SOME ASPECTS OF NEO-MU‘TAZILISM

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A. THE GENESIS OF A RENAISSANCE

About a millennium before the intellectual encounter with European rationalism the Islamic community experienced a similar inroad of extraneous ways of thought upon its religious concepts. It was only a short-while after the incorporation of Syria, ‘Irāq, and Persia into the Muslim state when the long established religious denominations started an intellectual counterattack against the revolutionary faith of Islam. The Jewish, Christian, Dualist, and Materialist schools of thought rested on the solid foundations of their systems which they had set up with the help of rational disciplines, mainly Greek philosophy. Many converts to Islam gradually began to assimilate the new religion to their old beliefs. This was done partly unconsciously, partly consciously, and in a number of cases with the intention to work for disintegration. Of course, the born Muslims of the first generations sensed the danger of disruption but it were precisely many of the sincere believers among recent converts to Islam who recognized the issue at stake in its full dimensions. Given the challenge and being well acquainted with the weapons of the opponents they started to use them in the service of Islam. Thus the school of Ḥā‘idzāl came into being. The adherents of this school are the Mu‘tazila or, in the European derivation, Mu‘tazilites, meaning literally “seceders” or “separatists”. They are mostly called “theological rationalists”, but the labels given to them vary from Freidenker des Islam to “dogmatiques intolérants a l’extrême”). Kenneth Cragg, a learned orientalist, names them a prominent group of theological adventurers and for the Lebanese scholar Albert Nader they are simply the premiers penseurs de l’Islam.

Islam as a religious polity came into existence at the outer border of cultural cross currents and with its intended plainness it seemed insufficiently equipped to master the new problems. It were the Mu‘tazila who formulated for the Muslim community the answers to menacing questions of the older civilizations. Their answers covered the religious as well as the cultural aspects. At the height of Mu‘tazilite supremacy, during the reign of Caliph Ma‘mūn and his immediate successors, Greek philosophy and science in its neo-Platonic transmission attained to a creative synthesis with Islam. In the history of the
entire realm of Islam a cultural synthesis of comparable success can hardly be found.\textsuperscript{11}

But since its defeat at the hands of the fundamentalists in 850 the Mu'tazilite school of thought has been outlawed and its teachings were no less extinct than its teachers and their writings. In Zaydi Yemen, their only reservation, they lived on in splendid isolation without relevance to the world of Islam.\textsuperscript{12} Shibli Nu'mâni, one of modern Islam's most outstanding theologians in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, rightly said that were it not for some references and hints in a few books we would not even know that such a school ever existed.\textsuperscript{13} In the Arabic-speaking world it was Muhammed 'Abduh (1849-1905) who took up their tradition for the first time in the modern age. Defending Islam against the attacks of the French minister Gabriel Hanotaux and the Arab Christian Farah Antiin he used Mu'tazilite argumentation to prove that Islam is neither fatalistic nor hostile to science.\textsuperscript{14} But, notwithstanding his unmistakable identification with numerous Mu'tazilite doctrines, he did not dare to mention the name of this school in a positive context for fear of fundamentalist opposition. However, much in his reformulation of Islamic thought urges for a reassertion of the Mu'tazila.\textsuperscript{15} A generation later, this impetus given by 'Abduh was led to logical consequences by Aḥmad Amin (1886-1954).

Again, it was not merely a rational pursuit of 'Abduh's modest beginning but also a recognition of the spirit of the time in which Aḥmad Amin lived. 'Abduh's groping endeavours to set some basic reforms into motion were more than the powerful traditionalists could tolerate.\textsuperscript{16} Similarly, 'Ali 'Abd al-Rāziq's thesis about the unpolitical character of the early Muslim community proved to be a hazardous enterprise with bitter consequences.\textsuperscript{17} Thereafter proceedings took place against Ṭāhā Ḥusayn on account of his critical study on legendary contents in the Holy Qur'ān.\textsuperscript{18} But all these intermittent advances in the struggle for a greater freedom of thought were not fruitless. The establishment of the Egyptian National University under the directorship of the liberal Luṭfī al-Sayyid created a weighty counterpoise to neutralize the Azhar University of the traditional scholars.\textsuperscript{19} Aḥmad Amin lectured Arabic literature at the National University and later on became Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Thus he experienced the self-confidence of the avant garde of free thought at its most vigorous source. Simultaneously he experienced a challenge to his attachment to Islam. As it appeared to him, to hold one's own could hardly be warranted without rational underpinning.\textsuperscript{20} These two factors led to a candid reversion to the Mu'tazila school of thought.
An additional factor was his co-operation with the Swedish orientalist H. Nyberg who edited in Cairo (1925) the *Kitāb al-Intīṣār* of the Muʿtazilite al-*Khayyāḥ*. After several centuries this was the first time that a Muʿtazilite work was made accessible to research. Formerly such research depended solely on information drawn from the polemics of the opponents of the Muʿtazila. Part of Aḥmad Amin's assistance was the translation into Arabic of Nyberg's introduction to the edition.1

But of no less importance or perhaps even more decisive than the factors mentioned above was the positive description of the Muʿtazila by the modernists in Muslim countries outside the Arab world.

In an article on *Le Renouveau du Moʿtazilisme* Robert Caspar has ably traced the beginnings of neo-Muʿtazilism from Muḥammad ʿAbduh to Aḥmad Amin. As regards the Egyptian scene we are certainly indebted to Caspar for the profoundness of his treatise. But the want of linking his research up with similar developments in the wider Islamic context has been responsible for the fallacy of considering neo-Muʿtazilism in Egypt or the Arab world an isolated phenomenon that has its origin in the person of Muhammad ʿAbduh.22

Similar reintroduction of a number of Muʿtazilite conceptions can also be found with the 18th century 'modernist' Ṣḥāḥ Wali-Allāh of Delhi. He too avoided scrupulously to mention the name of this banished school of thought. But his chief interpreter and propagator, 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi (1872-1944) was no longer scared to point out to the identity of Ṣḥāḥ Wali-Allāh's teachings with Muʿtazilite doctrines. As an example, he refers to the question of nāṣikḥ and mansūkḥ, i.e., the abrogation of certain earlier revealed verses of the Qurʾān by later ones. In his book *Ṣḥāḥ Wali-Allāh awwunkā Falsaja* 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi shows that Wali-Allāh did not consider any verse as abrogated. He gave rational explanations which were to prove the continuous validity of the verses that were said to be mansūkḥ with the exception of five. But if his method of finding out the individual purport of so-called abrogated verses is applied to the remaining five it will be discovered that especially these ones cannot at all be considered as abrogated. Their particular and everlasting independent significance becomes apparent beyond doubt. Therefore, Sindhi concludes, Ṣḥāḥ Wali-Allāh did not insist upon a wholesale rectification of the abrogation theory because the five verses which he omitted from his piecemeal explanations do not stand in need of interpretation. He could easily leave them undiscussed for the sake of appeasing the traditionalists. Sindhi says further:

"Ṣḥāḥ Wali-Allāh does not at all conform to the views of the traditionalist thinkers that certain verses in the Qurʾān are abrogated
by others. But while refuting the common beliefs and attempting to correct them he chooses the modes of expressing himself with prudence. He knows that the learned had accepted the theory of abrogation in the Qur'ān long ago. Anyone who totally rejects abrogation would be counted among the Mu'tazila and, therefore, his opinion will not be heeded. With an eye on this general trend of his contemporary scholars, Shāh Wali-Allāh endeavours to explain this question by degrees.\(^{23}\)

As far as the motivation of having recourse to the Mu'tazila is concerned that of 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhī is probably the most peculiar one. He aimed at creating a new self-view for the Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent because he felt they were too slavish in their admiration of Arab Islam. This wishful attachment to an alien past had made them overlook their own glorious contribution to Muslim history and, moreover, it had cost them the respect of other Muslim nations.\(^{24}\) Being first and foremost a nationalist, 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhī viewed the conflict between Mu'tazila and Muhaddithīn (conservative scholars of tradition) as a struggle between Persian and Arab mentalities. During the time of Ma'mūn, he writes, Arabs had lost all influence on governmental affairs. They had no symbol of greatness left to them except their language. To safeguard this residue of superiority they insisted upon the divinity of Arabic. That is why we regard most of those who attached more importance to the words than their meanings to be propagandists of Arab hegemony. Most of the Arab scholars fought for the doctrine of the Qur'ān’s eternity. A typical protagonist of Arab supremacy was Imām Shāfi‘ī. As against him the non-Arab Imām Abū Ḥanīfa held the Qur'ān to be created; similar is the case with Imām al-Bukhārī.\(^{25}\)

During the twelve years of his exile in Mecca 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhī was dejected by the Arab scholars' unwillingness to accept him and other Indian or non-Arab 'ulamā’ as competent authorities on Islam. He was particularly pained by the fact that "in the mysticism of Shāh Wali-Allāh they smell Iranianism and Indianism. And it is obvious that in their eyes Iranianism and Indianism have nothing to do with Islam."\(^{6}\) 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhī, therefore, followed the example of his ideal, Shāh Wali-Allāh, by furnishing an ideological basis for established facts. He called the Ḥanafī school of law, which is anyhow absolutely dominant in India, an “Aryan” school and declared it to be the Indian national interpretation of Islam. In contrast he regards the “Semitic” school of Shāfi‘ī as the Arab national version of Islam. In pan-Islamic bodies, however, both are to stand on equal footing.\(^{27}\)
Muḥammad Sarwar, a leading authority on Shāh Wali-Allāh and 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi, recapitulates:

"In short, with regard to the question of the Qurʾān being created Maʾmūn's advance was meant to correct the superiority complex in Arab mentality. In his view the insistence of the traditionalists that the Qurʾān is uncreated, was a stumbling block to the aspired healthy fusion of Arab and Iranian thought. As this was against the political interests of his empire, Maʾmūn pursued the matter so energetically. Mawlānā 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi says that during this period many non-Arab scholars, who were not less learned than their Arab counterparts, did believe the words of the Qurʾān to be created.28

... With Maʾmūn the Persians had gained a certain intellectual supremacy and to some extent the Muʿtazila movement was a manifestation of that superiority.29

'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi made use of the Muʿtazila to stress his point with regard to the Indian cultural sovereignty within the universal Muslim community. He was not really a neo-Muʿtazilite in the stricter sense. He adopted Iʿtizāl as a model to further national ends but precisely these are ultimately better served through Wali-Allāhīsm which represents not just an 'ajami brand of Islam but one that is genuinely Indian. Nevertheless, to Shāh Wali-Allāh we owe the inception of the Muʿtazila renovation and any propagator of his thought is bound to provide this movement with buoyancy, as did 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi.

"For him (Wali-Allāh) 'reason and argument' had perhaps a more fundamentalist significance, but they inspired the formula of neo-Muʿtazilism of Sayyid Ṭḥān, who had received his early education in the seminary of Wali-Allāh's successors in Delhi, of Shibli's scholasticism and of 'religious reconstruction' in the thought of Iqḥās.30

That 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi could so frankly disclose the Muʿtazilite inclination of his chosen Imām Wali-Allāh was mainly due to Sayyid Ṭḥān (1817-1898). Starting with him Indian Muslim modernists loved to call themselves neo-Muʿtazila, and to claim resuscitation of the aims and aspirations of that enlightened party of Islam. Thus adherence to Muʿtazilite conceptions was openly confessed in India much earlier than in Egypt. In this context too the role of Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī is to be regarded as of central importance. Before starting his preaching career in the Middle East he studied in India.31 It is, therefore, difficult to imagine that Indian neo-Muʿtazilism had no repercus-
sions on Egypt. Even if we make due allowance for the bitter dispute between al-Afghānī and S. Ahmad Khān on the concept of naturalism the least we must say is that Indian and Egyptian neo-Muʿtazilism ran parallel. Due to the isolation which British imperialism enforced on "our Indian Mussalmans" the two branches could not meet each other during the initial phase, but the increasingly closer contact between Indian and Egyptian thinkers that followed in the wake of the progressive liberation of both territories made the trends of neo-Muʿtazilism converge to a considerable extent. Nevertheless, Goldziher observed in his study of Qurʾān-interpretation that:

"It is hardly possible to ascertain whether the Egyptian endeavours are an effect of impulses radiating from India. There is some reason to answer this question in the negative. It is an important fact that the literary manifestations of the Egyptians do not betray any connection to the Indian movement. They derive their inspiration rather from genuinely orthodox Islamic authorities of earlier centuries or at least they strive to refer to them as justifying models but never to modern Indian precursors or partisans."

He goes on to say that there is an essential difference in the spirit with which both camps aspire to carry out reform:

"The Indian neo-Muʿtazila characterizes itself as representative of a cultural movement. It is the result of deliberations to which the circles of Muslim intellectuals were forced by the confrontation with the Europeans who overpowered them. Their efforts at reform are influenced by European culture. For them theological view-points are of secondary importance. They take them easy and deal with them nonchalantly and without much scruples. As against that, the Egyptian movement bears the stamp of theology. Its demands for reform are deduced from theological considerations. They are free from any outside influence. The Egyptian movement insists upon the removal of malpractices not because these are inimical to culture and do not fit into our time but rather because they are inimical to Islam and stand opposed to the spirit of the Qurʾān and the authentic traditions."

This finding of Goldziher, even if taken as a generalization, cannot be accepted as accurate. In fact, it does not do justice to either of the two groups. With regard to India he was certainly misled because his research was confined to those modernists whose works were available in English. Goldziher acknowledges this shortcoming when he says that
he is not aware of the trends expressed in the local vernacular Urdu. His observation about the cultural movement as a reaction to the impact of modern European civilization is no doubt correct when applied, as he does, to Sayyid Ahmad Khān and especially to Sayyid Amir ‘Ali. It is, however, out of focus when we examine the works of, e.g., Shiblī Nu‘mānī, who wrote in Urdu. Goldziher’s characterization of the Egyptian modernists applies to Nu‘mānī almost more aptly than to ‘Abduh. This notwithstanding, Shiblī Nu‘mānī contributed more to the revivification of the Mu‘tazila than the illustrious reformer of al-Azhar. Moreover, Shiblī Nu‘mānī did not hesitate to call the child by its name. His numerous books abound with references to the Mu‘tazila. His monograph AL-MA‘MŪN (written in 1894) was the first book devoted to a Mu‘tazilite giant and since then similar studies have been ever on the increase: ‘ASR AL-MA‘MŪN (Cairo 1927) by A. Farīd Rifā‘ī and IBRĀHĪM BIN SAYYĀR AL-NAZZĀM (1946) by ‘Abd al-Hādi Abū Rīdā are perhaps the most outstanding ones among them. Moreover, in his book on Al-Ghazālī, Shiblī Nu‘mānī has taken pains to prove that even this great Imam of orthodox Islam departed in many ways from the narrow viewpoints of Ash‘arism, the reactionary school of thought that uprooted Mu‘tazilism. He adduces numerous issues which al-Ghazālī adopted in conformity with Mu‘tazilite interpretations. By reintroducing certain Mu‘tazilite argumentations al-Ghazālī had in fact cleansed Ash‘arism of much of its anthropomorphism.

“Shiblī approached Western values from the viewpoint of Islam. His programme was not to reform Islam with some new criterion but to revive it from within, his ambitious vision including the rehabilitation of Islamic learning in its entirety, along the lines of its flowering under the ‘Abbāsīs in Bağhdād…. He envisaged his task as that of the rationalist Mu‘tazilī sect of the early centuries of Islam, to produce a synthesis of Islamic doctrine with philosophy (in that case Hellenist); and, accordingly, to combat irreligious thought.

Shiblī, unlike Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, accepted the whole of Islam, with its history; knew it and loved it; and, grasping the necessity of expressing that Islam in terms understood and appreciated by the modern half-Westernized world, set about to do so. Typical of his method, and his whole viewpoint, is that, before producing his theology for today, he wrote a preliminary history of theology in the past. . . . After his endeavours to rehabilitate theological learning at the Lucknow seminary, he set about to
organize a school of Muslim learning. Hence the Writers’ Institute (Dār al-Muṣannifin) at Azamgarh, sometimes known as ‘Shibli’s Academy’, which he instituted and endowed the year before his early death.38

Besides, in 1892 Shibli Nu’mānī visited the Near East and contact with the Egyptian modernists M. Rashīd Riḍā and M. Farīd Wajdī was maintained even after his return to India.39 An indication of the extent of his echo in Egypt we find in the Tārīkh al-Tamaddun al- İslāmī (1906) of Georgī Zaydān, whom he served as a source. This latter work set the start for Arabic cultural historiography in the modern age. It served as an inspiration for the epoch-making work of ʿAlīm Aḥmad who frequently cites Zaydān.40

We have already mentioned that ʿAbduh made use of Muʿtazilite argumentation in his defence of Islam against Christian critics. This defence was twofold, as was the criticism. There was the Christian missionaries’ attack that was to be countered on a more theological level and there was the blot put on Islam by Western secularists who considered it a stumbling-block in the way of cultural advancement. This latter criticism demanded a restatement of Muslim cultural values. Goldziher rightly calls Jamāl al-dīn al-Afghānī the initiator of the Egyptian movement and refers to his dispute with the French scholar Renan in the Journal des Debats. In a way he even acknowledges that al-Afghānī’s contribution is rather in conformity with the cultural movement of which S. Amīr ʿAlī was most symptomatic.41 If, however, we accept his previous judgement as valid with regard to Raṣḥīd Riḍā and a number of other Egyptian writers we find it restricted to the initial phase of the Manār-group, i.e., the period with which Goldziher’s study concludes.

B. THE SPELL OF SCIENTIFIC METHOD AND THE SPIRIT OF MODERATION

With Aḥmad Amīn neo-Muʿtazilism in Egypt reaches its culmination, but what the “vulgarisateur” of Muʿtazilism advocates can hardly be distinguished from the Indian revival of this school. It could not be otherwise, because in one of his early essays he candidly expressed his deep admiration for “our Indian brethren” who preceded the Egyptians in paving the way for a healthy combination of traditional Islamic learning with modern Western science. S. ʿAbd al-Khān, S. Amīr Aḥmad, and Muḥammad Iqbāl have created the “missing link” between the ancient and the modern sciences, between Muslim culture and European civilization. They are equally at home in both.42 Aḥmad Amīn lauds their efforts as setting a good example for Egypt and from then onwards
he propagates their line of thought. This has left traces not only in the collection of his essays in the leading cultural magazines *Al-Risāla* and *Al-Thaqāfa* (the essays were later compiled as STREAM OF THOUGHT) but also in his series of books on Islamic history. He cites Iqbal’s thesis on THE DEVELOPMENT OF METAPHYSICS IN PERSIA and Amir ‘Ali’s SPIRIT OF ISLAM (in FAJR) as well as Khudabakhsh, “several English writings from India”, and even HUJJAT-ALLĀH AL-BĀLIGHA by Shāh Wali-Allāh (in ZUHR, Vol. II, p. 83). Finally, it was his COMMITTEE OF WRITING, TRANSLATION, AND PUBLICATION44 which brought out the Arabic version of Iqbal’s RECONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT IN ISLAM.45

Since Ahmad Amin, like Goldziher, did not know Urdu, he was also unaware of the more theological brand of neo-Mu’tazilism that marked the works of Shibli Nu’māni and others. Amin’s advocacy of revived I’tizāl as a cultural movement stemmed from his acquaintance with the writings of S. Amir ‘Ali, above all. Whereas S. Ahmad Khan and his lieutenant, Chirāgh ‘Ali, dedicated themselves to the dissemination of Mu’tazilite doctrines46, S. Amir ‘Ali was more concerned to put the Mu’tazila in the proper historical perspective as it appeared to him. Speaking about Wāsīl ibn ‘Ata’, one of the founders of I’tizāl, he says:

“For several centuries his school dominated over the intellects of men and with the support of the enlightened rulers who during this period held the reins of government, it gave an impetus to the development of national and intellectual life among the Saracens such as had never been witnessed before . . . . 47

Mu’tazilism spread rapidly among all the thinking and cultural classes in every part of the Empire, and finding its way into Spain took possession of the Andalusian colleges and academies. Manṣūr and his immediate successors encouraged Rationalism, but made no open profession of the Mu’ṣṭazilite doctrines. Ma’mūn, who deserves more justly than any other Asiatic sovereign the title of “Great”, acknowledged his adhesion to the Mu’tazilite school; and he and his sons, Mu’taṣṣim and Wāthiq, endeavoured to infuse the rationalistic spirit into the whole Moslem world. Under them Rationalism acquired a predominance such as it has not gained perhaps even in modern times in European countries.”48

For the conservative preachers Amir ‘Ali’s historical perspective becomes altogether alarming when he deals with the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, hitherto celebrated as the restorer of the faith:

“A cruel drunken sot, almost crazy at times, Mutawakkil had the wit to perceive the advantage of an alliance with the latter party;
he would become at once the idol of the populace, and the model Caliph of the bigots. The fiat accordingly went forth for the expulsion of the party of progress from their offices under government. The colleges and universities were closed; literature, science and philosophy were interdicted; and the Rationalists were hunted from Baghdād. Mutawakkil at the same time demolished the mausolea of the Caliph 'Ah and his sons. The fanatical lawyers, who were now the priests and rabbis of Islam, became the ruling power of the State."

Goldziher is surely not far removed from truth when he calls this exuberant eulogy of the Mu'tazila as somewhat overdone. The merit of Ḥāmid Amīn lies in the fact that while upholding the basic truths expounded in the lines quoted above, he subjects the matter to profound and well-balanced historical research. The standard of his scholarship has been widely acknowledged by the Muslim elite as well as by Western orientalists. Besides, he never sought to emphasize that Islam is of basically Arab character—which is, according to Goldziher, typical of the Egyptian reform movement. The broader approach of Ḥāmid Amīn was apprehended best by Egypt's veteran literate and historian, Tāhā Husayn, who wrote in the preface to FORENOON OF ISLAM:

"I do not know any scholar of the history of Arab literature who was as successful as Ḥāmid Amīn in establishing the relationship between Arabs and Indians or between Arabs and Persians."

As a consequence of this attitude Amīn was certainly more receptive to Indian neo-Mu'tazilism than his colleagues at the university who subscribed to some form of nationalism or the other. Concomitantly he did not urge a return to or revival of the 'golden age' of the "rightly guided" three or four first caliphs, rather he was enthralled by the 'Abbāsī period and in his historical works he is at his best when dealing with the age of I'tizāl. If the cultural renaissance of Egypt before his time really resembled what Goldziher calls Kultur-Wahhabismus Ḥāmid Amīn had definitely emancipated himself from it.

In 1912 appeared in Cairo for the first time a History of the Jahmiyya and the Mu'tazila by Jamāl al-dīn al-Qāsimī followed in 1925 by Kurd ‘Ali's Ancient and Modern which contains a chapter on I'tizāl written by Tāhir al-Jazā'īrī. Still it was quite a revolutionary venture for an Azhar-trained scholar that Ahmad Amīn dedicated a dozen pages to the theological rationalists in his first historical research work, the DAWN OF ISLAM (1929). Two-thirds of the third volume of the FORENOON OF ISLAM (1936) are devoted to the discussion of their school of thought.
He deals with the development of the concept of Islamic theology ('ilm al-kalâm) extensively, explains the “five theses” of the Mu’tazila, introduces their main representatives and discusses the dispute over the question whether the Holy Qur’ān is created or co-existent with God. For centuries past this problem was considered to be dead and buried once and for all. A critical discussion of this question could not be interpreted but as heresy. His conclusion is daring in a double sense:

“I am convinced that men like al-Ma’mūn, al-Wāthiq, and Ahmad Ibn Abī Du‘ād were sincere in presenting their opinion. What they said they took to be the truth, and I agree with them that it is the truth, although I disagree with their point of view that all people should be told all the truth.”

Robert Caspar emphasizes the originality of Ahmad Amin’s exposition of the Mu’tazila which he sees manifest in its caractère littéraire et humain. This is reflected in his presentation of the most distinguished representatives like al-‘Allāf, al-Nazzām, and al-Jāḥiz as well as in the characterization of the “Mu’tazila mentality” in contrast to the gloomy faith of the masses. For the first time since the victory of the fundamentalists over the theological rationalists the history and doctrines of the latter were set forth extensively and sympathetically by a staunch Sunnī in such a way that “tout esprit impartial doit admirer l’équilibre, l’objectivité et le sens des nuances.”

With all that Ahmad Amin’s attitude toward theological rationalism is not free from ambivalence. On the one hand, he extols the Mu’tazila as the defenders of Islam. Whenever he emphasizes this function of theirs he stresses that their free-thinking knew only one restraint, viz., the a priori supposition of God’s existence and the limits set by His revelation.

“The theologian adopts the position of a loyal ‘advocate’ who is convinced that his case stands for truth and, therefore, takes up the defence. He finds arguments to evince and to corroborate what he believes to be right.”

The case is different with the philosopher. Though he may not always be able to free himself completely from all influences of background and environment he nevertheless makes objectivity the base of his research and asserts the result at which he arrives without regard for beliefs. “The position of the philosopher is that of a just judge.” And it is exactly this function which, on the other hand, he attributes to the Mu’tazila whenever he wishes to recognize in them the model of a ‘scientific’ Muslim:
"They gave reason full scope to examine all matters without putting any restriction... They did neither fix a definite sphere in which it was allowed to operate freely, nor did they recognize a realm in which it was not free to do so."63

The connection is established when he says that the theological rationalists introduced Greek philosophy into Islam, but then, again, he draws a clear line. According to him theological rationalism is differentiated from Islamic philosophy by organic growth as a genuine discipline of Islamic thought—comparable to jurisprudence (fiqh) and rhetoric (balāgha). Theology is the result of a protracted process of opening up question after question. As against that philosophy has been taken over from the Greeks as a ready-made product. It is Islamic only in the sense that Muslims have engaged in it and have written commentaries:

"Therefore, we acknowledge theology as an Islamic science, although it contains some elements of Greek philosophy. But the philosophy at which al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Sinā worked, we cannot call Islamic philosophy."64

Thus, basically, Ahmad Amin sees in philosophy the model for entirely unrestricted scientific research. On the one hand, such a model is his concern. On the other hand he sees in it the example of a one-sided assimilation to a foreign culture, it is not in conformity with his motto of "Lopping and Grafting" (al-taqlīm wa l-ta‘īm)65, but is just mere implanting. It does not correspond to his cherished ideal of synthesis. That is why at times he transfers the model of a research unrestricted by dogmas from philosophy into theology. The entrance of philosophy into Islam via theology serves as a bridge for crossing the contradiction in this construction. But his frequent references to the limits imposed by revelation makes the contradiction all the more apparent.66

"The liberation of thought"67 suffers a loss to avoid a preponderance of the foreign. Synthesis takes precedence and for the sake of preserving Muslim identity this synthesis cannot be visualized except in conformity with the supposition that the Holy Qur‘ān in its totality is the word of God:

"With the (Mu‘tazilite) theologians reference to the verses of the Qur‘ān and reliance upon them had precedence over the appeal to Greek philosophy and dependence on it. In fact, theology is a mixture of both, only that the Muslim personality finds stronger expression in it than in the philosophical studies".68
The philosophers, no doubt, built upon the wreckage of the Mu'tazila, but they did not occupy themselves with Islam except when it became necessary to bring a philosophical opinion into conformity with religion.

"With their philosophy they were like a Greek delegation in the land of Islam. They had nothing to do with the interests of the nation, no concern with the actual life of the Muslims among whom they lived except in case of a dispute. The Mu'tazila, on the other hand, wanted to rule, they wanted reforms and desired to guide. They were not content with a life in isolation." 

Thus there is also an ethical motive that caused Ahmad Amin to give preference to the Mu'tazila over the philosophers. Visualizing himself as a muṣliḥ he harboured an esprits de corps for 'reformer-craft'.

"For this reason I do not share the opinion that the philosophers assumed the role of the Mu'tazila. In fact the dominion of the traditionalists was never challenged by the philosophers. The latter praised God that he kept them safe from the former. The only desire of the philosophers was that the felicity which they felt in their other-worldly metaphysical thinking should last for ever." 

As against this the example of the Mu'tazila encourages to advance into the future, to advance toward Muslim renaissance:

"After the inquisition, the cause of the Mu'tazila lost its vigour and for about one thousand years the Muslims remained under the influence of the conservatives. This lasted until the modern renaissance which certainly exhibits Mu'tazilite traits: It knows doubt and experiment, both methods of the Mu'tazila, as is evident from, e.g., al-Nażzām and al-Jāḥiz. It has faith in the rule of reason. It believes in free-will with the resulting accountability of man. It respects the freedom of discussion and of research. Man lives in it with the consciousness of his personality. All these are principles for which the Mu'tazila fought and died. The only difference between them and the modern renaissance is that Mu'tazilism rested on religion, while the modern renaissance is based on pure reason . . . . it has no relation to religion, in many respects it is rather outside the pale of religion." 

The Mu'tazila promoted the development of personality because they liberated man from superstition by projecting a new conception of God. It was a lofty conception raised above the anthropomorphic ideas of the traditionalist simpletons who believed in an arbitrary ruler-god seated on a throne of clouds. Since this despotic god of theirs had not
bound himself to the obligations of justice, man, in his impotency, was
driven to seek the intercession of spirits (jinn) and saints. The new
conception of a gentle God of love in justice produced that spirit of in-
vestigation, that inquiring mind of scholars in the front rank of whom
Ahmad Amin—following Iqbal—finds the great Mu'tazila al-Nazzām
and al-Jāhiz. The perspective in which he sees the Mu'tazila is
apparent from his alternate use of the terms Al-Mu'tazila wa l-Muḥaddithūn
and Al-Ibtikār wa l-Taqlīd (Invention and Imitation). His
expectations with regard to the revival of the Mu'tazilite school find
recurrent expression in his writings such as:

"They stimulated thinking, incited it to do research and turned
toward problems which nobody before them had taken up. They
broached innumerable subjects in theology, in natural and political
sciences."

There is the same emphasis on the "scientific spirit" which marked
THE SPIRIT OF ISLAM as portrayed by Amīr 'Alī who wrote:

"Distinguished scholars, prominent physicists, mathematicians,
historians—all the world of intellect in fact, including the Caliphs,
belonged to the Mu'tazilite school."

With this accentuation they are, no doubt, on sure grounds. Re-
trospect to Mu'tazilism, classified as torchbearer of the scientific spirit,
is appealing not only to Muslims. Rudi Paret, most recent translator
of the Qur'ān into German, pays homage to their investigating mind
in an article entitled "An-Nazzām als Experimentator":

"It becomes clear at first sight that here we have an achieve-
ment which is highly significant for its scientific method. This
impression will be confirmed and strengthened if we compare it
with excerpts from medieval zoological literature dealing with
related subjects."

Drawing a comparison with Albertus Magnus he goes on to
say, "in the realm of natural sciences he distinguishes himself more
by observing and identifying than by theorizing. As against this
Nazzām is known to us mainly as a philosopher of nature and
speculative theologian."

Accordingly, to engage in the study of Einstein and Hobbes need not
signify a breakaway from Muslim personality. In FORENOON OF
ISLAM, A. Amin projects the ideal of a peaceful competition between
Mu'tazila ("progressive party") and Muḥaddithīn ("conservative
party"). But in a later essay he presents a rather one-sided picture of
the conflict between the two "parties". Much of the appreciation he
earned for his FORENOON OF ISLAM was due to his ability to depict minutely the distinguishing features of the two opponents. But in this essay he is out of touch with his acuteness and incisiveness. His colourless apologetics are devoid of finer shades. He maintains, e.g., that 'the entire Western science is nothing but an invention of the Mu’tazila; had their school of thought not been extinguished the West would not be able to deck itself out in borrowed plumes; instructors of the world would be the Muslims.'

But such superficiality is momentary, sporadic, surely not representative of his thought in general. It is but natural that in the eyes of an educationist so passionately absorbed by his mission as was A. Amin the achievements, however remarkable they be, always seem to fall short of his high aspirations. The noteworthy blend of patience and impatience that has been observed by so many of his friends was in all likelihood the cause of his success. His laudable contribution to Muslim historiography is to have restored the rightful image to the intellectual performances of the Mu’tazila. But he did not stop at that. Obviously he became increasingly aware that to take up an interrupted tradition by objective historical representation alone did not suffice to confront the painful consequences in which the extirpation of the Mu’tazila had resulted:

"With the acceptance of the methods of Western civilisation the Muslims began to imitate the foreigners instead of rising up on their own legs. Imitation of the foreign created inferiority complexes in them."

To liberate his students from these inferiority complexes appeared to be a rewarding task to a teacher mentally shaped by the reform tradition of ‘Abduh and Muṣṭatā ‘Abd al-Rāziq. Feeling the necessity to extenuate the remoteness of his ‘Abbāsī model and to endow it with concrete perspicuity he set himself the task of reviving the most representative writings of Muslim rationalism and free-thought. To support his ardent defence of the Mu’tazila by presenting a splendid example he chose to bring back to life one of their most captivating representatives, the long forgotten Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. Thus we owe to the diligent zeal of the undefatigable worker that was A. Amin excellent editions of al-Tawḥīdī’s KITĀB AL-IMTĀʿ WA L-MU’ANASA (three volumes 1939-44), AL-HAWĀMIL WA L-SHAWĀMIL (1951), and AL-BAṢĀ’IR WA L-DHAKHĀ’IR (1953), Although in the KITĀB AL-HAWĀMIL WA L-SHAWĀMIL, which is an exchange of questions and answers between al-Tawḥīdī and Ibn Miskawayh, the part
of the latter is more momentous both for its length and philosophical contents, yet it was al-Tawhīdī whom A. Amīn had in mind when he published it. The reason is that he considered him to be one of the greatest Arab classical authors in the fields of language and literature as well as thought. Al-Tawhīdī was obsessed by the image of al-insān al-kāmil (the perfect or the ‘super’ man) and this accounts for the humanist angle which he applies to all important problems. To A. Amīn he appeared, therefore, as most typical of an exemplary movement of acculturation with its general crisis of the self-realization of Muslims who have to arrange themselves with the forces of the day.

In many respects al-Tawhīdī’s comprehensive writings signify the apex of that “période héroïque” when Mu’tazilism reached its climax. This notwithstanding, he has failed to provide us with a synthesis of doctrines. The Mu’tazila, although agreed on the five cardinal principles, did not display that unity and homogeneity one might expect from a ‘school of thought’, and al-Tawhīdī’s work is as far from constituting a summa theologica as that of any other Mu’tazilite genius. The task of bringing forward an essential summary of Islamic verities, comparable to the product of Thomas Aquinas, was left to the post-Mu’tazilite Imām al-Ghazālī, whose drift into mysticism was followed by the aging A. Amīn. This later development signified the decline of neo-Mu’tazilism not only on a personal level but more or less on the whole. For scholars who still devote themselves to research on I’tizāl, like Albert Nader, or M. Abū Zahra (TĀRĪKH AL-MADHĀHIB AL-ISLĀMIYA) there seems to be much less personal involvement beyond the purely academic interest. Once freedom of thought in Muslim lands had broken the shackles of traditionalism I’tizāl as a tool of acculturation became less attractive. Where secularism was instituted as official or semi-official doctrine, the Mu’tazilite model lost its relevance altogether, or at least to the extent institutionalized secularism was challenged or not. In Muslim societies that do renounce secularism and choose to tread the more strenuous, because poorly defined, path toward a genuine Islamic order Mu’tazilism will surely continue to serve as a source of inspiration until its solutions are so convincingly superseded by new ones that the old ‘Abbāsī writers become truly obsolete. Before this stage is reached neo-Mu’tazilism will always find a field of operation, at least in justifying freedom of thought. With this aspect in view we may even be allowed to say that the importance attached to I’tizāl indicates absence of, or opposition to, freedom of thought in that particular Muslim society. This has been most acutely underlined by Zehdi Jār-Allāh in his book AL-MU’TAZILA:
“Had the reactionary forces in Europe been able to do away with the rationalist movement as the reactionaries in Islam did with the Mu‘tazila, this great European civilization would not have come into being.\(^8^4\)

For us as Sunnis there is much in Mu‘tazilism we cannot agree to—many details of their opinions, their philosophical fallacies, their sophistical squabbles... But there is one thing we cannot but admire, something we have to uphold and emulate: this is their spirit... Their daringly critical, liberating spirit which loves philosophy, seeks moderation and modernization, glorifies reason, sanctifies freedom, and purifies the doctrine of unity from the dross of anthropomorphism! How much do we stand in need of this spirit, how much do we require its revivification so that new vigour and new hope may rise in us and that we may solve our many present problems with its help!?^8^5

A similar line of argument led A. Amin to pronounce the following verdict on the role of the theological rationalists:

“In my opinion the end of the Mu‘tazila was one of the greatest catastrophes for Muslims, a catastrophe which, moreover, they inflicted upon themselves.”^8^6

This assertion echoes a pioneering statement from Iqbal’s lecture on THE SPIRIT OF MUSLIM CULTURE.\(^8^7\) It is indicative of the common concern of orthodox Muslim intellectuals, viz., to make their conciliatory pathway, their *via media*, to avert the portentous polarization into which the community is driven by less enlightened revivalists and radical secularists. It has repeatedly been said that the present-day constellation bears a great similarity to that of the earlier Mu‘tazila. They sounded the rally for the elements of moderation when these were pressed hard by the figuratively illiterate literalists on one side and by the extreme and most advanced Râfi‘a and Qarâmita on the other. Keeping this proposition in view the use of the name Mu‘tazila by “broad school Muslims of India” and elsewhere proves to be far less unhistorical and misleading than Duncan B. MacDonald was prone to think.\(^8^8\) This is not to say that neo-Mu‘tazilism lends itself to abundant definition of what the *ism* stands for.

“Quoi qu’il en soit, les esprits qui ne se satisferont pas des solutions simplistes—retour pur et simple aux modes de vie et de pensée de l’islam primitif ou au contraire abandon résolu de tout ‘lien’ religieux pour se précipiter dans l’athéisme spéculatif ou pratique—pourront trouver dans la tentative d’harmonie menée par les premiers théologiens musulmans une source d’inspiration
pour de nouvelles synthèses, on dût moin une méthode et un esprit les encourageant à cette recherche.  

C. MU'TAZILISM AS A FACTOR OF INTEGRATION

The supra-sectarian structure of I'tizâl was another important element responsible for the high expectations neo-Mu'tazilism aroused in Muslim modernists. The concept of al-manzila bayna l-manzilatayn (literally: stand between the two positions) with which the Mu'tazila undertook to reconcile divergent views is appealing due to its spirit of moderation. A certain Muslim school of thought, the Mu'dj'a, had taught that a Muslim who commits a serious crime is no doubt a sinner but remains, nevertheless, a Muslim. As against that the Khawârij movement regarded such criminals as apostates. Here the Mu'tazila took up an intermediary stand which, for many individuals, bridged the gulf between two extreme positions. Popular support for such an attitude could be gained with sayings of the Prophet like: khayru umûri awsa'ulâ—the best way is the middle-way.

Starting with the above-mentioned example, the Mu'tazila ultimately succeeded in creating a system that could serve as a common platform, if not as a base of rapprochement even between the two poles of Islam that seem to be so widely apart from each other, viz., Shi'â and Khawârij. It is a general trend of modernism to put an end to the age-old strife between Sunnis and Shi'is. Since this difference of 'sects' has its roots in political events and personality clashes of a distant past rather than in theological issues such a rapprochement appears, at first sight, easier than that between the different Churches of Christianity. In fact, it is sometimes alleged that Jamâl al-dîn al-Afghâni belonged to the Shi'â. The whole career of this spearhead of Muslim renaissance shows beyond doubt, that he had divested himself of all sectarian prejudices. S. 'Ahmad Khân was Sunnî by origin and S. Amîr 'Ali was Shi'i. As neo-Mu'tazilites they operated from a common base just as those early Mu'tazila in 'Irâq who came from both the camps and whom Louis Gardet describes as:

"Tiers-parti si l'on veut, parti de la conciliation, en tout cas parti politique. Les mu'tazilites "théologiques" ou spéculatifs emprunteront au vocabulaire politique cette appellation qui définissait assez bien leur position intellectuelle."

A. Amîn's critical research on Shi'îsm in DAWN OF ISLAM, the first book of his historical series, proved almost fatal. In 1931 he headed an Egyptian delegation to 'Irâq where they were invited to attend, inter alia, a lecture by a Shi'i divine who used the occasion to
deliver a most inciting discourse with attacks against A. Amin. When
the public fury had reached the boiling point, the delegates had quickly
to be brought into safety through a backdoor. For a scholar free from
any sectarianism like A. Amin this event was a painful experience. He
rightly pointed out that in his historical studies he criticised Sunnis
just as much as Shi‘is. Still he felt the urge to give forceful expression to
his objective neutrality and to do full justice to all. This was, moreover,
the demand of the spirit of his time which M. Husayn Haykal, Egypt’s
leading journalist and famous author of ḤAYĀT MUḤAMMAD (Biography
of the Prophet) advertised as “the reconciliatory thought of
Islam.” This conception points back to the Imām al-Ghazālī and
still more closely to Shāh Wali-Allāh of Delhi who made taḥḥiq (in his
vocabulary reconciliation) his leitmotif. Thus the circle takes its full
round and once again we are back to I’tizāl.

The dominant tendencies of Shi‘ism are closely related to those of
the Mu‘tazila in practically all questions unconnected with the doctrine
of the Imām. Shi‘i theologians even adopted for themselves the denomina-
tion al-‘adīyya, a name originally used by the Mu‘tazila. Many of
them even claim ‘Ali and the Imāms as founders of the Mu‘tazilite school
and while reiterating the doctrines of I’tizāl in their writings Shi‘i authors
often attribute them to one or the other of their Imāms. Especially the
Zaydi branch of Shi‘ism holds on to Mu‘tazilite doctrines, in greater
detail and more strictly than the Imamites. Their founder, Zayd,
grandson of al-Ḥusayn Ibn ‘Ali, had studied under the initiator of
I’tizāl, Wāsil Ibn ‘Aṭā’. During the final phase of Mu‘tazilism the
Baghdād school became more and more merged in the Zaydiyya.

It is the Zaydi to whom Zehdi Jār-Allāh refers when he says that the
spirit of the Mu‘tazila after being chased away from the soil of the Sunna
found refuge in the lands of the Shi‘a where, however, it lived the life of
a stranger in seclusion. Orientalists expect to find more material on
I’tizāl once the literary treasures of the Zaydiys become better accessible.
The ṬABAQĀT AL-MU‘TAZILA by one of their Imāms, Ahmad Ibn
Yaḥya Ibn al-Murtada, has been edited in 1961. Again it has to be
admitted that this very Ibn al-Murtada did not really appreciate the
integrating force of Mu‘tazilism. He was rather displeased because of
the existence of Mu‘tazila from among the Khawārīj and the Rawāfīḍ. Anyhow, the works of Shi‘a dogma display the principal division of
Mu‘tazilite writings in two parts: the first comprises chapters on the unity of God and the second those dealing with justice, concomitantly they
describe the hidden Imām as belonging to the group that stands for tawhid
and ‘adl—which was but one of the most common appellations of the Mu'tazila.

In this context it should not be forgotten that the Basra school of the Mu'tazila was pro-'Ali (preferable to Abū Bakr); under Ma'mūn, a decidedly pro-'Ali Caliph, this school gained a preponderating influence. Together with the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an 'Ali was proclaimed the best of creatures after Muhammad.

It is certainly a somewhat casual remark when Montgomery Watt says, "with the principle of ‘adl (justice) the Mu'tazila had taken over all that was best in the thought of the Khawārij,"\(^1\), for neither that principle was confined to any particular group in the community nor was it the only valuable contribution made by the Khawārij to Islamic thought. But with regard to the interaction of Khawārij and Mu'tazila the statement is, nevertheless, relevant insofar as it singles out the most important link:

"These interpretations of current conceptions are made in accordance with the principle of ‘adl, the justice or righteousness of God; in this they were the successors of the Khawārij. It is precisely here that their rationalism begins to appear."\(^2\)

The rationalist tendencies of the Mu'tazila, that were preserved in Shi'ism, had resulted in a certain liberalism which may account for the decisive participation of Shi'i intellectuals in the modernist movement. The most typical personification of this phenomenon was S. Amīr 'Ali, during the later 'Abbāsi epoch Shi'ism was well represented by the genius of al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, one of the last great theologians of I'tizāl and author of the SHARH AL-USŪL AL-KHAMSAR 'INDA L-MU'TAZILA. But Mu'tazilite rationalism, was in turn also preserved by this radical party. Due to their spirit of revolt against the establishment there arose among the Khawārij numerous theologians who opposed the generally accepted dogmas of orthodoxy. They refused to accept any other legal source beside the Qur'an and some of them even went to the extent of challenging the integrity of the Holy Book from which they wanted to exclude the chapter Joseph. In this way they continued the tradition of those Godfearing Mu'tazila who adopted a very critical attitude toward the hadith and who held similar views with regard to certain passages of the Glorious Qur'an, passages which reflect clashes between the Prophet and his adversaries on very personal matters which are, according to those Mu'tazila, not of general relevance.\(^3\) It is the moderate branch of the Ibādis who kept alive the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an. Whereas the early Khawārij held most anthropomorphic ideas, their present-day successors do not any more believe in a physical vision of God in paradise.\(^4\)
As the 'democrats in Islam' they were most bitterly opposed to the aristocratic concept of *ahl al-bayt* and the concomitant infallibility of the *Imām* in Shi‘ism. They recognize no fundamental need of an *Imām*, he is only allowable, some of them held that he should only be appointed in time of public trouble. The general Sunni view is that the appointment of an *Imām*, is incumbent upon men, according to the Shi‘is (Imāmītes, Ismā‘īlīs) the appointment is incumbent upon God. The basis of obedience is in both cases tradition. Here the Mu‘tazilite effort at reconciliation led to their conception that it was for man to appoint but that the necessity was based on reason, some argued that the basis was partly reason and partly obedience to tradition. The latter view was supported by the Zaydis and gradually it found acceptance in the strongest surviving section of the Khawārij, the Ibādis. Later development was probably a result of the migration of a Mu‘tazilite community, numbering about 30,000 members, to Tāhert, a Maghribi capital of the Ibādis.106

A. Amin had dismissed the question of the rightful ascension to the Caliphate as irrelevant to the future prospects of the community.106 For practical purposes, however, this problem calls for some sort of settlement even today as before. In heterogeneous Muslim countries Sunnī-Shi‘i clashes are often provoked by Shi‘i disrespect for Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān. For centuries it has been customary among the majority of Shi‘is to condemn these venerated “rightly guided Caliphs” of early Islam. The resulting tensions render rapprochement between the two parties very difficult. The Mu‘tazila provided a guide-post to the solution of this issue which is, so far as Shi‘ism is concerned, preserved in the teachings of the Zaydis. They do not regard the first Caliphs, Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, as usurpers as the extreme Shi‘is do; Wāṣil and with him all the Mu‘tazila regarded the Caliphate of Abū Bakr as legitimate; he left undecided the question as to who had the superior claim to Caliphate: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar or ‘Alī, but he accepted the superior claim of ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān.107 It is exactly the position taken by Amir ‘Alī who expressed his high esteem for Abū Bakr and ‘Umar on many occasions:

“Osman possessed neither the shrewdness of Abu Bakr nor the intellectual vigour or the moral fibre of Omar. His amiability and easy good-nature made him a pliable tool in the hands of his kinsfolk.”108

The progressive evaluation of ‘Alī by the Mu‘tazila has already been alluded to. According to A. Amin, this concession to Shi‘ism emanated from the desire to achieve sectarian harmony and from a genuine admiration for the man whose destiny is inextricably linked with
that of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, he is venerated and loved not only by Shi'is but by Sunnis as well. Nevertheless, resumption of the Mu'tazilite procedure to overcome sectarian strife meant, on the one hand, recognition of Abu Bakr and 'Umar by the Shi'is, and, on the other, a renewed emphasis on the exemplary role and character of 'Ali by the Sunnis. Iqbal reconstructed religious thought on lines largely different from those of the neo-Mu'tazilites who preceded him. For integrating the two parties, however, he adhered to the tradition of I'tizal:

"Iqbal was not only an ardent lover of the Prophet himself but also of his family and especially of his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, the fourth caliph who has become, in Islamic traditions, one of the most important and pathetic figures though he was, historically seen, not very clever in his political affairs. . . The meaning of the different names with which he is called — Hāydar the lion, Murtaḍā, Karrār, etc.—are set forth in the 10th chapter of the Asrār, and in Iqbal's poetry the name 'Ali or Hāydar becomes the cipher for that spiritual poverty which strengthens human personality; Hāydar is the fighter against the unbelievers of Khaybar and becomes a model of the Perfect Man."

Simultaneously, however, Iqbal dubbed the concept of Mahdism as entirely un-Islamic. In fact he envisages the SPIRIT OF MUSLIM CULTURE as a spirit of revolt against the Messianic-idea, which is an indispensable pillar of Shi'ism. Refuting Spengler's classification of Islam in THE DECLINE OF THE WEST Iqbal wrote:

"In this connexion Spengler fails to appreciate the cultural value of the idea of the finality of Prophethood in Islam. No doubt, one important feature of magian culture is a perpetual attitude of expectation, a constant looking forward to the coming of Zoroaster's unborn sons, the Messiah, or the Paraclete of the fourth gospel. . . Ibn Khaldūn, seeing the spirit of his own view of history, has fully criticised and, I believe, finally demolished the alleged revelational basis in Islam of an idea similar, at least in its psychological effects, to the original magian idea which had reappeared in Islam under the pressure of magian thought."

Following his line of argument A. Amin elaborated this anti-Mahdism still further in his booklet AL-MAHDIY WA L-MAHĐA-WIYA. The question of the Caliphate or Imamate as such is not solved by merely reshuffling the order of precedence. The assignment of a new status to 'Umar and 'Ali constitutes only one part of the deal. But the second part, the question of the system of government, was one of those
issues on which there was least unanimity among the Mu'tazila. This enabled their modern successors to imbibe more or less whole-heartedly the ideas of Western democracy, or, with regard to the Khilāfa to follow the lead given by the Khawārij. A. Amin adhered to the stand taken by the Khawārij and used their famous slogan *wa la w kāna 'abdān habashiyan* in his criticism of Shī'ī doctrine:

"Most entitled to rule is the most competent one, even if he be a Negro slave; there is no difference between the progeny of the Holy Prophet and the son of a carpenter or a hair-cutter."

He refers to a section of the Mu'tazila who, under the impact of the Khawārij, had rejected the condition of Qurashi descent for the post of the Caliph. It is for this significant revival of Khārīji thought that we have paid special attention to the correlation of this minor school with Mu'tazilism. The rationalism of I'tizāl brought extremely divergent groups together on a number of vital points. But simultaneously the influx of unresolvable divergencies of Shī'ī and Khārīji conceptions severely limited the integrating potentialities which Mu'tazilism could offer had its intellectual absorption remained confined to the major schools of Sunni Islam.

In other words: Mu'tazilite rationalism appeared very promising in eliminating sectarian differences originating in historical rivalries, because of the applicability of reason. But this very rationalism complicates integration when it enters the realm of mystery where reason is not applicable. Thus even as an integrating force the distinctive asset of Mu'tazilism is a principal obstacle: the affirmation of reason in one sphere seemingly creates an obligation which renders difficult its restriction in other spheres where it is not to be applied. This aspect, however, requires a more elaborate and separate discussion. We may be allowed to close the present chapter with a prayer that expresses, no doubt, a general aspiration of Muslims, but which is, nevertheless, characteristic of the particular emphasis given to it by neo-Mu'tazilism. A. Amīn concludes the foreword of his last book, the NOON OF ISLAM (published posthumously in 1955) with the words:

"May God . . . restore to Muslims their unity, may He bring their opposing schools of thought together!"
NOTES

3. The use of the term *sect* for such Islamic groups or movements like the Ḥāwārīj is disputable because most schisms stem from political rather than theological rifts. To call Ḥīzāl a *sect* is in my opinion particularly inappropriate, the reason will become apparent in the course of this article. Nevertheless, it has become quite a fashion to deal with the Mu'tazila as one of the sects of Islam, cf. e.g. *Les Sectes Principales de l'Islam* by Albert Nader (Bayrūt 1958) or *Tarīkh al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya wa Nashā 'Ilm-al-Kalīm 'inda l-Mūsālimin* by 'Alī Muṣṭafā al-Ghurābī (Cairo 1948).

4. The verb-root is ʿīzāl—to retire, to withdraw from. The origin of this name has been subject of much scholarly discussion, notably L. Gardet and M.-M. Anawati: *Introduction à la Théologie Musulmane* (Paris 1948) with the conclusion: "Et ainsi peu à peu les mu'tazilites eux-mêmes en vinrent à donner au nom dont on les désignait le sens de 'sécessionistes' et à croire que les orthodoxes avaient voulu l'employer pour exprimer leur réprobation. Seuls quelques écrivains conservèrent le souvenir de son origine." (p. 47).


12. That is why I regard Goldziher's insistence as out of focus; he says: "Le Mu'tazilisme s'est maintenu dans la littérature chi'ite jusqu'à nos jours. C'est donc, aussi bien au point de vue de l'histoire de la religion que de l'histoire littéraire, une grave erreur de prétendre qu'après la victoire décisive de la théologie aḥṣā'īite il n'y a plus eu de Mu'tazilisme actif. Une riche littérature de dogmatique chi'ite, cultivée jusque dans les temps modernes, est là pour démentir cette assertion."

15. Caspar op. cit., 142-172.
SOME ASPECTS OF NEO-MU'TAZILISM


21. Caspar 146, note 3; and 181, note 4.

22. Ibid.


بابره خيال مين اس معاييل مين شاف صاحب كأصل مقصود مين هي كه قرآن مجيد مين سبيه مين کوئی آتی نمضوخب نہیں، مگر وہ اس بات کو مصلحت کي وجه سبيه صراحتاہ نہیں کوئی سبکا اس طرح صراحتاہ کہنے سے ان کی بات معترلہ کي قوی سبيه مشاء بو جانی۔


27. Ibid., 208–214; Cf. my article "‘Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi—Modern Interpretation of Muslim Universalism” in Islamic Studies, June 1969.

28. Sarwar oy. cit., 303, with this view of the Mu‘tazila conflict he does not stand alone. Duncan B. MaDonald writes:

“In 234, the second year of al-Mutawakkil, it was abolished and the Qur‘ān declared uncreated. At the same time the ‘Alids and all Persian nationalism came under a ban. Practically, the status quo ante was restored and Mu‘tazilism was again left a struggling heresy. The Arab party and the pure faith of Muḥammad had re-asserted themselves.”

(Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory, 1903, reprinted 1950 Lahore, p. 137).

29. Ibid., 305–6.


31. “In fact there is very little in twentieth century Islam not foreshadowed in Afghānī” (W. C. Smith: Islam in Modern History, 48).


33. Ibid., 321.

34. Ibid., 320.

35. Al-Ghazālī (Hyderabad/Deccan 1901), 1956 edition, p. 223:
Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung, p. 323:


R. Caspar op. cit.

Cf. "Halqa Mafqūda" in Fayd al-Khāṣir Vol. I, pp. 33-34:

"... und Tora für den Herrn Muhammad, um seine Freude über die Freiheit und Unabhängigkeit der Araber zu veranschaulichen und sie vor der Schädigung der Islamischen Religion zu bewahren. Sie haben in der Tat entschieden, dass die Islamische Religion - solange sie von fremden Herrschern beherrscht wird - nicht zu sich selbst finden kann, und dass sie sich nur durch eigene Bemühungen und eigenes Engagement vor der Gefahr der Verwüstung schützen kann, die ihnen durch fremde Herrschaft droht..."

Cf. the chapters on S. Ahmad Khān und S. Amir 'Ali in Zu'amā' al-İlāhī fi l-'aṣr al-Ḥadīth (Cairo 1948).

A. Amin was chairman of the lajnat al-ta'alīf wa l-tarjuma wa l-naghf from its inception in 1914 till his death in 1954, as such he was also editor of the lajna's weekly magazine Al-Thaqāfa (The Culture), cf. his autobiography Hayātī.

Tajdid al-Taqfīr al-Dīnī fi l-İslām by Mahmūd 'Abbās (Cairo 1955).

Cf. the journal Tahdīb al-Akhlaq published by S. Ahmad Khān und Chirāgh 'Ali, and the latter's book The Proposed Political, Legal, and Social reforms in the Ottoman Empire and other Mohammedan States (Bombay 1883).

51. The orientalists Bergsträsser and Schaade were instrumental in securing for him the Ph.D. degree on account of his *Fajr al-Islām* and *Duḥā l-Islām*: cf. my article “Ahmad Amin—Modern Interpretation of Muslim Universalism in *Islamic Studies*” March 1969, p. 86, n. 14.


54. *Al-Qādīn wa l-Ḥadīth* (Cairo 1925).

55. L. Gardet op. cit., 47: “Les grands muʿtazilites... ne professaient pas sur tous les points du dogme la même doctrine. Il reste cependant qu'un même esprit les animait et que les historiens et les hérésiologues n’avaient point tort de ramener les caractéristiques de ces hardis théologiens à cinq affirmations principales: l’unité de Dieu, sa justice, la promesse et la menace, la position ‘neutre’ aux sujet du pécheur, et enfin la ‘commanderie du bien’.”

56. Caspar op. cit., 153, 158.


58. Caspar op. cit., 182.

59. Ibid.


62. Ibid., 18.

63. Ibid., 68.

64. Ibid., 20.


66. Cf. the essay “Ibtikār” (Creativity) in *Fayḍ al-Khāṭir*, V/156:

منهج المعتزليات كان منهج التفكير الحرك ظهور الدين، ويجب المسائل

كما يؤدي إليه العقل الطليق الأمن قيد الإيمان بالله و رسوله.


68. Ibid., 9, cf. *Fayḍ al-Khāṭir*, IV/288:

ارسطو ينظر في الطبيعة نظراً علماً، ونظراً فيها المعتزليات نظراً علمياً ودينياً

69. Ibid., 204; cf. Walther Braune op. cit., 109:


70. *Duḥā l-Islām*, III/205.

71. Ibid., 207.

72. Ibid., 191-7.


74. *Fayḍ al-Khāṭir*, IX/12.

75. Ibid. and 200.


و ارى ان وقعة الخليفة المتوكل في القضاء على المعتزلية ونصر المحدثين

كان لها اسوار الآثار في مهاجمة الأبتقار ونصرة التقليد
Similarly the essay “Causes of the Decline of Muslim Culture’ in Fayd al-Khāfīr, IX/9:

السبب الأول الهيأة المعزلة

77. 610.
80. Ahmad Amin—bi-qalamih wa qalam ashīqā’ih (Cairo 1955).
81. Fayd al-Khāfīr, IX/201.
82. Hayāṭi, the (unpublished) thesis on Ahmad Amin by the present writer contains a special chapter about the dependence of Amin on ‘Abduh and M. ‘Abd al-Rāziq.
84. 266.
85. 264.
86. Duḥā l-Īslām, III/207.
87. Reconstruction 149.
88. MacDonald op. cit., 196.
89. Caspar op. cit., 143.
90. Cardet op. cit., 50.
91. Hayāṭi, 264-5.
92. Cardet op. cit., 46.

“A painful sight to Amin in ‘Irāq was the division and strife between Sunnis and Shi‘a, the two great sects in Islam. In his autobiography he wrote about what he saw: ‘The difference between the Shi‘a and Sunnis does not call for strife any more than does the difference between the various schools of jurisprudence. It was the narrow-mindedness and the vested interests of some of the religious leaders which created contention, misled the people and coloured politics with religion... I put the blame for the appearance of this rift on the learned Shi‘a. They are virtuous and could dispose of these problems with a word if they wished, and I do not understand why they do not so.’ (Hayāṭi 1958 edition, pp. 262-3). Before this visit to ‘Irāq, Amin had already enraged the Shi‘a with his criticism of their sect in Fajr al-Īslām. This had provoked an angry reply from their leader Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Ḵāshi al-Ghīṭā in his book on the Origins of Shi‘ism and its Bases (Aṣl al-Shi‘a wa Usūlulāhā, Būyārīt 1990). He said that Amin had based his chapter on the Shi‘a upon the books of their opponents, the Sunnis. Later Amin again, and more elaborately, criticised their sect in his Duḥā l-Īslām, basing his comments on their own books. However, it must be said in fairness that Amin had also with impartiality attacked the principles of the Sunnis in Fajr al-Īslām and Duḥā l-Īslām and angered some of their members too. (For criticism of Ahmad Amin’s opinions concerning Sunnite principles, cf. Muṣṭafā al-Sībā‘ī, al-Sunna wa Makānatuhā fi l-Tashri‘ al-Īslāmi, Cairo 1960; M. Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī; Al-Tafsīr wa l-Mufassiran, Cailo 1961).”

93. Hayāṭi, 264 ; cf. his preface to the third volume of Duḥā l-Īslām, page d:

و لقد لقيت في هذا الجزء من العناء ما لم أهله في غيره من الأجزاء، لأن العقائد الدينية قد عملت فيها الالهاء أكثر مما عملت في غيرها من منحى الحياة، فتحرير المذهب كما يتصوره أصحابه في غاية الصعوبة...


97. 'Ubayd-Allah Sindhi; *Falsafa*, 36 ff.


100. Introduction to Ibn al-Murtada's *Tabaqāt al-Mu'tazila* (Bayrut 1961) by Susanna Diwald-Wilzer, p. XVI.


102, Ibid., 68.

103. Goldziher; *le Dogme et la Loi de l'Islam*, 162.


106. *Zuhr al-Islām*, IV/48:

وماتت فاطمة ولا وأبوها وعمها، فلا ندر أن يرى الخلاف قابلاً بعد مرور نهض الثلاثة قرون، بل إلى الآن، ويد خلف الأمة في الدين، وتقسم المذاهب المختلفة، بل من العجب أن تستمر إلى يومنا هذا مع التناحر والتفافهم، 

نعم، إنك تتهم أن تكون المسألة ما يصح أن يعرض له المؤرخون اليوم، وأمس وغداً، شأنها في ذلك شأن المسائل التاريخية، أما أن تكون سبباً للتناحر والتفافهم بعد زوال أصحابها بزون، فأمر يدعو إلى العجب.


111. *Reconstruction*, 144.


113. Ibid., 78.


وأكبر ما نتوقع أن يعتب على أخواننا من الجماعة في سلكته، ويزيف بعض آرائهم، وأن يجيبوا من دعوى النزاع والوقاية، ثم يتع ذلك بشيء من النقده والتاريخ.

فأقيه أقرب علماً أن لم أقصد في كل ساقته إلا ما اعتقد حقًا وصوابًا، وقامت ندمات أن أثار بايت وعادتي، وذهبني فلا أثمر رأية صنيًا لسنته، ولا أجري رأياً معنزاً إلا عزالة، أو اشتبه إلى تشييع وانت أكر أن القارئ رأى معن معي.

أني قد أثري الراي السني واجeses عليه الراي المعزلي أو الشيعي أو وكنت أثرب المعزلي لمذهب لا لاتصر له في كل آرائه، ودافت عنه في جميع آرائه، ولكن أراني نصيرة الحق خيراً من نصرة المذهب.