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School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion

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Supervisor: Dr. Jabal Buaben
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Submitted by: Emrah Çelik
ID Number: 1048533

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***Tajdid* (Renewal) - A Critical study of the term in Islamic thought with special reference to al-Ghazali and Muhammad ‘Abduh**

1. Introduction

Islam was revealed in the sixth century and it has continued to expand since the beginning. Islam is not only a moral system, nor only a judicial system. It is a comprehensive religion that has its own jurisprudence, moral principles, philosophy, and belief system. In terms of its comprehensiveness, it is a unique religion. However, even though it firstly addresses human beings in general some aspects are related to the specific circumstances of the people of the sixth century. So it could be argued that the verses and *Ahadith* that are related to the first Islamic century do not primarily speak to people of other centuries. And secondly, due to the constant changes in society, people and their understanding of religion and their feelings about religious values change in course of time. These facts necessitate two kinds of duties: one of them is to renew the religious values and rules that are responses to historical needs with regard to the new conditions and circumstances. The second duty is to renew the understanding and feeling of the people of the time about the religion, while having regard to specific unchangeable religious values. This also necessitates separating the changeable rulings of the religion and the unchangeable rulings and values, and setting up new rules. In Islam, this work is known as *ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is a very comprehensive work and it is related to all the areas of Islam, such as the Qur’an, *Sunnah*, history, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and logic. In this work, we will look at these areas and their relations with *ijtihad*.

In Islamic literature, the aforementioned duties have been called by different names, such as *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform). These two key terms are generally used interchangeably and derived from the Qur’an and *Sunnah*.

1.1. The objectives

In our study, we will explore in some detail the term *tajdid* and its relationship with such central Islamic concepts as *ijtihad* (reasoning) and *taqlid* (imitation).

Our second objective will be to explore the main themes of *tajdid* that have been argued upon by almost all scholars pursuing a renewal agenda in Islamic thought. These main themes may best be considered under three main headings: (a) return to and application of

the basic sources, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*; (b) the need for independent analysis (*ijtihad*) and reaffirmation of the authenticity and uniqueness of the Qur'anic experience and principles; (c) rejection of alien ideas and principles incompatible with the core values of Islam.

The third goal of this study will be to show the relationship between *tajdid* and such essential areas of Islamic studies as for example, the relationship between the Qur'anic sciences and *tajdid*; Hadith and *tajdid*; and Islamic jurisprudence and *tajdid*. At the same time we will look in some detail at Islamic sciences, such as *Tafsir* (the science of interpretation of the Qur'an), *al-Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (the purposes of Islamic law), and *al-Masalih al-Mursala* (public interests).

According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the most successful and influential representatives of *tajdid* movements are al-Ghazali in the classical period and Muhammad 'Abduh in the modern period. Our final objective is to research these two most renowned and influential figures in this field.

1.2. Definitions of the key terms

1.2.1. *Tajdid* (Renewal) and *Islah* (Reform)

In Arabic, *tajdid* is derived from the verb 'jad-da-da' meaning 'to renew'. The *Mujaddid* is the person who does this work 'the renewer'. *Tajdid* (renewal) is based on a *hadith* (tradition/saying) of the Prophet Muhammad: "Allah will raise for this community at the end of every hundred years the one who will renovate its religion for it."¹ Although there have been some different views on the details of this *hadith*, the general meaning has remained remarkably steady. It is certain that there will be some changes in society in the course of time. Some of these changes are necessary and the Muslim scholars who are equipped with essential knowledge and experience renew the rulings of the religion according to the new circumstances. Other kinds of changes in society are seen as harmful for religion and society and *mujaddidun*, exercising *ijtihad*, reveal the unchangeable religious values and endeavour to change their societies according to these values.

In Arabic, *Islah* is derived from 'sa-la-ha' and is translated into English as 'reform'. 'Sa-la-ha' literally means 'correct, amend, straighten.'² In the Qur'an, *islah* is used as a term describing

¹ Abu Dawud al-Sijistani, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Daru Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 1997, Volume 4, Hadith no. 3291, pp. 313

² Merad, Ali, 'Islah', in: *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, TDV Yayinlari, İstanbul, 1999, vol. 19, pp. 143

the struggling of the prophets and other righteous people to amend their societies and to call them to God's straight path. There are many verses in the Qur'an using this term.³ For example, God says that "Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrong-doing, if its members were likely to mend."⁴ "This Qur'anic mandate [*islah/reform*]", says John L. Esposito, "... epitomized in the lives and preaching of the prophets, especially that of Muhammad, coupled with God's command to enjoin good and prohibit evil (3:104, 110), provides the time-honored rationale for Islamic reformism, however diverse its manifestations in history."⁵ *Tajdid* and *islah* are used interchangeably, as already mentioned, and according to Voll, "Together they reflect a continuing tradition of revitalization of Islamic faith and practice within the historic communities of Muslims."⁶

1.2.2. The Qur'an

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam. According to Islamic belief, the Qur'an was revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad orally through the angel Jibril (Gabriel). Beginning in 610 CE, when the prophet was in his forty, and concluding in 632, the year of the Prophet's death. The Qur'an, unquestionably, is the main source of what all Muslims see as divine guidance and reliable direction for all humanity. The Qur'an presents religious and moral principles to guide human beings. It also contains judicial rulings and theological teachings in order to correct the wrong beliefs of other religions, as well as to respond to the needs of the society of the Prophet's time, and to establish an ideal community in the world. Although some verses are seen as related only to the society of the time, like emancipating slaves, the majority of Muslims believe that those verses have underlying principles and values that can be used and applied to Muslim societies at all times.⁷ One of the most important features of the Qur'an is that it is the last of the books revealed by God to human beings, as well as the Prophet Muhammad being the last prophet sent to humanity. Therefore, according to Islamic belief, the Qur'anic message addresses all human beings and societies from the beginning of Islam to the day of judgement. This is not the same for the other religions,

³ For example, Qur'an, 7:170; 11:117; 28:19

⁴ Qur'an, 11:117; All the translations of the verses in this dissertation are from: Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'an: Text - Translation and Commentary*, The Islamic Foundation, UK, 1975

⁵ Esposito, John L., *Islam – The Straight Path*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 115-116

⁶ Voll, John O., 'Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*', *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (Edited by J. L. Esposito), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 32

⁷ Rahman, Fazlur, *Islam*, Translated into Turkish by M. Aydin & M. Dag, Ankara Okulu Yayinlari, Ankara, 2000, p. 88

prophets and books: they were sent to particular societies⁸ and abrogated by Islam and the Qur'anic message.⁹

1.2.3. The *Sunnah* and *Bid'ah*

'Sunnah' literally means "... a clear path or a beaten track but it has also been used to imply normative practice or an established course of conduct. It may be conduct that sets a good example or a bad, and it may be set by an individual, a sect or a community."¹⁰ For the opposite of '*sunnah*', '*bid'ah*' is generally used. *Bid'ah* means "... innovation, which is characterized by lack of precedent and continuity with the past."¹¹ After the advent of Islam, the word '*Sunnah*' had a special meaning referring to the Prophet Muhammad's track record, namely his deeds (*fi'l*), statements (*qawl*) and approvals (*taqrir*).

In different sciences of Islam, *Sunnah* has different meanings according to its function in those sciences. For example, according to the scholars of Hadith, "*Sunnah* refers to all that is narrated from the Prophet, his acts, his sayings and whatever he has tacitly approved, plus all the reports which describe his physical attributes and character."¹² However, in the area of Islamic jurisprudence, "*Sunnah* refers to a source of the *Shari'ah* and a legal proof next to the Qur'an."¹³

The Qur'an and *Sunnah* are generally known as the two basic revealed sources of Islam with a small distinction: while the former is the direct revelation, the latter is the indirect one. For this reason, the Qur'an is called '*al-wahy al-matluw*', namely the revelation recited in the ritual prayers, while *Sunnah* is called '*al-wahy ghair al-matluw*', the revelation not recited in the ritual prayers. Al-Ghazali explains this close relationship saying: "God does not have two words, one in the Qur'anic style which we are bidden to recite publicly, and called the Qur'an, while the other word is not Qur'an. God has but one word that differs only in the mode of its expression. On occasions God indicates His word by the Qur'an; on others, by

⁸ Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Isma'il, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Bayt al-Afkar al-Duwaliyya li al-Nashr, Riyadh, 1998, 'Kitab al-Tayammum', Hadith no. 330, p. 86

⁹ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, Dar Tayyibah, Riyadh, 2006, 'Kitab al-Iman', Hadith no. 153, vol. 1, p. 80; Qur'an, 3:19, 85

¹⁰ Kamali, Mohammad Hashim, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge, 2003, p. 58

¹¹ Ibid, p. 58

¹² Ibid, p. 61

¹³ Ibid, p. 61

words in another style, not publicly recited, and called the Prophetic tradition. Both are mediated by the Prophet.”¹⁴

2. Main themes of *tajdid*

In the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims could easily ask their questions related to religious affairs to the prophet and get their answers immediately or in a short time.¹⁵ There was no need for them to doubt the answer, because the Qur’an and the prophet were the main authorities on such matters. As the Qur’an points out, “It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.”¹⁶ After the prophet, if Muslims had any problem or controversy they conveyed it to the caliphs and the caliphs gave decisions after a consultation with other reliable Successors (*ashab*). This condition continued until the death of the third caliph, ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan. After that tragedy, Muslim society witnessed different kinds of controversies, and social and political problems. The problem of caliphate, unrighteous rulers, the question of supreme sin and the status of its perpetrator, man’s independence in willing and doing, the issue of the Quran being created or uncreated etc. are some of the best-known examples among these problems. Another significant problem was the penetration of alien ideas into Islamic thought through, for example, Persians, Manichee sectaries and Yazidis.¹⁷ Expansion of the Islamic state and conversion of people from various nations to Islam brought a new challenge to the Muslim community (*ummah*). The new Muslims had new circumstances and questions, which were not explicitly considered in the Qur’an and *Sunnah*. They needed to find right answers to be able to live Islam. These problems are not unique and not special to the second and third Islamic centuries of Muslims. On the contrary, as we will see, Muslims have come across these kinds of challenges in all centuries in their history. *Tajdid* movements and *mujaddidun* have struggled with these matters and tried to find proper solutions for their own societies, their own

¹⁴ Ghazali, *al-Mustasfa*, 1.125; in: Peters, F. E., *A Reader on Classical Islam*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1994, p. 220

¹⁵ For example, see *al-Surah al-Mujaadilah* in the Qur’an

¹⁶ The Qur’an, 33:36

¹⁷ ‘Abduh, Muhammad, *The Theology of Unity*, Translated by I. Musa’ad & K. Cragg, G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1966, p. 35

conditions, and their own times. Looking at their acts we can find themes common to them all.

2.1. Returning to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*

As we said above, according to Islamic belief, the Qur'an is the last of the books revealed from God, and the Prophet Muhammad is the last messenger sent by God. All the other books, such as Torah, Psalms, and all the other prophets, Adam, Moses, David, were sent to particular societies (*umam*) and were abrogated with the Islamic message. The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad, on the contrary, were sent to all human beings as long as the earth and humanity exists. This means that the book and messenger of Islam will be the ultimate guidance for humanity. The prophet repeated this doctrine in his farewell sermon in 632 CE saying that "O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O People, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Qur'an and my example, the *Sunnah* and if you follow these you will never go astray."¹⁸ Over the time, with new problems and circumstances, such as those mentioned above, people may easily stray from the path and principles of Islam and all the *mujaddidun* in history tried to turn peoples' understanding and feelings to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. They did not try to amend the religion itself, on the contrary, they endeavoured to correct their understanding of religion and establish their societies according to the original Qur'anic message and the example of the Prophet Muhammad. According to Erol Gungor, *mujaddidun* (Ibn Hazm, Ibn Hajar, al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyya etc.) did not only regard the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as the sources of their thought. Additionally, they considered the opinions of the first, second and third generations of Muslims (*salaf*).¹⁹ When Muslims talk about *salaf*, they mean Muslims of the first century and their Islamic thought and life. It is generally believed by almost all *mujaddidun* that their understanding and feeling for Islam was pure and all Muslims need to try to regulate their own thought and life according to those of the *salaf*. For this reason, from the classical era (e.g. Ibn Taymiyya) to the modern era (such as the disciple of Muhammad 'Abduh, Rashid Rida), some *mujaddidun* are generally called as "*salafiyya*" as well.

Returning to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* began particularly strongly in the third Islamic century. Voll explains this saying that "By the beginning of the third Islamic century, the

¹⁸ Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad, *al-Siyra al-Nabawiyya*, Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiya, Beirut, 2004, vol. 2, p, 670-671

¹⁹ Gungor, Erol, *Islam'in Bugunku Meseleleri*, Otuken Nesriyat, Istanbul, 2005, p. 8-9

perceptions of the life of the Prophet had become sufficiently codified for teachers like Ahmad ibn Hanbal to call for a strict adherence to the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet. ... He could reject the earlier alternatives of simple personal opinion and other methods and he criticized local traditions of practice and legal interpretations that had developed in the various parts of the Islamic world."²⁰ Voll also says that declaring the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the main sources is one of the common attributes of renewalist reformists. He gives another example citing a statement of Muhammad al-Shawkani (1172-1250 A.H./1758-1834 A.D.), a scholar from Yemen thus: "[There is] the pure path of the Qur'an and the pure Sunna of the Messenger of God, ... there is no third like them."²¹

2.2. The need for *ijtihad* and abstaining from *taqlid*

Ijtihad has a very important place in Islamic jurisprudence (*Shari'a*) because it renders its continuation possible until the end of the world. Muhammad Hashim Kamali divides the sources of Islamic jurisprudence into two categories, "revealed" and "nonrevealed", and, after he declares that the nonrevealed sources are generally based on *ijtihad*. He then gives a definition and explanation of it: "[*Ijtihad*] literally means 'striving.' It is defined as exertion by a qualified scholar to the best of his or her ability to deduce the ruling of a particular issue from the evidence found in the sources. Unlike the revelation of the Qur'an and the Sunna, which ended with the Prophet's death, juristic reasoning continues to be the principle source and instrument that keeps the law consistent with the realities of social change."²²

The *mujtahid* (scholar who carries out *ijtihad*) derives the rulings of Islamic jurisprudence on particular matters from the sources. With *ijtihad*, the *mujtahid* cannot judge if there is an apparent rule in the Qur'an or in the *Sunnah*, however, when the ruling of the sources is not obvious or if there is no ruling on the issue, the *mujtahid*, regarding the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*), can use his or her own reasoning and issue a decree. Although the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* have rulings on various issues, they were not consistently arranged. Some rules are given indirectly, some of them are not obvious and, as al-Shatibi

²⁰ ²⁰ Voll, John O., 'Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*', *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (Edited by J. L. Esposito), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 39

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kamali, M. Hashim, 'Law and Society', *The Oxford History of Islam*, Ed. By J. L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 118, 121

(790/1350) pointed out, Islamic jurisprudence does not provide rulings for all particular issues, rather it mostly gives general principles that encompass numerous issues.²³

There is a close relationship between *tajdid* and *ijtihad*, or *mujaddid* and *mujtahid*, however, is it obligatory for a *mujaddid* to be a *mujtahid* as well, and vice versa? It is obvious that all the *mujaddidun* are not also *mujtahidun*, and all the *mujtahidun* are not also *mujaddidun*. Nevertheless, when we look at the renewal movements or reformist scholars (such as al-Shafi'i, Hasan al-Basri, al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyya, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti et al) and their functions in history, it is certain that *ijtihad* has a vitally important place. Although it is not strictly obligatory, says Kurucan, being a *mujtahid* at the same time is a "preferred" qualification.²⁴

These two main themes of *tajdid* movements might be surprising due to their seeming contradistinction. Because, on the one hand, *mujaddidun* emphasize the strict adherence to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, which emerged AD 610-632, they also emphasize personal reasoning (*ijtihad*) insistently, on the other. Although they are expected to be traditionalists or conservatives at first view, they are not. According to Voll, resolving this 'problem' is possible. He explains: "This "paradox" is resolved by viewing such contemporary currents from the perspective of the broader context of *tajdid* and *islah* in Islam. This mode of Islam is willing to use the Qur'an and Sunna as a standard by which to judge traditional and current institutions and, when they are found wanting, to oppose them. This *ijtihad* does not necessarily mean an attempt to recreate the conditions of the seventh-century Arabian Peninsula. Even the most naïve renewer goes beyond that. What this *ijtihad* means is using individual effort to apply the Qur'an and the Sunna to existing conditions."²⁵

The development of Islamic jurisprudence is generally divided into six periods:²⁶

- 1) 610-632: The prophetic period
- 2) 632-661: The era of the Prophet's Companions (*Ashab*)
- 3) 661-750: The era of the Successors (*Tabi'in*)
- 4) 750-950: The era of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*)

²³ Karaman, Hayrettin, *Islam Hukukunda Ictihad*, DIB Yayinlari, Ankara, 1971, p. 27

²⁴ Kurucan, Ahmet, <http://zaman.com.tr/yazar.do?yazino=968018>, 01.04.2010

²⁵ Voll, John O., 'Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*', *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (Edited by J. L. Esposito), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 40

²⁶ Kamali, M. Hashim, 'Law and Society', *The Oxford History of Islam*, p. 111-116

- 5) 950-20th century: The era of imitation (*taqlid*), following precedent, and the institutionalized schools (*madhahib*)
- 6) 20th century-...: The revival of original thinking and independent reasoning.

Karaman, in his *Islam Hukuk Tarihi* (The History of Islamic Jurisprudence)²⁷ designates these stages, with some difference in the dates, as the birth of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), the developmental stage, maturity, stagnation, recession, and the period of revival.

As can be seen in the above classification, the period of stagnation lasted a very long time and, the revivalist movements since the dawn of the twentieth century struggled to open the gate of *ijtihad* again, as in the first three centuries of Islam. This reformist struggle that began with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97) and his disciples Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935), has been growing increasingly. These scholars’ call to open the gate of *ijtihad*, which was alleged close, and to abandon blind imitation (*taqlid*) has influenced Muslims comprehensively in all Muslim countries.²⁸

2.3. Reaffirmation of authenticity of the Islamic message

The third common feature of the reformists in the classical and modern periods is their efforts to demonstrate and protect the uniqueness and authenticity of the Islamic message. All of them have emphasized the perfection of Islam as a religion, an ethic, and a juristic, social and political system.²⁹

In Islamic belief, the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* are impeccable in terms of their authenticity, and they are universal guidance from God to all human beings. As we mentioned above, these features are peculiar to Islam. As Voll declares, “In this context, *ijtihad* may be necessary in order to determine the proper application of the Qur’anic message in changing circumstances, but this, in the tradition *tajdid-islah*, need not, and must not, involve borrowing from non-Islamic traditions as a way of adding to basic Islamic principles.”³⁰ From the beginning till now, almost all Muslim scholars have been sensitive to this issue. Protecting the purity of the Islamic message has been a vitally important aim of *mujaddidun*. We can easily see this when we look at the lives of people such as Hasan al-Basri (d. 737), al-

²⁷ Karaman, Hayrettin, *Islam Hukuk Tarihi*, İz Yayincılık, İstanbul, 1999

²⁸ Kamali, M. Hashim, *Shari’ah Law*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2008, p. 171

²⁹ Merad, Ali, ‘*Islah*’, *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, TDV Yayinlari, İstanbul, 1999, vol. 19, pp. 152

³⁰ Voll, John O., ‘Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*’, *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (Edited by J. L. Esposito), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 41

Shafi'i (d. 820), al-Ash'ari (d. 936), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), al-Sirhindi (d. 1624), Shehu Uthman dan Fodio (d. 1817), Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) and so forth. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) is the best-known of the scholars, who demanded preservation of the purity of the Islamic message from alien ideas and customs, attacking Muslim philosophers, theologians, mystics and Isma'ilis. In subsequent chapters of this work, we will go more deeply into his Muhammad 'Abduh's life, thought and activities in order to pursue this matter further.

As Muhammad 'Abduh said "Unity was the great aim of the mission of the Prophet Muhammad ..." ³¹, the unity of God (*tawhid*) is the central and vital message of Islam, ³² because of this, renewalist scholars have always put a special emphasis on this in all its aspects. Explaining the significance of *tawhid*, 'Abduh said: "... Islamic religion is a religion of unity throughout. It is not a religion of conflicting principles but is built squarely on reason, while Divine revelation is its surest pillar. Whatever is other than these must be understood as contentious and inspired by Satan or political passions." ³³ Renewalist scholars have emphasized the universality of Islam, the independence of reason, and the calling of people to God and to the message of His religion. ³⁴ All of these endeavours are in order to protect the authenticity of the Islamic message and to apply its principles to contemporary circumstances.

2.4. Other themes

Although the aforementioned are the generally accepted themes common to all renewalists (*mujaddidun*), needless to say there are other features renewalists have shared and there are numerous subjects they have dealt with, depending on their time, place, and conditions. ³⁵ For this reason, some of them, like al-Ghazali and Muhammad 'Abduh, concentrated on intellectual problems and education of their people. However, some other scholars, like Ibn Taymiyya and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, concentrated on political issues. Some of them struggled mostly against imitation (*taqlid*), some against innovation (*bid'ah*),

³¹ 'Abduh, Muhammad, *The Theology of Unity*, Translated into English by I. Musa'ad & K. Cragg, G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1966, p. 29

³² In order to see how *tawhid* is important in the Qur'an see the following verses: 1:5; 2:255; 7:59; 7:65; 7:172; 10:31-35; 10:36; 16:51; 51:56 etc.

³³ 'Abduh, *The Theology of Unity*, p. 39

³⁴ Merad, Ali, 'Islah', *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, TDV Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1999, vol. 19, pp. 152

³⁵ Waardenburg, Jacques, *Islam: Historical, Social, and Political Perspectives*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2002, p. 290-291

some against alien ideas and customs and so on. Voll points this fact out saying that “... the specific forms that *tajdid* and *islah* take do reflect the nature of the society in which they are undertaken. Thus, while the effort to bring society into conformity with the norms defined by the Qur’an and Sunna is, in general terms, a constant element in the *tajdid*-*islah* tradition, the role of the *muslihun* and *mujaddids* in any given social context will vary. Over the centuries, as a result, the contextual significance of the effort of moral renewal has changed and evolved.”³⁶ When he compares the renewalist scholars of the classical period and of the modern period, John L. Esposito, for example, remarks on this difference thus: “While premodern revivalist movements were primarily internally motivated, Islamic modernism was a response both to continued internal weakness and to the external political and religiocultural threat of colonialism. Much of the Muslim world faced a powerful new threat – European colonialism.”³⁷

Finally, it can be added here that Ali Merad, in his classification of the *tajdid* themes and renewalists’ features, in addition to the above matters, puts forward another common theme: separation between services (*‘ibadat*) and customs (*adat*). According to him, this distinction helps renewalists to apply the unchangeable Islamic principles to changing circumstances in all times and places. *‘ibadat* are defined by the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and cannot be changed at any time. However, *adat* are relevant to individual matters and affairs concerning the social world and rulings related to them are left to judges and rulers of the time.³⁸

3. The major Islamic sciences and *tajdid*

Like the other ideas and movements in the Islamic tradition, renewalist movements legitimize their ideas using the methodologies of the Islamic sciences. As the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* are the final authorities in Islam, people who want to remain within the limits of Islam need to find a base for their ideas, otherwise they are not seen by the other Muslims within these limits (*takfir*) in terms of those ideas. However, if they use the methodology of Islamic sciences and demonstrate a basis for their ideas, they are accepted as Muslims, even though their ideas may be seen as wrong by the majority of Muslims or Muslim scholars. This is known as *takfir* (accusing someone of being an unbeliever) and *ta’wil* (interpretation). The best-known scholar on this subject is al-Ghazali, with his attack on Muslim philosophers

³⁶ Voll, John O., ‘Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*’, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, p. 35

³⁷ Esposito, John L., *Islam – The Straight Path*, p. 124

³⁸ Merad, ‘*Islah*’, in: *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 19, pp. 151

(*falasifa*), because of some of ideas opposed to Islamic belief. When he talks about it, Al-Ghazali, first of all points out that to solve this problem we need to look at it in the context of reason and revelation. He categorizes the different approaches into five sections: those who give weight only to reason, those who give weight only to revelation, those who base their conclusions on reason but also use revelation, those who use revelation as the basis of their thought but also allow reason its place, and those who give weight to both reason and revelation in equal degree. Among them, according to al-Ghazali, the best is the fifth one, the others being too easily able to fall into error.³⁹ He criticised the two extreme sides, namely the people who ‘close the gate’ of *ta’wil* (interpretation) rigidly and those who change the apparent meanings of the Qur’an or the *Sunnah* almost completely and include the verses related to the hereafter in this category, claiming that those verses should be understood metaphorically.⁴⁰ If that is so, then who or what is the authority for doing a correct *ta’wil*? Al-Ghazali points to dictionaries, Arabic grammar, rhetoric, idioms and Arab customs. Because it is possible to interpret a verse in various ways, al-Ghazali reminds us of an important principle; a principle that has a vitally important place for our subject: he says in his *Faisal al-Tafriqa* that one cannot accuse a person who interprets a Qur’anic verse or a saying of the Prophet of being an unbeliever (*takfir*), the important point in *ta’wil* is to be careful not to change any principle of Islamic faith.⁴¹ He says that one cannot accuse someone who declares his faith saying ‘*La ilaha illallah*’ (There is no God, but Allah) unless he contradicts (*takdhib*) or rejects any of the Qur’anic verses or the sayings of the Prophet. After declaring that, in his *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, he says that the philosophers, because of their contradictions of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, have to be declared as unbelievers.⁴² Thereby he distinguishes *ta’wil* and *takfir*. Frank Griffel explains al-Ghazali’s attack on the philosophers saying: “Such interpretation is unbelief, he says, since it leads to a situation in which people no longer take their guidance from the Qur’an or from the teachings of the prophet.”⁴³

Now, we will look briefly at the major Islamic sciences and their principles that give a possibility for *mujaddidun* to apply the Islamic message to different circumstances.

³⁹ Bulac, p. 214-217

⁴⁰ Ozervarli, M. Sait, ‘Gazzali – Kelam Ilmindeki Yeri’, *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, TDV Yayinlari, vol. 13, Istanbul, 1996, p. 508

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 508

⁴² Ibid, p. 510

⁴³ Griffel, Frank, *Al-Ghazali’s Theological Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, p. 102

3.1. *Tafsir* (Interpreting the Qur'an)

Tafsir literally means 'explanation' and 'exposition'. Al-Zarkashi defines the '*ilm al-tafsir* (the science of interpretation of the Qur'an) as "... that body of knowledge which deals with the explanation, interpretation and commentary on the Qur'an, encompassing all ways of acquiring knowledge, which contributes to the proper understanding of it, explains its meanings and extrapolating its laws and wisdom."⁴⁴ The word *ta'wil* literally means 'to turn, to revert' and, according to Qadhi, it "... implies going back to the original meaning of a word to see what its meanings and connotations are."⁴⁵

During the first three centuries of Islam, these two terms were used interchangeably, with the meaning of "interpretation of the Qur'an." Over the centuries, however, the words tended to be used in different ways from each other. For example, *ta'wil* was at times used when speaking of an interpretation based on reason or personal opinion without knowledge. However, according to Qadhi, "... the most common understanding in modern usage of the two words is that *tafseer* is used to explain the meaning or intent of a verse which has only one connotation, whereas *ta'weel* is used when one of the possible connotations of a verse or word is chosen over the others due to external factors."⁴⁶

Like other sciences, *Tafsir* has a special method including important principles and anyone who wants to interpret the Qur'an needs to obey these methodological rules, otherwise, his or her interpretation might be regarded as "*deviant Tafsir*." The major principles of *Tafsir* can be put in order of priority as follows: *Tafsir* of the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself,⁴⁷ by the *Sunnah*⁴⁸ (sayings, acts and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad), by the statements of the Companions⁴⁹ (*Ashab*), by Arabic language, by Arab customs,⁵⁰ and *Tafsir* by personal opinion. Generally, *Tafsir* by personal opinion is classified under the title of "*Tafsir* based on

⁴⁴ Al-Zarkashi, Badruddin Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah, *Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, 3:13, in: Esack, Farid, *The Qur'an: A User's Guide*, Oneworld Publications, 2nd Print, Oxford, 2007, p. 128-129

⁴⁵ Qadhi, Abu Ammar Yasir, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan*, al-Hidaayah Publishing, Birmingham, 1999, p. 289

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 290

⁴⁷ For example, see the Qur'an 44:3 and 97:1

⁴⁸ Qur'an, 16:44

⁴⁹ See the Qur'an 14:82, and Bukhari, *Sahih*, Vol. 6, No: 222, in: Qadhi, 308

⁵⁰ See the Qur'an 5:103, and Ibn Katheer, v. 2, p. 121, in: Qadhi, p. 317

reason (*ra'y*)."⁵¹ In terms of *tajdid* (renewal), the important kind of interpretation method is the first one, *Tafsir* based on reason (*ra'y*). Of course, this kind of *Tafsir* did not imply that narrations are not important and exegetes should ignore them, but rather that the primary source of *Tafsir* is *ijtihad*.

In the history of *Tafsir*, there is disagreement amongst scholars concerning this kind of exegesis, with some favouring it over the *Tafsir* based on narrations, and some opposed, calling it 'deviant.' According to Farid Esack, "Al-Ghazali resolved the 'problem' by classifying *Tafsir bi'l-ra'y* into two further categories: *Tafsir mahmud* – a 'meritorious' commentary based on the hadith sources of *Tafsir*, the rules of Shari'ah and the Arabic language on the one hand, and *Tafsir madhmum* – an 'objectionable' commentary based entirely on personal opinion in disregard of the aforementioned sources and rules, on the other."⁵²

When we look at the history of Islam, we see that these exegeses were born in the period of meeting with non-Muslim ideas through translations and conquests. At that period personal reasoning was a very important tool in order to defend Islam against others' attacks and to organize the knowledge of Islamic law. "These tasks", says al Faruqi, "... fell upon the companions and their descendants generally. But with the diversification and multiplication of the issues, specialization emerged. The first task became the province of the jurists; the second, that of the Mu'tazilah, the first dialecticians of Islam."⁵³

The most important principle of interpretation and the most related to *tajdid* movements is interpreting the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet (*Ahadith*) considering their socio-historical context. This is vitally important to be able to apply the Islamic values to all times and places. Like the stagnation and imitation period in the area of Islamic jurisprudence after the third Islamic century, we see the same problem in the field of *Tafsir*. Since that time, Muslims focused much more on recitation of the Qur'an than on understanding its meaning, values and principles.

Explaining the importance and scope of the context, Saeed, before he compares the status of women in pre-Islamic Hijaz, in the first Islamic centuries, and in modern times, and also some Qur'anic rulings related to women, says that "Understanding this context of the

⁵¹ The most well-known works in this field are: *Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Ta'wil* of Mahmud al-Zamakhshari (538/1143), *Mafatih al-Ghayb* of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (606/1209) and *Anwar al-Tanzil* of 'Abdullah al-Baydawi (691/1191)

⁵² Esack, *The Qur'an: A User's Guide*, p. 133

⁵³ al Faruqi, Isma'il R., al Faruqi, Lois Lamy, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1986, p. 244

Qur'an requires a detailed knowledge of the Prophet's life, both in Mecca and Medina, the spiritual, social, economic, political and legal climate, and the associated norms, laws, customs, manners, institutions and values of the region, in particular Hijaz. These also include housing, clothing and food, and social relations, such as family structure, social hierarchy, taboos and rites of passage."⁵⁴ Actually, this principle was known and achieved before the third Islamic century by Companions and Successors, and it was called "*Asbab al-nuzu*" (Reasons of revelation), however, for a long period, the majority of Muslim scholars neglected this science until the efforts of modern revivalists.

When we look carefully at the symbols, metaphors, terms etc. of the Qur'an, we realize that they are closely related to sixth century Arab culture. This is easily seen, for example, when the Qur'an describes Paradise. The following sentences might be considered as the brief approach of *mujaddidun* to the Qur'an: "Values change according to social, economic, political, legal and intellectual circumstances. When this happens, there should be a change in how we approach the foundation texts that relate to those values. The Qur'an was given in a specific context, within the framework of a worldview that was appropriate to first- to seventh-century Arabia, and in a language and symbolism that its audience understood. The Qur'an should be seen as embedded in the context in which it was received."⁵⁵

Finally, it should be added here that among the groups of *Tafsir*, "Modernistic"⁵⁶ exegeses are closely related to the modern *tajdid* movements. This kind of work focuses on immediate social, moral and political problems of the time and place. Their main concern is the contemporary issues they deal with reflecting also their *tajdid* views. The best-known examples are Muhammad 'Abduh's (d. 1905) *Tafsir al-Manar* and Sayyid Qutub's (d. 1966) *Fi Dhilal al-Qur'an*.

3.2. *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence)

As we mentioned above, Islamic Jurisprudence (*Shari'ah/Fiqh*) consists of two kinds of sources: revealed and unrevealed. There is unanimous agreement among Muslim scholars that the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad are the main sources of Islamic Jurisprudence. The other kinds of sources, unrevealed sources, are founded in *ijtihad*

⁵⁴ Saeed, Abdullah, *Interpreting the Qur'an – Towards a contemporary approach*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 117

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 124

⁵⁶ Qadhi, p. 336-7

(reasoning). The best-known evidence⁵⁷ for *ijtihad* is the *Hadith* of Mu'adh ibn Jabal: "Upon sending Mu'adh as judge to the Yemen, the Prophet asked him about the source on which he would rely in making decisions. In reply, Mu'adh referred first to the Book of God, and then to the Sunnah of the Messenger of God; in the event that he failed to find the necessary guidance in either, then he would formulate his own *ijtihad*. The Prophet approved of this and was well pleased with Mu'adh's response."⁵⁸ As Kamali says: "This reasoning may take a variety of forms, including analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), juristic preference (*istihsan*), considerations of public interest (*istislah*), and even general consensus (*ijma*) of the learned, which basically originates in *ijtihad* and provides a procedure by which a ruling of juristic reasoning can acquire the binding force of law."⁵⁹

As with *Tafsir*, the main issue of *tajdid* is to ascertain the unchangeable values and principles of the Islamic message from the Quran and the *Sunnah*, and to apply them to new circumstances. In Islamic jurisprudence, this is closely related to the subject of *Maqasid*.

The term '*maqasid*' (singular: *maqsid*) refers to purpose, objective, goal, end, principle and intent. So technically, *maqasid* means the objectives or purposes of Islamic law. It refers to what the lawgiver (*Shari'*) intends when he makes a judgement on any subject, when he commands Muslims to do anything or prohibits anything.

It is certain that, like any inscription or speech, the Qur'anic verses have underlying purposes determined by God. These purposes, according to Muslims, are to provide benefits in this world and the hereafter. Therefore, *maqasid* is generally used as an alternative expression to public interests, "*masalih al-mursalah*". We can see these two terms used interchangeably. The Qur'an declares the benefits and purposes of its commandments and prohibitions itself.⁶⁰

Two major approaches to identification of *maqasid* are "Textualist approach" and "*maqasid*-oriented approach."⁶¹ According to textualists (some call them literalists or *Zahiris*), we can understand the *maqasid* only through clear texts. Although this view seems reasonable at first glance, it is not sufficient for all purposes, and may be seen as contrary to the

⁵⁷ See also: Omar, M. Abdel-Khalek, 'Reasoning in Islamic Law: Part Two', *Arab Law Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1997, pp. 353-383

⁵⁸ Abu Dawud al-Sijistani, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Daru Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 1997, Volume 4, Hadith no. 3592, pp. 15-16

⁵⁹ Kamali, 'Law and Society', *The Oxford History of Islam*, p. 118

⁶⁰ Qur'an, 2:179; 57:25; 29:45

⁶¹ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an – Towards a contemporary approach*, p. 123-4; Kamali, *Shari'ah Law*, p. 127-134

methodology of the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an is not an encyclopaedia, which contains all subjects in alphabetical order. On the contrary, while it explains some rulings in detail, it leaves the others to Muslims and wants them to ponder over the related verses.

The majority of Muslim scholars have defended the *maqasid*-oriented approach. According to them we need to consider the texts and the underlying causes and reasons at the same time. This is necessary in order to apply the values and rulings of the Qur'an to all situations in all times, and this method is the most complete response to the questions that we mentioned above. On one side, there are immutable and limited texts of *Shari'ah* (the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*) and on the other side there are countless facts and conditions. The main duty of Muslim jurists is to deduce the immutable and universal values from the texts of the *Shari'ah* with the help of divine revelation, and apply them to new conditions. Kamali says that "The *maqasid*-based approach is thus likely to open new possibilities for the growth of *ijtihad* and the versatility of the laws of *Shari'ah* and their continued application to new situations, times and places."⁶²

The term *maqasid* was used in the early fourth century after the *Hijrah*. Abu 'Abd Allah al-Tirmidhi al-Hakim (d. 932) and Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwaini (d. 1085) were the foremost exponents of this method. Al-Juwaini divided the purposes of Islamic law into three categories: necessities, needs and luxuries. His pupil, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) further developed the theory and said that *Shari'ah* has five essential objectives: life, intellect, faith, lineage and property, and that these are to be protected as absolute priorities.

Although the theory of *Maqasid* was established in the fourth century after the *Hijrah*, it was actually implemented by the Prophet Muhammad and there are several examples of this. One well-known example concerns the hypocrites (*munafiqun*). Although the Prophet was aware of their treasons, conspiracies and harmful activities against the Muslim community, he decided not to punish them saying: "I fear people might say that Muhammad kills his own Companions."⁶³ Similarly, although he wanted to restore the Ka'bah to its original dimensions, as established by the Prophet Abraham, he decided not to do that, saying: "I would have done so if I didn't fear that this may induce our people into disbelief."⁶⁴

⁶² Kamali, *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction*, p. 131

⁶³ Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, Dar Tayyibah, Riyadh, 2006, 'Kitab al-Zakat', Hadith no. 1063, vol. 1, p. 471

⁶⁴ Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Isma'il, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Bayt al-Afkar al-Duwaliyya li al-Nashr, Riyadh, 1998, 'Kitab al-Tamanni', Hadith no. 7243, p. 1381

After the death of the Prophet, as new circumstances arose, new judgements were called for. For example, 'Umar b. Khattab, the second caliph, changed some rulings which were obviously indicated in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.⁶⁵

Karaman, declares the importance of the application of *maslahah* and *maqasid*, giving examples regarding some aspects of Islamic law. For instance, according to the Hanafi School, pilgrims (*Hujjaj*) can graze their animals in the areas of the *Haram* when the need arises. (Normally this is not allowed.) And according to the Maliki school, although the evidence of children in court cases is normally not valid, if no other witness can be found, children can attest in cases concerning some crimes.⁶⁶

The most problematic issue of this subject is which part of *Shari'ah* is mutable and which part is immutable. There is unanimous agreement on the distinction between acts of worship (*'ibadat*) and worldly transactions (*mu'amalat*). Acts of worship cannot be changed by reference to personal opinion, because while the reasons for worldly transactions are known through experience, the reasons behind acts of worship are known only through divine revelation.⁶⁷ However, there are big debates on the rulings stated clearly in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. For example, although the penalties declared by the Qur'an (*Hudud*) are seen as immutable by the majority of Muslim scholars, some modern scholars claim their mutability.⁶⁸ Esposito explains this fact saying, "Although many traditionalists and neorevivalists or fundamentalists call for the reimplementation of the hudud punishments, other Muslims argue that they are no longer appropriate..."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an – Towards a contemporary approach*, p. 124

⁶⁶ <http://www.hayrettinkaraman.net/kitap/meseleler/0477.htm>, 12.05.2010

⁶⁷ As an example, see: al-Tufi's (d. 716 AH) view in: Omar, M. Abdel-Khalek, 'Reasoning in Islamic Law: Part Three', *Arab Law Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 1. (1998), pp. 34

⁶⁸ Rahman, Fazlur, *Islam*, Translated into Turkish by M. Aydin & M. Dag, Ankara Okulu Yayinlari, Ankara 2000, p. 86-89; Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an – Towards a contemporary approach*, p. 123-4; Kamali, *Shari'ah Law: An Introduction*, p. 26, 135

⁶⁹ Esposito, John L., 'Contemporary Islam', *The Oxford History of Islam*, Ed. By J. L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 687

4. al-Ghazali (1058-1111)

4.1. His life

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali was born in 450 A.H./1058 A.D. in Tus in Persia. He received his early education from his father and a friend of his father's. He memorized the Qur'an and learned grammar and arithmetic. His interest in mysticism dates also from an early age and the influence of these two men. He started his higher education in Tus in 465 taking *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) lessons. In 1080 he went to Nishapur and enrolled at Nizamiyyah College. There he took lessons from the best-known theologian of the time, Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni. He was well educated in Nishapur especially in *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad), *'Aqid* (Islamic doctrines or tenets), grammar etc. and became a learned scholar in *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *'Aqid*, logic, philosophy by the end of this period. In addition to these studies, taking mysticism lessons from one of the important mystic scholars, Abu 'Ali al-Farmadi, furthered his interest in mysticism.

After the death of al-Juwayni, al-Ghazali moved to the court of Nizam al-Mulk in order to benefit from the facilities the state was offering to scholars, in order to further his studies. Despite being only twenty-eight years old, he was welcomed with respect by Nizam al-Mulk. This was probably due to the strength of his personality and his learning. He spent six years there and during this stay he became famous for the quality of his contributions to Islamic debates and was appointed chief professor at Nizamiyyah College in Baghdad in 1091. Al-Ghazali used to lecture to approximately three hundred students at Nizamiyyah. He was admired and supported by the caliph Muqtadi Biamrillah for his lectures and other work at the college. In this four-year period, in addition to writing numerous books, he reconnoitred philosophy and Batiniyya doctrine. He spent three years on researching philosophy. Though other theologians also criticized philosophy, al-Ghazali chose to get sufficient knowledge first, writing a book summarizing the field: *Maqasid al-Falasifa* (The Intentions of the Philosophers). Aside from Batiniyya and philosophy, he researched theology and mysticism; reading the masterpieces of well-known mystics; his conclusion was that only direct spiritual experience was to be relied on rather than intellection. Following these intense researches he suffered depression and had psychological and physical problems for some time.

In 1095, al-Ghazali gave up his career and decided to leave Baghdad. We can think of three possible main factors in this big decision: some of his ideas after investigating mysticism; his psychological and physical problems; and finally the political confusion in Baghdad after the assassination of Nizam al-Mulk. In this period, he went to Syria, Palestine, Hijaz, Makka and

Madina, and then he returned to his hometown Tus where he engaged in writing. This period lasted for approximately eleven years and during it he wrote one of his best-known works, *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)*.

In 1106, probably with the persuasion of the son of Nizam al-Mulk, Fakhr al-Mulk, he returned to Nishapur and took up his position as professor at Nizamiyya College again; however, this time he lectured mainly on mysticism. By reason of both his health and his desire for the mystic life, after three years he gave up his position again, returning to his hometown in 1109. In Tus he continued to write and to lecture near his home. Al-Ghazali died in 505 A.H./AD 1111.

4.2. Problems and al-Ghazali's struggles

Al-Ghazali is a very important figure in the history of Islamic thought. Due to his abilities and contribution to Sunni Islam, he has been called "*Hujjat al-Islam*" (Proof of Islam). Necip Taylan argues that his main concern was to defend and spread the Islamic creed (*aqidah*) and, depending upon it, Islamic morality and thought.⁷⁰

Because of his temperament and interests, al-Ghazali, from an early age, started to get rid of ties of blindly imitating the predecessors (*taqlid*) and sects without criticizing them.⁷¹ He believed that doubt is the only way to reach reality.⁷² In his time there was a big struggle within Islamic thought and among the various ideologies.⁷³ He surveyed all the main lines of thought of the day: the philosophers, Isma'ilites (*Batiniyyun*), mystics (*Sufis*) and theologians (*mutakallimun*). He criticized all of them, writing numerous books. However, his critique of philosophy was the most important. His attack on philosophy has influenced Muslim scholars ever since.

In the history of Islam, there always have been arguments centring on the roles of reason (*'aql*) and revelation (*wahy*), religion and philosophy. In the early centuries of Islam, the contenders in these debates were the theologians on the one hand, and the philosophers on the other. We can see this as a debate between native and foreign cultures.

Since the first half of the 9th century, various cultures and philosophies, especially Greek philosophy and science, had come into the Islamic world in translation, and this had an

⁷⁰ Taylan, Necip, <http://www.ghazali.org/site-tr/gazzali1.html>, 29.06.2010

⁷¹ Ghazali, *al-Munqidh Min al-Dalal*, p. 2-3, in: Cagirci, Mustafa, 'Gazzali', *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, ISAM, vol. 13, Istanbul, 1996, p. 494

⁷² Ibid, p. 494

⁷³ Taylan, Necip, <http://www.ghazali.org/site-tr/gazzali1.html>, 20.06.2010

impact on culture and society. During the time of the Abbasids, the caliphs supported the first rationalist movement, the Mu'tazila, and philosophers. This was in some aspects useful for the Muslim world, for example through the translation movement some beneficial science, e.g. natural sciences, logic, and medicine, were introduced to the Muslim world. However, according to Bulac, this movement had also its dangers: through the translations some aspects of foreign cultures and thought would pass through the Muslim world and, unless they were sorted out, this would be quite dangerous for Islamic thought and culture.⁷⁴ The traditionalists (*Ahl al-Hadith*) or *Salafiyya* reacted first, rejecting philosophy completely as they had before with the Mu'tazilites. Malik ibn Anas and Ahmad ibn Hanbal were the best known of these scholars and Islamic jurists. At that time, Sunni-Muslim theologians, especially the Ash'arites undertook the duty of the defence of Islamic thought against philosophy.

Of all Muslim scholars in the history of Islam, Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111) might be regarded as the greatest and the most effective theologian in arguing against philosophers. His reaction to philosophy was quite different from that of other theologians. Al-Ghazali criticized other theologians because of their methodology. According to him, if a person wants to criticize any idea, he or she has to investigate the idea with their own methodologies first of all; otherwise, without sufficient knowledge, an investigator can easily make serious mistakes. In accord with this belief he researched the philosophers' ideas, particularly al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, and wrote a book about philosophy and the philosophers: *Maqasid al-Falasifah*.

In refutation of the ideas of the philosophers, al-Ghazali wrote *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). Its main targets were al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (or Avicenna), because these two philosophers were the main representatives of philosophical thoughts at that time. Al-Ghazali's aim with *Tahafut al-Falasifa*, was to evaluate twenty ideas of philosophers in the light of Islam: sixteen in the field of metaphysics, and four concerning physical principles. In the case of three of the points, he accused the philosophers of being unbelievers (*takfir*). These ideas were "the philosophers' belief in the eternity of the world"⁷⁵, "their doctrine that the First [God] does not know the particulars"⁷⁶ and "their

⁷⁴ Bulac, Ali, *Islam Dusuncesinde Din-Felsefe Vahiy-Akil Iliskisi*, Yeni Akademi Yayinlari, Istanbul, 2006, p. 187

⁷⁵ Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifah (Incoherence of the Philosophers)*, Translated into English by S. A. Kamali, B. A. Dar, 2nd Print, Lahore, 1963, p. 13-53

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 143-149

denial of the resurrection of bodies.”⁷⁷ Al-Ghazali believed that, in addition to their falsity, these three ideas were very dangerous for the Islamic faith and Muslims, especially in terms of their practical consequences. Some of al-Ghazali’s arguments are the following:

“If the world is co-eternal with God it violates strict Islamic monotheism. Philosophers make God a fashioner rather than an originator. It is impossible to prove or disprove the eternality of the world, so there is no reason for rejecting the orthodox tenet of creation *ex nihilo*. Philosophers assume an immediate relationship between cause and effect which al-Ghazali said was not logically necessary. The complex theory of emanation does not safeguard God’s unity and is deterministic. The material world does not demonstrate the principle of one proceeding from one, thus at some point one must meet multiplicity. The proposal that God does not have temporal knowledge is highly speculative and implies there is no freedom for God to exercise His will, which makes Him impervious to the petitions of His creatures. Emanation does not allow for miracles except as they are naturalized through science.”⁷⁸

Ahmet Arslan seeks the answer as to whether there is an ‘Islamic’ philosophy or not. He declares that Neo-Platonism influenced Islamic thought, especially the Muslim philosophers, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. He cites two features of Neo-Platonism which he says influenced them: first, this school, on the one hand wants to return to Plato, and on the other wants to integrate all the previous spiritualist-idealist philosophical schools to produce a synthesis; second, its interests and concerns regarding religion. According to Arslan, the Islamic world encountered philosophy first in Neo-Platonism, and this inclined them to the perhaps naïve view that all true philosophy is one, just as all mathematics is one. It is from this standpoint of seeing the Neo-Platonists wrestling with essentially the same philosophico-religious questions as themselves that these philosophers came to consider Neo-Platonism as the one true religion and, as such identical to Islam at the deepest level. As a result, adds Arslan, they aimed to reconcile philosophy with Islamic revelation; in other words, they wanted to disclose the deep unity in whose existence they believed.⁷⁹ One of the most important reasons for al-Ghazali’s attack on these philosophers was what he saw as the Hellenizing of Islamic thought, and the annihilation of the intellectual independence of the Muslim world. He was severely critical of the philosophers for, as he saw it, their imitative and submissive

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 229-249

⁷⁸ Saeed, Abdullah, *Islamic Thought*, Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 103-104

⁷⁹ Arslan, Ahmet, ‘Bir İslam Felsefesi Var midir?’, *Yazko Felsefe Yazilari*, Yazko Yayinlari, b. 2, 1982, pp. 24-53

attitude to non-Muslim learning. According to al-Ghazali, this attitude made Islamic faith less important than Greek metaphysics.⁸⁰

In al-Ghazali's time, there were intellectual problems in the Islamic world and political problems with some foreign powers. Al-Ghazali was distinguished from others by his wide-ranging knowledge and intelligence. Nizam al-Mulk, as the vizier of the state, was looking for a good scholar to defend the Sunnite-Islamic faith against the Isma'ilites who were in revolt against the Sunnite government. The vizier may have thought that al-Ghazali was just the person to fulfil this duty. Cagrici suggests it was for that reason he made al-Ghazali welcome at his court.⁸¹ This was true and al-Ghazali was given the duty of defending the Ash'arite/Sunnite creed and reinforcing it.⁸² To disprove the philosophers' ideas which were contrary to Sunnite ideas was a part of his duty. Al-Ghazali himself believed that defending the Islamic creed/faith was the main duty of all theologians and he criticized other theologians for doing their 'duties' by a wrong methodology and not for the true purpose of the science of theology (*'Ilm al-Kalam*).⁸³ We can add here another important issue related to this duty: *Tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reform) of Islam are the main duties of Muslim scholars. "They reflect a continuing tradition of revitalization of Islamic faith and practice within the Islamic communities of Muslims."⁸⁴ This idea is, as we pointed out above, based on a valid *Hadith*,⁸⁵ and as Voll declares, two of the main themes of *tajdid* have always been the returning to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, and the "reaffirmation of the uniqueness and authenticity of the Qur'anic message."⁸⁶ In this sense, according to al-Ghazali, the biggest threat to the Islamic faith was philosophy.

As one of the greatest theologians in the history of Islam Al-Ghazali's contribution to Islamic thought is unquestionable and, without considering his works it is very difficult to offer an opinion about Islamic thought, or hope to understand some developments in its history. Fazlur Rahman describes him as "... the most influential and impressive religious personality in post-classical Islam" and mentions his "... unusual intelligence and 'ocean like'

⁸⁰ Bulac, p. 191

⁸¹ Cagrici, p. 491

⁸² Ibid. p. 499

⁸³ Taylan, Necip, <http://www.ghazali.org/site-tr/gazzali1.html>, 29.06.2010

⁸⁴ Voll, John O., 'Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: *Tajdid* and *Islah*', *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, Edited by John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 32

⁸⁵ Omar, Mohamed Abdel-Khalek, 'Reasoning in Islamic Law', *Arab Law Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1998, pp. 30

⁸⁶ Voll, p. 35, 41

knowledge.”⁸⁷ There are different factors that make him a great *mujaddid*. His personality, teachers and spiritual experiences are only a few among them. As with the other revivalists or reformists in the history of Islam, such as Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), he sought a return to the earliest sources of Islam, namely the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad. He also, as with others, aimed to disentangle Islamic thought and faith from alien ideas and cultures. Al-Ghazali saw this as the main duty of theologians, and he evidently was more concerned by intellectual corruption than by armed attacks from enemies of Islam and political issues. For example, the Crusaders invaded Jerusalem in 1099 and we do not have any evidence that al-Ghazali spoke or wrote about it.⁸⁸

5. Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905)

5.1. His life

Muhammad ‘Abduh was born in the Nile River delta in northern Egypt in 1849. When he was about thirteen he enrolled as a student at the Ahmadi mosque at Tanta and received a traditional Islamic education. At that time, it was the largest centre of religious education after al-Azhar in Cairo. After he finished his studies there, he went to al-Azhar where he studied from 1869 to 1877. For some time, he had been interested in mysticism and published his first book, *Risalat al-Waridat*⁸⁹ (Treatise on Mystical Inspirations), in 1874, on the subject.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897) was one of the most important figures in ‘Abduh’s life and thought. They met for the first time when al-Afghani was passing through Egypt on his way to Istanbul. When al-Afghani came back to Cairo in 1871, ‘Abduh, under his influence, began to study philosophy, attending his informal lectures and helping to spread his ideas. At this time we also see ‘Abduh as a writer on political and social issues.

In 1877, after finishing his studies with the degree of *‘alim*, he taught ethics, history of civilization, the philosophy of history etc at *Dar al-‘Ulum*. In the 1870s there was a political

⁸⁷ Rahman, Fazlur, *Revival and Reform in Islam*, Edited by E. Moosa, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2003, p. 115-116

⁸⁸ Cagrici, p. 493

⁸⁹ ‘Abduh, Muhammad, *Risalat al-Waridat fi Nazariyyat al-Mutakallimin wa al-Sufiyya wa fi Falsafa al-Ilahiyya*, Matbaatu al-Manar, al-Qahira, 1925

and economic crisis in Egypt. The Khedive Isma'il had fallen into debt to European bankers and they had taken financial and political control of Egypt. This situation caused an increase in national consciousness, and Muhammad 'Abduh, under the influence of al-Afghani, was one of the leaders of opposition to the Western powers. When Britain occupied Egypt he was arrested for some time and exiled for three years for assisting nationalists.

In this period, he spent time at a number of places including Tunis, Beirut and Paris. In Paris he joined al-Afghani and helped him to establish the *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* ("the most trustworthy handhold," based on the Qur'anic verses 2:256 and 31:22) society and publish a journal of the same name. After the journal was banned in 1884, he went to Beirut to teach and write and he first met Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) who would become 'Abduh's most distinguished disciple later. At that period, 'Abduh accepted the realities and results of the British occupation.

In 1888, the khedive, the ruler of the country, allowed him to return to Egypt. He was forbidden to teach but was made a judge in the native courts, an occupation he continued until the end of his life in 1905. In 1899, he became a member of the governing council of al-Azhar, for which he proposed some reforms, this council continued to be one of the main concerns in his life. In 1899 he was appointed *Mufti* (the chief Islamic jurist) of Egypt, and was appointed to the Legislative Council. As the head of the system of law, 'Abduh achieved very important reforms in order to make Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) answer the needs of modern times.

Rashid Rida founded the journal *al-Manar* in 1898. 'Abduh had legal rulings (*fatawa*) and reformist ideas published in this journal, as well as his Qur'anic interpretations (*tafsir*). However, by the time he died in 1905, he had only interpreted the Qur'an up to the middle of the fourth chapter (*surah*). Later on, Rashid Rida continued to write his interpretations and this work was published with the name *Tafsir al-Manar*.

5.2. Splitting from al-Afghani

Albert Hourani says, "The starting point of his thought, as of al-Afghani's, was the problem of inner decay, the need for an inner revival."⁹⁰ They saw a big gap between what Muslims did and what they should do. "Abduh's purpose, in all the acts of his later life as well as his writings, was to bridge the gulf within Islamic society, and in so doing to strengthen its moral

⁹⁰ Hourani, Albert, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939*, Cambridge University Press, 19th printing, Cambridge, 2009, p. 136

roots... It could only be done by accepting the need for change, and by linking that change to the principles of Islam.”⁹¹ ‘Abduh accepted the changes that had occurred in society, however, he was aware of a new problem. These changes could create a dualist society: conservatives and secularists. This division was seen especially in the areas of law and education. As Moaddal and Talattof have said, “Although he was Afghani’s disciple and associate, Abduh later on abandoned the oppositional politics of his mentor altogether and began to emphasize social issues and educational reforms. Instead of anti-British political agitation, Abduh believed that priority must be given to education so that individuals could perform the duties of a representative government with intelligence and firmness.”⁹² Muhammad ‘Abduh, contrary to al-Afghani, did not defend any political agenda in his *tajdid* ideas. Some other reformist Muslim scholars have criticized this aspect of his ideas.⁹³

5.3. Religious reform and al-Azhar

Muhammad ‘Abduh believed that a religious reform was necessary for Muslims. Explaining the reason for this kind of reform he said, “The ground of moral character is in beliefs and traditions and these can be built only on religion. The religious factor is, therefore, the most powerful of all, in respect both of public and of private ethics. It exercises an authority over men’s souls superior to that of reason, despite man’s uniquely rational powers.”⁹⁴

‘Abduh argued that religious reform should start in Egypt first of all. In an article in *al-Manar* he gave some of his ideas for religious reform.⁹⁵ ‘Abduh began with an analysis of Egyptian society: “Like all other eastern nations, Egypt constituted a religious community bounded together by Shari’ah.”⁹⁶ After that, he defined the function of religion: “Religion is the organizing principle of all its affairs – it dictates man’s private and public conduct, the king’s orientation, toward his subjects and the subjects toward their king.”⁹⁷ And he describes the

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 139

⁹² Moaddel M. & Talattof K., ‘Introduction’, *Contemporary Debates in Islam*, Editors: M. Moaddel & K. Talattof, Macmillan, London, 2000, p. 13

⁹³ Hashmi, Sohail H., ‘Reform’, *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Editor in chief: R. C. Martin, Macmillan Reference USA, New York, 2004, vol. 2, pp. 577

⁹⁴ ‘Abduh, Muhammad, *The Theology of Unity*, p. 106

⁹⁵ ‘Abduh, Muhammad, ‘The True Reform and its Necessity for al-Azhar’, *al-Manar*, vol, 10, no, 28, 1906, pp. 758-65, Translated by K. Talattof; in: *Contemporary Debates in Islam*, Eds. M. Moaddel & K. Talattof, Macmillan, London, 2000, p. 45

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

relationship between religion and morality: “Religion is the basis on which moral conduct has been built. Moral conduct will disappear when religion collapses. The same thing will happen if religion is deformed by introducing into its core any innovations or superstitions.”⁹⁸

As to the place of religion and religious education in Egypt, he pointed to al-Azhar as “... the primary authority in religious matters, ...” because “... the nation took its religious beliefs from al-Azhar and adopted convictions about life and society from it as well.”⁹⁹

When we look at ‘Abduh’s writings, we can see that he observed and reflected on both the state of Eastern and Western nations and the causes of the problems of Eastern societies. For example, according to him, among the causes of social ills in the East are “... the beliefs and opinions introduced into Islam by different groups like the Sufis and others. These beliefs and opinions took root in the souls of Eastern people and have brought harmful results. The reformation will extract these beliefs from the nation. It will replace them with authentic Islamic beliefs: those that call for resolution, work, perseverance, and determination in this life.”¹⁰⁰

Muhammad ‘Abduh emphasizes again the importance of the scholars of al-Azhar and of the furthering of their education, saying, “This reform will prepare al-Azhar’s Ulama to be helpful in the achievement of this objective. They are the focus of hope for this reformation.”¹⁰¹

As we already stated, ‘Abduh reached a position of authority and realized some of his ideas in al-Azhar. He regulated many things at the school: admission of students, discipline, examinations, curriculum, textbooks etc. The works of the great scholars of Islamic thought were taught, the neglected sciences, especially philosophy, were added to the curriculum, topics such as ethics, history, and geography. He was the first Muslim scholar to lecture on philosophy at the university of al-Azhar.¹⁰²

‘Abduh’s attempt met with opposition from two sides: conservatives objecting to modernist ideas and opposition from the Khedive ‘Abbas concerning political issues. Muhammad

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 45

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 46

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 48

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 48

¹⁰² Fakhry, Majid, ‘Philosophy and Theology’, *The Oxford History of Islam*, Ed. by J. L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 298

‘Abduh resigned from the council in 1905, after an attack on him, and he died in the same year. After his death, his influence on al-Azhar did not disappear. According to Hourani, “... more than one of the Rectors of the University during the last fifty years have been his pupils and followers. In spite of opposition from inside and outside they have been able to carry on his work intermittently, and if the Azhar today is different from what it was in ‘Abduh’s time, it is largely thank to him.”¹⁰³

5.4. The importance of the *Salaf*

Like other *mujaddidun*, Muhammad ‘Abduh emphasized the importance of following the early Muslim generations. In the Islamic literature, these generations are called as the *Salaf al-Salihin*. For this reason, Muhammad ‘Abduh and his disciples, especially Rashid Rida, are known as the “*Salafiyya*.”¹⁰⁴ Hashmi explains why ‘Abduh gave an important place to the early Muslim generations saying that they “... had produced a vibrant civilization because they had creatively interpreted the Qur’an and hadith to answer the needs of their times. Such creative jurisprudence (*ijtihad*) was needed in the present, ‘Abduh urged. In particular, modern jurists must consider public welfare (*maslaha*) over dogma when rendering judgements.”¹⁰⁵

5.5. Change

Muhammad ‘Abduh believed that the Islamic message is not completely unchangeable, though some part of it is immutable and does not change according to place and time. The regulations of Islamic jurisprudence on worship (*ibadat*) cannot be changed by any authority after the Prophet died. The rules and forms of the Prayer (*salat*), fasting (*sawm*), pilgrimage (*hajj*) are the best-known examples of Islamic worship. The second part is, according to ‘Abduh, by far the largest; these regulations relating to civil transactions (*mu’amalat*), family laws, inheritance law, penal law etc. When circumstances change, the core Islamic principles and values, which are derived from the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, should be reapplied to the new conditions, and the old rulings, which are mutable, should be replaced with new ones. Esposito summarizes ‘Abduh’s view on change saying, “Abduh

¹⁰³ Hourani, p. 155

¹⁰⁴ Gungor, Erol, *Islam’in Bugunku Meseleleri*, Otuken Nesriyat, Istanbul, 2005, p. 9

¹⁰⁵ Hashmi, Sohail H., ‘Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905)’, *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, Editor in chief: R. C. Martin, Macmillan Reference USA, New York, 2004, vol. 1, pp. 7

believed that the crisis of modern Islam was precipitated by Muslim failure to uphold the distinction between the immutable and the mutable, the necessary and the contingent. Abduh followed this approach by championing reform in law, theology, and education.”¹⁰⁶

5.6. The principles of ‘Abduh’s reformism

Hashmi claims that ‘Abduh’s reformist ideas are based on three fundamental principles.¹⁰⁷ According to Hashmi, the first of these principles is ‘Abduh’s opposition to predestination. He believed that fatalism damaged the Muslim world and caused intellectual stagnation. The second principle is ‘Abduh’s struggle to reconcile reason and revelation. The relationship between reason and revelation has been the most problematic issue since the early Islamic centuries. This problem arose in the nineteenth century and Muhammad ‘Abduh was one of the most influential Muslim scholars to respond to this problem. According to him, reason and revelation cannot come into conflict with one another, because religion and science are “the twin sources of Islam”¹⁰⁸ and they are active in different areas.¹⁰⁹ When he defended this view, ‘Abduh, although he did not deny the probability of miracles as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan did, tried to interpret the Qur’anic verses and the sayings of the Prophet relating to miracles according to contemporary scientific laws. ‘Abduh has been criticized for being influenced by Western culture and science.¹¹⁰ Although he did not go beyond the limitation of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, he struggled to explain some verses and *ahadith* in terms of Western science and civilization. Hashmi points out the third principal saying, “‘Abduh asserted a claim to renewed interpretation (*ijtihad*) of Islamic law based on the requirements of social justice (*maslaha*) of his own era.”¹¹¹

6. Conclusion

As one of the biggest religions, Islam has teachings concerning both faith and practice. The field of practice is generally divided into two parts: acts of worship (*‘ibadat*) and worldly transactions (*mu‘amalat*). Although change in the areas of faith and worship is definitely not

¹⁰⁶ Esposito, *Islam – The Straight Path*, p. 130

¹⁰⁷ Hashmi, Sohail H., ‘Reform’, *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, vol. 2, pp. 575-6

¹⁰⁸ Esposito, *Islam – The Straight Path*, p. 129

¹⁰⁹ Rahman, Fazlur, *Islam*, 299

¹¹⁰ Karaman, Karaman, <http://www.hayrettinkaraman.net/kitap/meseleler/0531.htm>, 09.06.2010

¹¹¹ Hashmi, Sohail H., ‘Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905)’, *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, pp. 7

accepted by Muslims, it is generally accepted that worldly affairs (*mu'amalat*) can and have to change according to new circumstances.

Protecting Islamic belief and acts of worship from innovations (*bid'ah*), and implementing its main principles and values in new circumstances in worldly transactions are necessary for Islam to be able to live until the Day of judgement (*yawm al-qiyamah*), otherwise, it cannot fulfil the needs of new generations and cannot preserve its purity. These two concerns have been the main issues in the history of Islamic thought and are called *tajdid* (renewal). *Tajdid* is generally defined as the struggle to revitalize Islamic faith and practice.

When we look at the all *tajdid* movements in the classical and modern period of Islamic history, we find three common issues which have become the concerns of *mujaddidun*. The first issue is returning to the basic sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and seeing them as the main authorities for Islamic belief and practice. From the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who can be called the first *mujaddid* in Islamic thought, down to contemporary scholars, all *mujaddidun* have emphasized the importance of accepting the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as the basic sources of Islam. As a result the main doctrines, principles, and values are derived from these sources and applied to new conditions in all times and places. The aforementioned effort of application, *ijtihad*, necessitates a wide knowledge of the basic sources, the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and interpretation (*tafsir*), and the Arabic language. *Ijtihad* has a vitally important place in *tajdid* and when the period know as "closure of the gate of *ijtihad*" arose, imitation and stagnation occurred immediately. The gate of *ijtihad* was opened in the first centuries of Islam and it has been opened again in recent centuries by *mujaddidun*, such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and so forth. Rejecting alien ideas and customs which are against Islamic values and principles is another common subject of *tajdid* movements. This rejection implies reaffirmation of the authenticity of the Islamic message. However, protecting the Islamic message may be achieved in different ways, by intellectual and political struggle for example, depending on where the threats come from. Al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyya are the best-known scholars who struggled to save the purity of the Islamic message.

Although they have some common features and similar stories, *mujaddidun* differ from each other in a variety of ways. Their differences are mainly dependant on the circumstances they encounter in their times and places. While the above mentioned issues are their main concerns, every *mujaddid* may address any principle or subject in order to solve his or her contemporary problems. For example, while modern revivalist movements emphasize the

place and importance of the Qur'an in Islamic thought and practice, in the classical period, revivalist scholars emphasized the importance of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad, and struggled against *bid'ah*.¹¹² As another example, in the works of the scholars of the classical period, we see intellectual and spiritual issues discussed more than political and social subjects. However, in the modern period, political and social issues are handled along with intellectual and spiritual subjects. Esposito explains the main difference between these two groups thus: "While premodern revivalist movements were primarily internally motivated, Islamic modernism was a response both to continued internal weakness and to the external political and religiocultural threat of colonialism. Much of the Muslim world faced a powerful new threat –European colonialism."¹¹³ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and Muhammad 'Abduh are the most impressive and representative renewalist scholars (*mujaddidun*) in the classical and modern periods of Islam, and, when we look at their lives, concerns and struggles, it is easy to see the characteristics and problems of their times. Muslim scholars since have been much influenced by their ideas and, for example all modern Muslim scholars have applied to Muhammad 'Abduh's ideas.

¹¹² Merad, Ali, 'Islah', *Islam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 19, pp. 144

¹¹³ Esposito, John L., *Islam – The Straight Path*, p. 124

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