic Philosophy*. Translated from Persian by Shahyar Sa'adat, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Muharram 1404 AH). Teheran: University of Teheran. Pp.3-7.
- ¹⁵ Gauthier. Leon. 1923. *L'esprit semitique et l'esprit aryen*. Paris. Pp. 66-67.
- See also _____, 1925. *La Theorie d'Ibn Rochd (Averroes) Sur Les Rapports de la Religion*. Paris: E. Leroux. Pp. 185-195.
- ¹⁶ Madkour. Op. cit. Pp 8-9.
- See also Dugat, Gustave. 1868. *Histoire Des Orientalistes De L'Europe Du XII Au XIX Siecle*. Paris: Maisonneuve Et Cie, Libraires Editeurs.
- Gustave Dugat born 1824 in Orange , died 1894 in Barjols , was a French orientalist .Dugat traveled through in 1855 on behalf of the Government of Algeria , and after his return member of Société orientale de France . Among his major works include Gram Maire française à l'usage des arabes (1854), Histoire politique et littéraire des arabes d'Espagne (1854-59, one in conjunction with Dozy , Krehl and Wright from the Arabic translated work) and Histoire des orientalistes de l'Europe to XII th au XIX e siècle (1868-70). Dugat was also a diligent employees of the Dezobry and Bachelet issued "Dictionnaire général des lettres, des beaux-arts et des sciences morales et politiques" (1862-63, 7th Edition, 2 tapes, 1902.*
- ¹⁷ Madkour. Op. cit. Pp. 9-10.
- ¹⁸ Keddie.1972. *A Political Biography*. op.cit. P. 91.
- ¹⁹ See Amin, Ahmad. 1979. *Zu'ama` al-Islah fi al-'Asr al-Hadith*. al-Qahirah: Maktabah al-Nahdah al-Misriyah. Pp. 92-93.
- ²⁰ See Keddie. 1968. *An Islamic Response*. Op.cit. P.3.
- See also Euben, L.Roxanne. 2003. *A Counternarrative of Shared Ambivalence : Some Muslim and Western Perspectives on Science and Reason*. http://commonknowledge.dukejournals.org/cgi/pdf_extract/9/1/50,Commonknowledge,2003, Volume 9,Number 1,Winter 2003, Duke University Press. Pp. 57-62.
- ²¹ See Keddie. 1968. *An Islamic Response*. Op.cit. Pp.3-5.
- ²² See Majidi, M.R. and Dehshiri M.R. 2005. *The Universal Message of Seyyed Jamal-ed-Din Assadabadi, a Reformist from West Asia*. Tehran: International Conference on Sayyed Jamal-ul-Din Hosseini Asadabadi. Pp 5-6.
- See also Roxanne L.Euben. op.cit. pp.57-58.
- ²³ See further note on al-Afghani's exchange with Renan in Kedourie, Elie, 1966. *Afghani and 'Abduh; An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd. Pp. 41-44.

It is of some interest to follow the fortunes in the East of the exchange between Renan and al-Afghani, A letter from 'Abduh in Beirut to al-Afghani in Paris dated 8 Sha'aban 1300. Perhaps first written in Arabic and then translated into French, the "Answer to Renan" was published in Journal des Débats on May 18, 1883; it has been republished as an "Annex" to the aforementioned Refutation des Matérialistes, tr. by A. M. Goichon, Paul Geuthner, Paris (1942), pp. 174-85; English translation by Keddie can be found in Response, op.cit, pp. 181-7, [henceforth "Answer"].

²⁴ *Some of al-Afghani's own works were collected and published in 1968 from Cairo; these include: al-Ta'liqat 'ala Sharh al-Dawwani li al-'Aqa'id al-'Adudiyyah; in this al-Afghani glosses over Dawwani's commentary on the famous Kalam book of 'Adud al-Din al-'Iji, called al-'Aqa'id al-'Adudiyyah; Risalat al-Waridat fi SIRR al-Tajalliyat; Al-Afghani had dictated this work to his student Muhammad 'Abduh when he was in Egypt; in addition, see his Tatimmat al-Bayan, published in 1879 at Cairo, which is a political, social and cultural history of Afghanistan; and Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Husayni, Beirut, 1931. This is a book compiled by the Lebanese journalist Muhammad Pasha al-Makhzumi who participated in most of al-Afghani's talks during the last years of his life and developed his conversations with al-Afghani into the present book. The book contains important information about al-Afghani's life and ideas.*

²⁵ See Hourani, Albert. 1962. Op.cit. P.110.

²⁶ See Hourani, Albert. 1962. Op.cit. P.113.

²⁷ See Hourani, Albert. 1962. Op.cit. P.121.

²⁸ See also Keddie R. Nikki. 1968, op.cit. P.187.

François Pierre Guillaume Guizot (1787–1874) was a French historian, orator, and statesman. Guizot was a dominant figure in French politics prior to the Revolution of 1848.

²⁹ See Hourani, Albert. 1962. Op.cit. Pp.114-115.

³⁰ The useful works dealing with the challenger of modernity are:

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1981. *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*. London: KPI

and Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1975. *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*. London: Longman.

Also see Rahman, Fazlur. 1984. *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Seen also Grunebaum, Von, G. E. 1962. *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity*. Westport : Greenwood Press.

For a post-modern perspective, see Majid, Anouar. 2000. *Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World*. Durham & London : Duke University Press.

For a post-modern analysis of the impact of Mustafa Kemal's policies on Turkey. See Sayyid, Bobby, S. 1997. *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and Emergence of Islamism*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

For a case study of Turkey, see Mardin, Serif. 2000. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. First published in 1962.

See also Muzaffar Iqbal. 2006. *Science, Religion, and Society: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Controversy*. Volume 1. Armonk. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

- ³¹ See further works by Bucaille. Maurice. 1989. *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science – the Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Nordeen.

In 1976 Bucaille published his book, The Bible, The Qur'an and Science which argued that the Qur'an contains no statements contradicting established scientific facts. Bucaille argued that the Qur'an is in agreement with scientific facts, while the Bible is not. He states that in Islam, science and religion have always been "twin sisters". According to Bucaille, there are monumental errors of science in the Bible and not a single error in the Qur'an. Bucaille's belief is that the Qur'an's descriptions of natural phenomena make it compatible with modern science. Bucaille concludes that the Qur'an is the words of God.

Bucaille argues that the Old Testament has been distorted because of numerous translations and corrections as it was transmitted orally. He highlights, in his words, "numerous disagreements and repetitions", in the Old Testament and the Gospels. In his analysis, Bucaille claims he makes use of many propositions of Biblical criticism, such as the documentary hypothesis.

See also Bucaille. Maurice. 1995. *The Qur'an and Modern Science*. Indianapolis, USA: American Trust Publication.

See also Bucaille. Maurice. 2005. *What is the Origin of Man*. London: Islamic Book Service.

- ³² See Badawi, Zaki, M. A. 1978. *The Reformers of Egypt*. London: Croom Helm. P.31.

See also Kedourie, Elie. 1966. *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. Pp. 12-14.

See further informations in Qudsi-Zadeh, Albert. 1970. *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: An Annotated Bibliography*. Leiden: E. J. Brill. Pp. 3-5.

- ³³ Goldziher, Ignaz. 1915. *Stellung der alten Islamischen Orthodoxie zu den antiken Wissenschaften*, first published as no. 18 (1915) of *Abhandlungen der Koniglich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Philosophische-historische Klasse)* (Berlin, 1916), pp. 3-466.
Goldziher, Ignaz. 1981. *Studies on Islam*. translated by M. L. Swartz. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 185-215. [hereafter Goldziher (1916)].

Ignác (Yitzhaq Yehuda) Goldziher (June 22, 1850 – November 13, 1921), often credited as Ignaz Goldziher, was a Hungarian scholar of Islam. In 1873, under the auspices of the Hungarian government, he began a journey through Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and took the opportunity of attending lectures of Muslim sheiks in the mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo. In 1890 he published Muhammedanische Studien in which he showed how Hadith reflected the legal and doctrinal controversies of the two centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammad.

"Goldziherism" continues to reign supreme in numerous studies of Islamic scientific tradition. The central element of Goldziher's theory is that the "ancient sciences", which "included the entire range of propaedeutical, physical, and metaphysical sciences of the Greek encyclopedia, as well as the branches of mathematics, philosophy, natural science, medicine, astronomy, the theory of music and others", (2) were looked upon by the "strict orthodoxy" with mistrust and "with the growing influence of a narrow orthodoxy, this distrust which the religious circles of Eastern Islam felt for the works of the 'ulum al-awa'il expressed itself with an increasing

*intensity ... the pious Muslim was expected to avoid these sciences with great care because they were considered dangerous to his faith." (3) According to Goldziher, this opposition made decisive progress after al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and thus began the decline of Islamic science. This view, which has been cogently called "the marginality thesis" by Abdelhamid I. Sabra. 1987. "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement", *History of Science*, 25, London: Science History Publications Ltd. 1987. pp. 229.*

34 Keddie. 1972. Op. cit. Pp. 189–190.

35 Keddie. 1968. Op. cit. pp. 182–184.

36 See Ernest Renan, 1947. *Oeuvres Complètes*. Vol. 1, Paris. P. 961, cited in Keddie R. Nikki. 1972. Op.cit. P. 189,

See also Keddie. 1968. Op.cit. Pp. 182–84.

See also Iqbal, Muzaffar. 2007. *Science and Islam*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press. Pp 147-49.

37 See also Renan, Ernest. 1866. *Averroes et L'Averroïsme Essai Historique*. Paris: Michel Levy Freres Libraires Editeurs. Reprinted by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zurich and New York. 1986. P. preface iv.

38 Keddie. 1972. Ibid. Pp. 189-90.

See also Abu Zayd, Nasr, 2006. *Reformation of Islamic Thought*, Amsterdam/Den Haag:Amsterdam University Press. P.23.

Nasr Abu Zayd holds the Ibn Rushd Chair at the University of Humanistics,Utrecht,The Netherlands.He is also Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Leiden.He is former Professor of Arabic literature at Cairo University.He also has received the 2005 Ibn Rushd Prize for Freedom of Thought.

39 See Aziz al-Azmeh, 2003. 'Laïcité et Culturalisme dans le Monde Arabe'. In Abdou Filali Ansary, *Réformer l'islam,une introduction aux débats contemporains*, Editions de la découverte, Paris, 2003 in Abaza,Mona, 2007. *The Dialectics of Enlightenment,Barbarism and Islam*, Meijboomlaan:Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences. Pp.13-14.

40 See also Keddie R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response In The Answer to Renan*. Op.cit. P.3.

41 Ibid. P.4.

42 See Kedourie, Elie. 1966. *Afghani and 'Abduh*. op. cit. P. 43.

43 See Hourani, Albert. 1962. Op.cit. P. 121.

44 Keddie. 1972. *A Political Biography*. Op. cit. Pp. 182-4.

45 See Muhammad Abduh. *al-Islam Din wa Hadarah*. ed. Tahir al-Tinaji . al-Qahirah: al-Hilal. n.d. P. 148.

- ⁴⁶ See al-Afghani. *Lecture on Teaching and Learning*. In *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*. Op.cit. Ed. Nikki R. Keddie. Berkeley, California: University of California Press. (1968). P. 17.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. P.17.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid. Pp. 182-4. Reproduced in Keddie (1972). Ibid. Pp. 196-197.
- ⁴⁹ See al-Afghani. *The Benefit of Philosophy*. In *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*. Op. cit. Pp.120-121.
- See also al-Afghani. *Islamic Solidarity*. In *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, eds. John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito. 1982. *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press. P.19.
- ⁵⁰ See Charles C. Adams. 1968. *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*. New York: Russell & Russell. P. 7.
- See also Safi, Louay. 1995. *From Reform Revolution; A Critical Reading of the Political Discourse and Actions of the Islamic Movement in Egypt*. In *Intellectual Discourse*,1995,No.1. Pp.23-49.
- See also Asaf Hussain. 1983. *Islamic Movements in Egypt, Pakistan, and Iran: An Annotated Bibliography*. London: Mansell Publishing Limited. Pp. 6-7.
- ⁵¹ See Amin, Osman. 1966. *Some Aspects of Religious Reform in the Muslim Middle East* in Leiden, Carl. 1966. *The Conflict of Traditionalism and Modernism in the Muslim Middle East*. Texas, USA: University of Texas Press. P. 98.
- ⁵² See Barakat, Halim. 1993. *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp.7-9.
- See also Esposito, John L. 1984. *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. Pp.47-48.
- ⁵³ See Abaza, Mona. 2007. Op.cit. P.13.
- See also Vahdat, Farzin. 2003. *Critical Theory and the Islamic Encounter with Modernity in Islam and the West: Critical Perspectives on Modernity*. Michael J Thompson,ed.,Lanham,Maryland: Rowson and Littlefield Publication Group. P. 9.
- See further analysis by Ahmad, Aziz. 1967. *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964*. London: Oxford University Press. P. 127.
- Aziz Ahmad mentioned that the basic difference lay in the final aim and end of a reformism, which for Sayyid Ahmad Khan meant a final adjustment with the West, but for al-Afghani an eventual and inevitable confrontation with Western imperialism.*
- See also Ahmad, Aziz. 1969. *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Pp.55-56.
- Aziz pointed out that the disagreement between al-Afghani and Sayyid Ahmad Khan consists of three cardinal points;*
- ¹. *Al-Afghani did not agree with the extremist rationalism of at least some of Ahmad Khan's views, and regarded his new 'ilm al-kalam as a heresy in so far as it seemed to falsify the words of the Quran.*

²He regarded Ahmad Khan's religious views and his educational programme as ancillaries to his political servitude to British interests in India, whereas al-Afghani himself was bitterly anti-British.

³As a logical consequence of the second point, he saw Ahmad Khan as his main adversary in India, opposed to Pan-Islamism, isolating the Indian Muslims from the rest of Dar al-Islam, especially from the Turks, and hostile to the conception of a universal Muslim Khilafat.

See also, Habib, Irfan, S. 1997. *Reconciling Science with Islam in 19th century India*. This article was presented at the *International Congress of History of Science* in July 1997 at Liege, Belgium.
SAGE:<http://www.sagepublications.com>. Pp.80-82.

Habib describes al-Afghani stand by saying: It is particularly interesting to explore Afghani's views on science and modernity because, in contrast to reconstructionists such as Syed Ahmad Khan, al-Afghani did not make a serious attempt to reinterpret Muslim theology. His central concern was the mobilisation of people against Western colonialism, and Islam seemed the most potent rallying force for this purpose. His advocacy of modernity was also marked by caution. He never emphasised the Western origins of the elements he borrowed, for fear that it might encourage a trend of admiration for the West and feelings of Islamic inferiority and helplessness. Habib emphasized that al-Afghani, however, was convinced that Islam was the closest of all religions to science and knowledge, and that there was no incompatibility between them.

54 See Bender, David. 2004. In website, <http://homepage.mac.com.pdf>. pp.42-43.

See also Tauber, Eliezer. 1994. "Three Approaches, One Idea: Religion and State in the Thought of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Najib Azuri and Rashid Rida." In *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.21, no.2 (1994). P.193.

See also Michelangelo Guida. 2011. *Al-Afghānī and Namik Kemal's Replies to Ernest Renan: Two Anti-Westernist Works in the Formative Stage of Islamist Thought*. in *Turkish Journal of Politics* Vol. 2 No. 2 Winter 2011. Pp.59-61.

According to Michelangelo Guida which as for the second point, the one where Renan showed his belief in racial theories, al-Afghānī stated that Greek and Persian contribution to the development of Muslim sciences was immense. At the same time, though, 'these sciences, which they usurped by right of conquest, they developed, extended, clarified, perfected, completed and coordinated with a perfect taste and rare precision and exactitude'. Europeans learned from the Arabs the philosophy of Aristotle, 'who had emigrated and become Arab'. This proves the fact that Arabs have a natural attachment to science and philosophy even if they fall into ignorance and into religious fanaticism.

55 See Hourani. 1962. op. cit. p.112.

See also Keddie. 1968. op.cit. P. 184.

56 See Safi, Louay. 1995. "From Reform to Revolution: a Critical Reading of the Political Discourse and Actions of the Islamic Movement in Egypt". In *Intellectual Discourse*, 1995, Vol. 3, No. 1. .Pp. 17-19.
http://Isinsight.org/articles/1998_Before/Reform.htm

57 See Ernest Renan's lecture "Islam and Science" was delivered at the Sorbonne and subsequently published in the *Journal des Débats* on 29 March 1883. In Keddie. 1972. op cit. p. 189.

58 See al-Afghani: "Reply to the Lecture of Renan." In *Journal des Débats*, 18 May 1883, In Keddie. 1972. op. cit. Pp. 189-190.

59 See Malik, Saeed, 2011. *Muslim Political Thought during the Colonial Period*. In *Renaissance : A Monthly Islamic Journal Pakistan*. No. 2, 2011. Pp. 5-6.
<http://www.monthly-renaissance.com/issue/content.aspx?id=973>.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

This is a study of a response made by Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani or Asadabadi to Renan's critical views of Islam and science. Renan had claimed that Islam was similar to other religions that resisted scientific development and modernity. It, in actual fact, is a representation of the West 19th century modern thought that depict an endless and continuous covert mission of The Post Crusade War.¹ This is a phenomenon known as The Post Medieval Europe that witnesses a high-octane deliberation of thoughts and mind games between Islam and the West which has in the end, contributed to colonialism and imperialism by the latter. He firmly dismissed accusation by Renan as being absurd. Renan had likened Islam to other religions, particularly Christianity, which has stifled the development of science brought about by the Industrial Revolution, Renaissance and Enlightenment Age in 18th century. Worse still, the phenomenon has ruptured into a secular movement of the Positivism mainstream that was championed by Renan, whereby religions in Europe were isolated from scholastic practices, especially sciences and philosophies which were pioneered by Nicholas Copernicus, Galileo Galilee, Rene Descartes and August Comte. To an extent, claims by Renan were also closely associated to the Ethnocentrism dogma that sees the European ethnicity as superior, whilst achievements by other civilizations, namely Islamic Civilization that had conquered Spain and part of Europe for 741 years since its annexation of Spain in 711, as inferior. Thus, Renan had purportedly disclaimed the superiority of Islamic Civilization in Spain or Andalusía that had changed the Dark Age

landscape of Europe to that of The Enlightenment Age; a totally deplorable act for it has his study on Ibn Rusyd or Averroes, who was influential in the rise of rationality and modernity dogmas, which have had him conferred with the doctorate in philosophy. ²

Since al-Afghani was aware that Renan had grasped an abundant of knowledge about the Islamic civilization achievements through his studies, the former, in his response, had relently countered Renan's irrational claims by deliberating on Islamic philosophical and intellectual supremacy in his studies. He emphasized that the Islamic knowledge tradition with Arabic as its medium of instruction, has been the integral rudiment and central element that contributes to the supremacy of both science and civilization in Islam and among the Muslims. The Neo Muslim, despite its diversity that comprises the Arabs, Persians and Turkish and had once been under the siege of Roman and Persian Empires, later on became part of the Islamic territorial divides, and unite as an *Ummah*. To this, Al-Afghani has expounded at great length:

Besides, the French, the Germans, and the English were not so far from Rome and Byzantium as were the Arabs, whose capital was Baghdad. It was therefore easier for the former to exploit the scientific treasures that were buried in these two great cities. They made no effort in this direction until Arab civilization lit up with its reflections the summits of the Pyrénées and poured its light and riches on the Occident. The Europeans welcomed Aristotle, who had emigrated and become Arab; but they did not think of him at all when he was Greek and their neighbor. Is there not in this another proof, no less evident, of the intellectual superiority of the Arabs and of their natural attachment to philosophy? It is true that after the fall of the Arab kingdom in the Orient as in the Occident, the countries that had become great centers of science, like Iraq and Andalusia, fell again into ignorance and became the centers of religious fanaticism; but one cannot conclude from this sad spectacle that the scientific and philosophic progress of the Middle Ages was not due to the Arab people who ruled at that time. ³

Al-Afghani was adamant that the Muslim community held scholars and philosophers in high regard for they were the ones responsible in making the knowledge

culture of the Muslims more advanced than the Christians'. It was during the Renaissance whereby debates and rebuttals between the church and modernity enablers in Europe were at their utmost torrid moment. Eventually, Christianity was brought down to its knees and nearly disintegrated upon the dawn of the Enlightenment Age.

That aside, al-Afghani in many ways than not has since responded to Renan's assertion that most of the Muslim scientists and philosophers in the likes of Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Rusyd (Averroes) and Ibn Tufail were not Arabs. To Renan, only al-Kindi was the most outstanding among them; a claim that was vehemently refuted by Afghani. He wrote;

*As for Ibn-Bajja, Ibn-Rushd (Averroes), and Ibn-Tufail, one cannot say that they are not just as Arab as Al-Kindi because they were not born in Arabia, especially if one is willing to consider that human races are only distinguished by their languages and that if this distinction should disappear, nations would not take long to forget their diverse origins. The Arabs who put their arms in the service of the Muslim religion, and who were simultaneously warriors and apostles, did not impose their language on the defeated, and wherever they established themselves, they preserved it for them with a jealous care.*⁴

For all that matters, Islam unite them with Arabic as the medium of communication in their interactions and literary works. In fact, almost all of the Persian scholars mastered Arabic. Even in Andalusia, Arabic had been the *lingua franca* and integral factor that contributed to the rise of its scholastic ingenuity. Henceforth, founded on Islamic and Arabic virtues and in defiance of Renan's allegation, al-Afghani dedicated a time frame beginning from the year 775 until the middle of 13th century as the Golden Age of Islamic Intellectual:

What nobler mission for a people! But while recognizing that from about 775 C.E. to near the middle of the thirteenth century, that is to say during about 500 years, there were in Muslim countries very distinguished scholars and thinkers,

and that during this period the Muslim world was superior in intellectual culture to the Christian world, M. Renan has said that the philosophers of the first centuries of Islam as well as the statesmen who became famous in this period were mostly from Harran, from Andalusia, and from Iran. There were also among them Transoxianian and Syrian priests. I do not wish to deny the great qualities of the Persian scholars nor the role that they played in the Arab world; but permit me to say that the Harranians were Arabs and that the Arabs in occupying Spain and Andalusia did not lose their nationality; they remained Arabs. Several centuries before Islam, the Arabic language was that of the Harranians. The fact that they preserved their former religion, Sabaeism, does not mean they should be considered foreign to the Arab nationality. The Syrian priests were also for the most part Ghassanian Arabs converted to Christianity.⁵

In order to prove that Arabic was the language, cum culture of *al-Quran* and was responsible for the rise of the Muslim civilization particularly during The Expansion Age of Islam, al-Afghani insisted that the mastery of the language among the non Arab scholars was not due to their love and appreciation for *al-Quran* and Islam. It was because Arabic had been widely used even among the Persian scholars in their literary works. Thus, the statement below is a counter response to Renan's detrimental allegation which was filled with chauvinism, as well as one that belittle the Arabs and Muslim scholars in entirety;

*No doubt Islam, in penetrating the conquered countries with the violence that is known, transplanted there its language, its manners, and its doctrine, and these countries could not thenceforth avoid its influence. Iran is an example; but it is possible that in going back to the centuries preceding the appearance of Islam, one would find that the Arabic language was not then entirely unknown to Persian scholars. The expansion of Islam gave it, it is true, a new scope, and the Persian scholars converted to the Mohammadan faith thought it an honor to write their books in the language of the *Qur'an*. The Arabs cannot, no doubt, claim for themselves the glory that renders these writers illustrious, but we believe that they do not need this claim; they have among themselves enough celebrated scholars and writers.⁶*

Renan argued that it was the contributions of the non-Arabs like Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and al-Khawarizmi that developed the scientific mindset and knowledge of

rational in Muslim community, unlike the Arabs who could only have been obtrusive. This is undoubtedly a baseless claim. All the while, the Arabs have been renowned as avid and early supporters in the rise of Islamic knowledge tradition. They have, in the presence of Persians, Turkish and non-Arab Muslims during the Islamic territorial expansion age, particularly the Abbasid golden intellectual age, enriched and enhanced the Islamic intellectuals. Al-Afghani had worked in earnest to portray Islam as open and universal as it can be. It had even through the efforts put in by Arabs and non-Arab intellectuals assimilated the Greeks, Persians and Chinese knowledge culture. Yet, its intellectual fundamentals have always been based on *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* that even Western scholars like Rene Taton and Montgomery Watt have attested to. Taton had this affirmed through his book entitled *History of Science Ancient and Medieval Science from the Beginnings to 1450* ⁷ whilst Watt in his array of literatures, *The Majesty that was Islam, The Formative Period of Islamic Thought and Islamic Philosophy and Theology*.⁸ Another prominent orientalist, Richard Walzer in his book, *Greek into Arabic* ⁹ asserts that even though there was an inherent Greek influence in the Muslim thinking and philosophy, the classic tradition of Islam still has its own treasures of science and philosophy that form the core of the rise of science and philosophy in Islam. The same idea was also supported by al-Afghani in the answer to Renan that the true Islamic teachings on the back of *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah* never suppressed the rise of science and philosophy, but, in fact, developed and brought them to life. In reality, the main cause of deterioration of science and philosophy was mismanagement and the abuse of power by the ruling elite, i.e. the despotism that stunted and jolted the development of science and philosophy. This was the argument by al-Afghani as a rebuttal to Renan's claim that Islam (as opposed to Muslim leadership) was hostile to the development of science and rational knowledge. In this

regard, al-Afghani pointed out to the case of despotic Caliph al-Hadi (born: 147 AH [764 AD]; died: 170 AH [786 AD], the fourth Abbasid caliph who succeeded his father Al-Mahdi and ruled from 169 AH (785 AD) until his death in 170 AH (786 AD)), as follows:

*Al-Siuti tells that the Caliph al-Hadi put to death in Baghdad 5,000 philosophers in order to destroy sciences in the Muslim countries down to their roots. Admitting that this historian exaggerated the number of victims, nonetheless it remains established that this persecution took place, and it is a bloody stain for the history of a religion as it is for the history of a people.*¹⁰

Such incidents proved the oppressive act of the Caliph rather than of Islam's stance on science. In fact, another Abbasid Caliph such as al-Ma'mun (Born 786, Baghdad—died August 833 seventh Abbāsīd caliph (813–833), known for his attempts to end sectarian rivalry in Islām and to impose upon his subjects a rationalist Muslim creed) was supportive of science and philosophy. Tyranny and despotism phenomenon also occurred in the history of Christianity causing the power of religion to be excluded and marginalized from the West dominant society. This is what secularization at its utmost peak levels has created; Positivism that undermines religious values and divine. As al-Afghani explained:

I could find in the past of the Christian religion analogous facts. Religions, by whatever names they are called, all resemble each other. No agreement and no reconciliation are possible between these religions and philosophy. Religion imposes on man its faith and its belief, whereas philosophy frees him of it totally or in part. How could one therefore hope that they would agree with each other when the Christian religion, under the most modest and seductive forms, entered Athens and Alexandria, which were, as everyone knows, the two principal centers of science and philosophy, trying to stifle both under the bushes of theological discussions, to explain the inexplicable mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Transubstantiation? It will always be thus. Whenever religion will have the upper hand, it will eliminate philosophy; and the contrary occurs when it is philosophy that reigns as sovereign mistress. So long as humanity exists, the struggle will not cease between dogma and free investigation,

*between religion and philosophy; a desperate struggle in which, I fear, the triumph will not be for free thought, because the masses dislike reason, and its teachings are only understood by some intelligent members of the élite, and because, also, science, however beautiful it is, does not completely satisfy humanity, which thirsts for the ideal and which likes to exist in such dark and distant regions as the philosophers and scholars can neither perceive nor explore.*¹¹

If thoroughly examined, al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh followers in *al-Urwat ul-Wustha*, insisted that they have an idea to develop scientific and rational knowledge which can serve as a bridge to the progress of the *Ummah*. Al-Afghani and Abduh particularly have concluded that progress depends on three main factors, namely:

- i. the need to unify the nation and to avoid disintegration;
- ii. the need to enhance the appreciation of Islamic morals; and
- iii. the need to develop public education that integrates religious and intellectual knowledge.¹²

Both the reformists are in view that Islam urges its followers to be strong and great. In order to be excellent Muslims must master the knowledge that is capable of preparing munitions of war, military technology, biology, engineering, chemistry and rational knowledge, apart from their domination in various religious sciences.¹³

According to Muna Husain al-Dasuqi (1999) in *Al-Syaikh Mustafa al-Ghulayayni fi Mafahimuhu al-Islahiyyah Dirasah Muqaranah baynahu wa bayna Syaikhaini Jamal al-Din al-Afghani wa Muhammad 'Abduh*, reformist ideas or knowledge reform organized by al-Afghani were in no way against Western civilization for it is essential for the Muslims to acquire knowledge. Therefore, they can learn useful

European science, but not through ignorance (blind imitation). They need to master modern knowledge while adhering to the principles of Islam.¹⁴

Al-Afghani insisted that the aspirations of the Islamic worldview have become the axis of rational mastery of knowledge among Muslims since the beginning of their generation. This proves that Islam has never been hostile to science and its rationality is as asserted by him in the following statement:

*The first Muslims had no science, but, thanks to the Islamic religion, a philosophic spirit arose among them, and owing to that philosophic spirit they began to discuss the general affairs of the world and human necessities. This was why they acquired in a short time all the sciences with particular subjects that they translated from the Syrian, Persian, and Greek into the Arabic language at the time of Mansur Davanaqi.*¹⁵

It was argued by al-Afghani that Islam has never opposed science and philosophy. Truly so, the Arabs who were the first generation of the Islamic nation have not only developed the Revealed Knowledge, but they also have been championing the rationale sciences on the encouragement of *al-Quran* and *al-Sunnah*. In this regard Hans Daiber defended al-Afghani's stand on scholars of the early generations of Islam, especially the Arabs, who also have supported the advancement of science and philosophy. He put forward the following statement:

*According to him the Arabs had developed the transmitted sciences, improved and accomplished them. Even the Arab interest in Aristotle is evidence of their intellectual superiority and their natural sympathy for philosophy. Al-Afghani is giving us here a correct evaluation of the role of Islam. However, in his opinion reconciliation between religion and philosophy or sciences is not possible; neither religion nor free thought would be victorious.*¹⁶

Al-Afghani did not directly argue about the role of religious values or ideas of *Samawi truth* or *the Transcendental Truth* on science and rational knowledge, though.

In this context, al-Afghani, in his lecture "*The Benefits of Philosophy*" used the term "*Precious Book*" to refer to the primary source of science and philosophy. Among other things he explained:

Therefore, notwithstanding the glory, splendor, and greatness of Islam and the Muslims, in order to exalt and elevate knowledge, they lowered their heads and showed humility before the lowers of their subjects, who were the Christians, Jews, and Magians, until, with their help, they translated the philosophical sciences from Persian, Syrian, and Greek into Arabic. Hence it becomes clear that Precious Book was the first teacher of philosophy to the Muslims.¹⁷

Seyyed Hossein Nasr has argued on Islamic ideas of science which was in line al-Afghani's statements.. As such, Islamic aspirations of science or Islamic worldview on science reject any form of secularization with religion or faith befitting science and philosophy. It is coherent, compatible and so well-gelled that it cannot be separated or marginalized. Islam discards the idea of marginalization of religion from science. This is formulated as *The Marginality Thesis*.

This is what S.H. Nasr has asserted in his book, *The Encounter of Man and Nature*. To him, even though the Scientific Revolution did not occur in Islamic Civilization, it still does not signify backwardness. As a matter of fact, this showcases more about Islamic ideas on science. Thus, it contradicts the definitive aspiration of modern science of sheer human existence. As S.H. Nasr explained:

the fact that modern science could not develop in Islam is not a sign of decadence; it is a result of the Islamic idea of science: knowledge in Islam is not secular knowledge and differs from what modern science conceived to be the ultimate goal of human existence.¹⁸

Strictly speaking, the various branches of Islamic science are not just profitable to the community but across the whole of human life in meeting their basic needs and

their spiritual life, especially in the hereafter. As expressed by S.H. Nasr in his *Islam and Modern Science*, and in his book, *Science and Civilization in Islam*:

*to relate the corporeal world to its basic spiritual principle through the knowledge of those symbols which unite the various orders of reality.*¹⁹

Al-Afghani tried in earnest to show Muslims' openness towards science, philosophy and modernity currents that swept the world when he was confronted with Positivist figures, such as Renan in Paris in 1883. He was up till then, not apologetic to Western Civilization. This is due to his belief that the approach of the modern rationalist and scientific discovery can be used to develop Islamic nation, as long as Muslims hold to the principles of Islam. He considered the approach to reform or to implement *islah* for the development of Muslims was performed simultaneously with efforts to defend Islam from Western imperialism power threat. In other words, it should be both internal reform and external defence of the *Ummah*. To this, al-Afghani insists Muslims to interact with the European intellectual community that has dominated modern science, provided that the basis and principles of Islam are maintained.

Regarding this, Roxanne L. Euben has commented on the reform movement approach (*islah/tajdid*) undertaken by al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh to face the challenges of European science and modernity, as follows:

Modernists such as the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and his sometime mentor and collaborator Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (al-Asadabadi, d. 1897) shared a conviction that modern rationalist methods and the scientific discoveries they produce would be essential to the strength and survival of the Islamic community. Yet they witnessed firsthand the ways in which rationalism could serve as the handmaiden of Western arguments about Muslim backwardness and thus justify European hegemony. The challenge was to sever the association of science and Western power, and to draw upon Islamic history

*to demonstrate that in al-Afghani's words, science is a "noble thing that has no connection with any nation....everything that is known by science, and every nation that becomes renowned through science. Men must be related to science, not science to men."*²⁰

On the whole, al-Afghani deplored a conflict between science and religion. Despite his ambivalence or uncertain attitude, such as his proposed radical rationalism stand, he, at the same time called on the Muslims to back the true teachings of the Quran.²¹ This indicates the elasticity or flexibility attitude of al-Afghani in different situations. He had compromised when dealing with Renan in Paris because he wanted to put forward the ideas of openness and universality of Islam. In doing so, he strived hard to maintain the dynamism of Islam and the Arabs who were underestimated by Ernest Renan. Then again, he was steadfast on the calling for Muslims to firmly uphold the *Quran* and the *Sunnah* while he is in Egypt, Turkey, India, Afghanistan, Sudan and Iran.

These continual and relentless efforts were reported by the followers of Muhammad al-Makhzumi who have studied al-Afghani's pursuit to transform the beliefs pertaining to Islam and its religious practices as opposed to Renan's impulsiveness in *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Husayni*.²² In his exchange with Renan, Al-Afghani confronted Renan's thesis that Arabs, by nature of their race, society and religion, have always been incapable of developing rational thought (i.e., science and philosophy). While the Islamic world was under developed in scientific advancement and rational thought, al-Afghani countered that this has not always been the case. He asserted that Renan's thesis was unscientific because it did not take into consideration the fact that all religious institutions have opposed free-thought at some point in their history. In the last section of his response, al-Afghani pondered why a decline in the

Islamic civilization has occurred. It is permissible, however, to ask oneself why Arab and Islamic civilization, after having thrown such a live light on the world, suddenly became extinguished. Why hasn't this torch been relit since; and why the Arab and Islamic world still remain buried in profound darkness. The fault for such a decline, al-Afghani believed, lies with religious scholars (*'ulama*) as they were the ones who prevented sciences from flourishing separately from the influences of religious orthodoxy. The *'ulama* had actively maintained a traditional fusion of science and religion, free-thought and blind following. Al-Afghani's discussion on what made the Islamic civilization declined had influenced the theological and philosophical discourse of the nineteenth century.

In order to understand the reform movement in 19th century, it is necessary to explore al-Afghani's reasons for blaming the religious scholars for such a civilization decline. Specifically, I will investigate al-Afghani's quizzical conclusion that the tensions which differentiate religion from philosophy cannot be remedied. It is my belief that al-Afghani's conclusions can be easily understood when put into the context of his life, work and intellectual ideas on civilization progress. Today, al-Afghani is popularly viewed as a controversial figure due to his status as a charismatic political activist and anti-imperialist, his acceptance of Western modernism and modern science to aide in an internal Islamic reform, as well as the seemingly contradictory messages present in his lectures and publications. It is worth noting that al-Afghani did not accept a wholesale adoption of Western beliefs and values; rather, he opted for the reintroduction of sciences, reason and philosophy, found in Europe, into Islamic discourse. Al-Afghani believed that these endeavors were not foreign to Islam, but were natural to it.

Al-Afghani blamed a combination of foreign domination, despotic rulers and retrogressive religious leaders and scholars for the abandonment and loss of the free-thought that had contributed to the Golden Age of Islam. He argued that it was essential for the *'ulama* to open the gates of *ijtihad*. The emphasis religious scholars placed on old, outdated interpretations of the *Quran* and the *Sunnah* was detrimental to the health of the Islamic civilization.

The most intriguing part of al-Afghani's focus on the decline of Islamic civilization, has not on who he blamed had, but on how he proposed to reverse that decline. From this perspective, an observer can accurately dissect the mechanisms which influenced al-Afghani's ideas about civilization decline. It reveals that al-Afghani was not simply criticizing religious orthodoxy in the Muslim world in his exchange with Renan; rather, he was criticizing the way in which the *'ulama* used religious orthodoxy as a means to maintain intellectual stagnation. As a result, the innovation of absolute monarchy was easily co-opted into the political system of the Islamic civilization and defended by the *'ulama* as being Islamic. It is apparent that the sanction on philosophical endeavors was the root of decay in Islamic religion and society; it was to this purpose that al-Afghani pointed his criticism against Renan.

NOTES

- 1 See Muhammad al-'Arus al-Matwi. 1998. *Al-Hurub al-Salibiyyah fi al-Masyriq wa al-Maghrib*. Translated to Malay Language by Ahmad Asri Lubis. Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Syuhada' . Pp. 43-66.
- 2 See Renan, Ernest, 1866. *Averroes et L'Averroisme Essai Historique*, Paris: Michel Levy Freres Libraires Editeurs.Reprinted by Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zurich and New York, 1986. P.i.
- 3 See al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din. *Answer of Jamal ad-Din to Renan. Journal des Debats*, May 18, 1883 in Keddie R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*. Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press. P.185.
- 4 Op.cit. Pp. 185-186.
- 5 Op. cit. P. 185.
- 6 Op. cit. P. 186.
- 7 See Taton,Rene. 1963. *History of Science Ancient and Medieval Science from the Beginnings to 1450.ed. translated to English by A.J. Pomerans.New York:Basic Books Inc. P.386.*
- 8 See Watt, Montgomery. 1974. *The Majesty that was Islam. The Islamic World*,661-1100. London:Sidgwick & Jackson.Pp. 136-137.

_____. 1973. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* . Edinburgh:Edinburgh University Press. Pp. 204-205.

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- 9 See Walzer, Richard. 1962. *Greek into Arabic* . Oxford:Bruno Cassirer Ltd. Pp. 1-3.
- 10 See al-Afghani. *Answer of Jamal ad-Din to Renan*. In Keddie R. Nikki. 1968. op.cit. P.187.
- 11 Ibid. P. 187
- 12 See al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din and Muhammad 'Abduh. 1983. *Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa*. Bayrut: Dar al-kitab al-'Arabi. Pp. 53-57.
- 13 op. cit. pp. 63-69.
- 14 See al.Dasuqi, Muna, Husain. 1999. *Al-Syaikh Mustafa al-Ghulayayni fi Mafahimuhu al-Islahiyyah Dirasah Muqaranah baynahu wa bayna Syaikhaini Jamal al-Din al-Afghani wa Muhammad 'Abduh*. Bayrut: al-Maktabah al-'Asriyyah. P. 96.
- 15 See al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din. *Lecture on Teaching and Learning* in Keddie R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*. Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press. P.105.
- 16 See Daiber,Hans. 1994. "Science and Technology versus Islam:A Controversy from Renan and Afghani to Nasr and Needham and its Historical Background, " in *Journal for the History of Arabic Science*. Vol.10,1994. P. 120.

- ¹⁷ See al-Afghani, Sayyid Jamal al-Din. *The Benefits of Philosophy* in Keddie R. Nikki. 1968. *An Islamic Response to Imperialism Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*. Berkeley and Los Angeles : University of California Press. P. 114.
- ¹⁸ See Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1968. *The Encounter of Man and Nature*. London: George Allen & Unwin. P. 97.
- ¹⁹ _____. 1982. *Islam and Modern Science in Islam and Contemporary Society*. London: George Allen and Unwin. Pp. 117-190.
- ²⁰ _____. 1968. *Science and Civilization in Islam*. With a preface by Giorgio de Santillana. Cambridge: Harvard University Press & Oxford University Press. P. 40.
- ²¹ See Euben, L. Roxanne, 2003. *A Counternarrative of Shared Ambivalence : Some Muslim and Western Perspectives on Science and Reason*, http://commonknowledge.dukejournals.org/cgi/pdf_extract/9/1/50, *Commonknowledge*, 2003, Volume 9, Number 1, Winter 2003, Duke University Press. Pp.57-58.
- ²² See al-Makhzumi, Muhammad. 1931. *Khatirat Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Husayni*. Bayrut : al-Matba'ah al-'Ilmiyyah li Yusuf Sadir. P. 88.

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- Ernest Renan in *Journal des Debats*, 19 May. 1883; this article is reprinted as an Appendix to Renan's lecture, "*L'Islamisme et la science*" In his *Discours et Conferences*. Paris, 1887.
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