Islamic Reformism and Christinaity. A Critical Reading of the Works of Muhammad Rashid Rida and his Associates (1898-1935)

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Chapter Three
Al-Manār versus Evangelism: Rashīd Riḍā's Perceptions of Social and Theological Aspects of Missions[1]

What follows here is a systematic treatment of Riḍā's various polemics against missionary writings and activities of his time. The discussion is mainly meant to put Riḍā's works on Christianity (discussed below), which he published in separate treatises, in its appropriate historical context in relation to the previous two chapters.

The present chapter traces his responses to the missionary work in the Muslim world, and his confrontations with some of the missionaries in Egypt. It will be divided into eight sections: 1) his early general understanding of the role of missionary work in each religion, and the development of his thinking over the years in this early phase (1900); 2) his perception of missions as part of western colonialism in the Muslim world, and the concrete examples through which he tried to find a link between both forces; 3) *al-Manār*'s confrontation with the British authorities in Egypt because of its attacks on missions and severe critique of Christianity; 4) Riḍā's evaluation of the missionary educational work and its (dis)advantages among Muslims; 5) the role of other Muslim writers and readers who reacted to missionary work in *al-Manār* from various regions in the Muslim world; 6) Riḍā's short-lived project of Dār al-Daʿwā wā al-ʾIrshād; 7) his zealotry in propagating Islam as part of his anti-missionary strategies; and lastly 8) his criticism of the religious official scholars of Al-Azhar in Egypt and their mild responses to missions.

3.1. Mission is the Life of Religion

In 1900, Riḍā wrote two articles on the importance of propaganda for the spread of religions, when the Muslim public opinion had become frustrated about news that circulated on the missionary success in converting Muslims in Africa. Riḍā chiefly discussed their ideas in order to relieve the sad feelings of Muslims about the conversion of Muslims to Christianity and to stimulate them to do more work in propagating Islam. He explained to those despaired Muslims the real reasons behind the spread of religions, asking them to develop a better understanding of missionary success. He rejected the common thought among Muslims that the spread of religions was only dependent on governments, when they use it as a policy tool. Governments can only facilitate

[1] An earlier version of the chapter has been read at the conference: "Social dimensions of mission in the Middle East (19th and 20th century)", the Faculty of Protestant Theology at Marburg University and the Fliedner-Foundation Kaiserswerth, Düsseldorf-Kaiserswerth (13th-15th March 2006).

the growth of a given religion, which has already been spreading on its own for many other fundamental reasons.[2]

In his analysis of these articles, Juan R. Cole notes that Riḍā's encounter with non-Islamic missionaries led him to develop a 'missiology' *(Ṭarīq al-Daʿwa)* for Islam, which was characterized by both modern pragmatic and traditionalist Islamic aspects. This missiology, Cole argued, rested upon the explanation of the dynamics of the spread of religions in terms of organization and efficiency rather than in terms of the intrinsic truth of the message or the intervention of a supernatural agency. This secular explanation helped him to account for the successes of Christian missionaries in Africa in converting Muslims.[3] Cole has actually based his observation only on these two particular articles with no consideration of Riḍā's later, more paradoxical views. His remark is true when it comes to Riḍā's interpretation of the missionary enterprise in historical and social terms. Looking at Riḍā's whole understanding of the subject-matter, as we shall see, one would easily conclude that he totally renounced such views when it came to the struggle between Islamic expansion and the endeavours of Christian missions over the whole Muslim world. In his conviction, the spread of Islam was caused by the power of the 'truth' of its divine message as compared to the 'absurdity' of the Christian creed.

As we shall see throughout the chapter, Riḍā's views of Christian missions were not always coherent. In the two articles we just mentioned, Riḍā argued that all religions (including Islam) would successfully spread by propaganda regardless of its falsity or truth. But the rationality lying in true religions could in many cases help them to dominate over false doctrines. In historical terms, however, Riḍā maintained that without propaganda religions would have died out or vanished, as it had been attested that false beliefs easily disseminated by propaganda, while true ones had disappeared when its followers exerted no vigorous missionary effort. But he insisted that due to its power and rationality Islam had higher esteem and more authority than all other religions.[4]

Riḍā moreover asserted that the methodology of religious propaganda should contain two aspects to achieve success: philosophical proofs for the intellectual elite and the rituals and sermons for the lay people. A missionary therefore needed specialized skills and knowledge. These include knowledge of the language and customs of the local population, and a broad acquaintance with their religious sects and rites. He should be capable of delivering the message according to their mentality and in words that they would easily grasp. Riḍā also stressed that the propagandist should be convinced of the inner truth of his message and must act according to it, evincing great endurance and a

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[2] *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Daʿwah Ḥayāt al-ʾAdyān (Mission, the Life of Religions)', vol. 3/20 (Jamādā al-ʾŪlā 1318/September 1900), pp. 457-463; 'Al-Daʿwah wā Tarīquhā wā ʾĀdābuhā (Mission, Its rules and Methodologies)', vol. 3/21 (Jumādā al-Thāniya 1318/September 1900), 481-490. The articles were written as a reaction to an article in the Egyptian paper *al-Muʾayyad* of Sheikh ʿAlī Yūsuf (September 1900) on the success of Christian missions in Sudan.

[3] See, Juan R.I. Cole, 'Rashīd Riḍā on the Baha'i Faith: A Utilitarian Theory of the Spread of Religion', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 5/3 (Summer 1983), p. p. 284, p. 276.

[4] *Al-Manār*, vol. 3/20, p. 463.

never-failing hope of success. This emphasis on the internal strengthening of the community rather than on foreign mission was natural in a situation where many Muslim countries were under European colonial rule. Muslims saw the need for self-defence and self-strengthening as more important, in a situation of economic and political dependency, than the need for an aggressive expansionism.[5]

Riḍā was much impressed by the methods followed by Western missionaries in propagating their religion. He demanded Muslim religious men to follow their model of training and propaganda. He summarized the merits of the success of Christian missions over Muslim propagandists in various points. He admitted that missionaries received better training in secular sciences and the knowledge of the modern world than Muslim religious leaders. Christian preachers also exerted effort to learn foreign languages and translate their publications in the local languages, while Muslim scholars sometimes considered learning foreign languages as a 'deviance' from Islam. Other factors were their amiable treatment and deep awareness of the traditions, desires, religious sects, norms and mentalities of the local population. Christian missionaries also used to present their religion in a way that would attract followers of other religions. Riḍā mentioned an example of missionaries in China, who succeeded in attracting Buddhists by dressing themselves in the native clothes of the indigenous people and carrying the statues of their gods. In his view, missionaries had more unyielding endurance in propagating their religion as compared to that of Muslims. In Asia they suffered humiliation, but remained steadfast and resolute. An example of that was a story he read in a missionary periodical that one of the early missionary groups in China remained for nearly eight years preaching with no case of conversion. Their request to return back home was rejected. They received a demand from their mother institution in the West to remain determined in preaching the Word. As a result of their sincere missionary conviction, the local Chinese people began gradually to accept their work and converted to Christianity.[6]

Cole did not refer to other attitudes shown by Riḍā, and which implicitly contradict his lofty admiration of the religious aspiration of mission in many other places in his journal. One year after the publication of these articles, for instance, Riḍā stated that although there were many Christians preaching their religion because they believed in Christianity as the only truth, there were many individuals who committed themselves to missionary activity only because of the salaries they received from religious institutions. They used their job in most cases as a source of living without any conviction in spreading the truth.[7] In his view, the only 'true' mission of solid faith in Christian history was that of the disciples of Jesus; and any later missionary attempt was false. Riḍā constantly stressed that the Islamic *daʿwa*, on the contrary, had been gaining millions of converts over centuries despite the frail state of Muslims, their lack

[5] Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-285.
[6] *Al-Manār*, vol. 3/21, pp. 488-89.
[7] *Al-Manār*, vol. 4/16 (Rajab 1319 /29 October 1901), pp. 624-26.

of knowledge, the fragility of Muslim leaders and the weakness of their civilization and culture, which represented an obstacle in the way of the expansion of Islam. Despite their scientific, social and political shortcomings, Riḍā argued, Muslims still preached their religion only motivated by their conviction of the truth of the Islamic message. Missionary groups, on the other hand, were given all protection by their governments. European supremacy in the East 'made them speak loudly […] Christians preach their religion motivated by politics, followed by money, and protected by weapons'.[8]

In the meantime, Riḍā, backing his statements, enthusiastically quoted a full Arabic translation of some speeches delivered by the English Canon Isaac Taylor (mentioned above in the introduction) on the successful expansion of Islam in Africa.[9] In 1887, Taylor announced to a British audience at a church conference in Wolverhampton that Christianity, because its message was 'too spiritual' and 'too lofty', had failed to civilize the savage, barbarous Africans.[10] Islam, he continued, had been more successful than Christianity in ridding that continent of its evils – evils like cannibalism, devil worship, and human sacrifice. The Islam-Christianity debate evoked many discussions in British newspapers, especially the *London Times* for several months after Taylor's speech. Taylor admitted that missionaries did some good, but suggested that they failed because their efforts were misdirected.[11] Riḍā's enthusiasm about Taylor's critique of the modest results achieved by missions in Africa somehow contradicted his above-mentioned theory that the spread of any religion relied on organized propaganda. In his thinking, 'although the vast sums of money and all the precious lives lavished upon Africa, Christian converts were reckoned by thousands, Muslim converts [without missions] by millions'.[12]

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[8] Ibid., p. 626.

[9] See his articles, 'al-Muslimūn fī ʾIfrīqiya (Muslims in Africa)', *al-Manār*, vol. 4/22 (Dhū al-Qiʿda 1319/February 1902), pp. 846-852; 'al-Islam wā al-Muslimūn', *al-Manār*, vol. 4/24 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1319/March 1902), pp. 924-932; 'al-Qurʾān wā al-Kutub al-Munazzalah (Qurʾān and Revealed Books)', *al-Manār*, vol. 5/2 (Muḥarram 1320/April 1902), pp. 52-64.

[10] Among Taylor's works is: *The origin of the Aryans: an account of the prehistoric ethnology and civilization of Europe*, London: Scott, 1890. More about him and this debate, see, H. Alan C. Cairnes, *Prelude to Imperialism: British Reactions to Central African Society*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965, pp. 211-214. His talk is also mentioned by Andrew Porter, 'Late Nineteenth – Century Anglican Missionary Expansion: A Consideration of Some non-Anglican Sources of Inspiration', in Derek Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History* 15, Oxford: Blackwell, 1978, pp. 354-357; Thomas Prasch, 'Which God for Africa: The Islamic-Christian Missionary Debate in Late-Victorian England,' *Victorian Studies* 22 (Autumn 1989): 51-73. The next year Taylor visited Egypt. He compiled his memoirs under the title: *Leaves from an Egyptian Notebook*. Taylor's speeches had a strong influence on the ideas of the father of pan-Africanism Edward Wilmot Blyden. See, Edward Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967. Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan-Negro Patriot 1832-1812*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 76. Temple Gairdner was alarmed by both Taylor's and Blyden's praise of Islam; see T. Gairdner, *The Rebuke of Islam*, London, 1920, pp. 156-157.

[11] Cairnes, ibid, p. 211.

[12] See his two articles, *al-Manār*, 'al-Taʿaṣṣub (Fanaticism)', vol. 1/26 (Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1316/September 1898), pp. 483-93; vol. 1/27 (Jumādā al-ʾŪlā 1316/October 1898), pp. 504-16;

3.2. Mission and Colonialism

Like many Muslims of his age, Riḍā perceived the Christian missions as an integral part of the colonial presence in the Muslim world. He was convinced that Europe made use of religion as a political instrument for mobilizing European Christians by inflaming their 'fanatic' feelings against other nations. This was manifest in the spread of missions in Asia and Africa as 'tools for conquest'. An example of that was the occupation of the Chinese harbour Kiao-Chau (1898) after the murder of two German Catholic priests by a mob in November 1897. On the pretext of protecting German missionaries in China, Kaiser Wilhelm II dispatched his brother with ships to enforce new German territorial demands, and the practical cession of the harbour from the Chinese government.[13]

In his analysis of the association of missions with colonialism, Riḍā drew historical parallels, such as the collaboration of the Church in medieval Spain with the authorities in converting the Muslims and the Jews.[14] He gave the example of the British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), who was deeply imbued by Christian theology, and had hatred towards Islam.[15] Another case was the English politician, Lord Salisbury, who, according to Riḍā, was reported to say: 'we should retrieve what the Crescent had taken from the Cross'.[16]

One of Riḍā's readers in East Africa reported to him cases of compulsory conversion of Muslims by the German colonial authorities. Riḍā remarked that the Germans tried to spoil the relation between Arab and indigenous inhabitants. Due to their excessive 'egotism' taught by Bismarck, the Europeans, in Riḍā's view, were the only race throughout human history, who used compulsion in matters of religion. In comparison to the German behavior in their colonies, Riḍā praised the British colonial policy of tolerance, asking the 'Orientals to give them their preference over all other European governments'.[17]

In an article on 'the Muslim World and European Colonialism', Riḍā accused the Dutch authorities in Indonesia of adopting new schemes for

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and the reaction of one of his readers, vol. 1/28 (Jumādā al-ʾŪlā 1316/October 1898), pp. 535-540.

[13] *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/26, p. 494. M. P. Shiel (ed.), *China in Arms: The Final Revision of The Yellow Danger*, with an afterword by John D. Squires, Kettering, Ohio: The Vainglory Press, 1998.

[14] *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/26, p. 498.

[15] About his religious affinity, see, for example, David William Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

[16] *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/26, p. 498.

[17] *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Mānya fī Sharqay ʾIfrīqiya wā Tanṣīruhā al-Muslimīn (Germany in East Africa and Christianizing Muslims), vol. 7/18 (Ramaḍān 1322/24 November 1904), p. 720. Riḍā also received another letter from one of his readers in Dar as-Salam about discriminating the Arabs and the destruction of one of the mosques there, when two Greek employees complained about the voice of the *adhān*, vol. 7/20 (Shawwāl 1322/23 December 1904), p. 799-800.

Christianizing the whole Archipelago.[18] He also criticised Indonesian students in the Middle East (especially in Mecca and Egypt) for their indolence in religious knowledge. He accused them of staying for long years in another country without committing any effort to read its newspapers or magazines or works of history, sociology and geography. Such a small country as the Netherlands was able to colonize and exploit millions of people. In Riḍā's view, the Dutch had followed a unique and successful way in evangelizing Muslims, especially in Depok, a village between Batavia and Bogor. He was told that missionaries were dispersed among Muslims in remote villages, while 'enlightened' Arab Muslims were entirely forbidden to enter them. They also studied religious superstitions and 'false' beliefs that circulated among the locals, describing them as part of the people's faith in order to convince them of the 'fallacy' of Islam. They supported their arguments by focusing attention to the deteriorating state of Muslims as compared to the flourishing state of their Christian fellow citizens in knowledge, wealth and status. As a result, the inhabitants of these regions converted to Christianity, and started to 'hate' Muslims. Riḍā cynically explained that 'when a Muslim entered [these villages], he would not find shelter. None of the inhabitants would give him a cup of coffee or water; nor would they meet him or talk to him. Was Jesus dispatched to instill animosity and hatred among people to such a degree? Or was it the European policy which was further from the religion of Christ?'[19] Riḍā's critique also focused on the situation of Muslims on Java as the most ignorant and lax in religious matters. For him, 'if the Dutch continued in their policy, all Indonesian islands would easily change into another Spain'.[20] Riḍā's attack on the Dutch policy in the East Indies in that regard might sound extreme. According to Harry J. Benda, many Dutchmen in the Indies had great hopes of eliminating the influence of Islam by rapidly Christianizing the majority of Indonesians. These hopes were partly anchored in the fairly widespread, if facile, Western belief in the superiority of Christianity to Islam, and partly in the erroneous assumption that the syncretic nature of Indonesian Islam at the village level would render conversion to Christianity easier in Indonesia than in other Muslim lands.'[21] In his consultations to the Dutch goverment, Snouck Hurgronje welcomed the educational work of Christian missions in Indonesia, but deplored their confessional bias, and discouraged missionary work in the areas of religious Muslim majorities.[22]

Also seeing it against the historical background, it should be emphasized that Riḍā wrote his article in 1911, when the Christian statesman A.W.F.

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[18] *Al-Manār*, 'al-ʿĀlam al-ʾIslāmī wā al-Istiʿmār al-ʾUrūbī (The Muslim World and Western Colonialism)', vol. 14/5, pp. 347-352.
[19] Ibid., pp. 349-350.
[20] Ibid., p. 350. An unnamed Muslim notable in Singapore informed Riḍā, for example, that the number of converted Muslims to Christianity on Java exceeded 100.000 person every year. See, vol. 14/1 (Muḥarram 1329/January 1911), pp. 49-50.
[21] Harry J. Benda 'Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 30/4 (December, 1958), pp. 339.
[22] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/5, p. 345.

Idenburg (1861-1935) was the governor-general (1909-1916) of the Indies. Idenburg was a fervent member of Abraham Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party. The newspaper *Soerabaiaasch Handelsblad* passed a judgment upon him: 'we have a governor-general here whose thinking is too much influenced by Kuyper, who has too many apostolic aspirations.'[23] Idenburg's Christianization policy even included his wish to officially involve civil servants in public festivities on Sundays, and to discourage Sunday markets.[24]

The Javanese journal *al-Wifāq* (edited by the Meccan publicist Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Fatta)[25] reported to Riḍā that the Dutch authorities intensified their 'prosecution' of Muslims in Java by inspecting worshippers during the time of the prayer. The journal commented that Muslims should always obtain permission whenever they wanted to establish congregational prayers, whereas missionary workers were given all the space to hold their gatherings and spread their publications over the whole island.[26]

Riḍā believed that, unlike the Indonesians, Tatar Muslims in Russia were difficult to convert because of their strong faith and firm adherence to the native language and culture.[27] Tatar Muslims were actually suspicious about Russian education and clothing. In their eyes, the ignorance of Tatar language would directly imply Christianization.[28] Christian missionary activity also strove to shape Muslim education, literature and publishing, as they recognized its powerful impact on Muslim locals.[29]

Riḍā made his point clearer by stating that the first step of European colonial conquest started with establishing missionary schools, hospitals and orphanages. Attendants of their institutions as a result would begin to doubt their doctrines and social constituents. The community would consequently be divided into two classes: those Westernized who tried to replace their traditions with European habits, and those of conservative minds who cling firmly to the

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[23] About his policy, see, Pieter N. Holtrop, 'The Governor a Missionary? Dutch Colonial Rule and Christianization during Idenburg's Term of Office as Governor of Indonesia (1909-1916)', in Pieter N. Holtrop and Hugh McLeod (eds.), *Missions and Missionaries*, Boydell Press, 2000, pp. 142-156.

[24] Ibid., pp. 147-48.

[25] About his journal, see, Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, 'The Arabic Periodicals of the Netherlands East Indies', in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152:2 (1996), p. 240-41, see also, Riḍā's review of Fatta's magazine, vol. 25/2 (Rajab 1342/February 1924), p. 159

[26] *Al-Manār*, 'Al-ʾIslām fī Jawā (Islam in Java)', vol. 26/6 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1344/October 1925), p. 480.

[27] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/5, pp. 350-351. About Riḍā's views of Muslim education in Russia, see, for example, 'Al-ʾInfāq ʿalā al-Taʿlīm al-ʾIslāmī min Māl al-Ḥukūmah al-Rūssiyā' (Spending of Russian National money on Islamic Education), *al-Manār*, vol. 9/3 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1324/April 1906), pp. 205-207.

[28] Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780-1910*, Brill, 2001, p. 250; cf. A. Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience*, Stanford, California, 1986.

[29] See, Agnès Kefeli, 'The Role of Tatar and Kriashen Women in the Transmission of Knowledge, 1800-1870', in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds.), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 250.

past.[30] The clash between the old and new would consequently engender aggression from the side of Muslims against missions or Eastern Christians: a good excuse for colonial states to use military intervention under the pretext of protecting the interests and religion of minority groups in the East.[31]

3.3. Confrontation with the British

As has already been mentioned, Riḍā praised the tolerance of the British in their colonies as compared to their German counterpart in East Africa. But due to Riḍā's political activism and the pro-Caliphate tone in his journal, British authorities in Egypt entertained the idea of sending its founder to exile in Malta during the First World War.[32] The British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes (1879-1919) described Riḍā after their meeting as 'a leader of Pan-Arab and Pan-Islamic thought. In conversation he talks as much as he writes. He is a hard uncompromising fanatical Moslem, the mainspring of whose ideas is the desire to eliminate Christian influence and to make Islam a political power in as wide a field as possible.'[33]

As early as January 1899, the British Commissioner of Egypt Lord Cromer delivered a speech in the Sudan, in which he promised the Sudanese people to establish justice and religious freedom under the British Protectorate.[34] Riḍā believed that such 'daring' promises could not be fulfilled without definitive measures to bring missionary work to an end. It would be a 'false' pledge in case they would be given the opportunity to intensify their work there.[35]

As a matter of fact, the British were well aware of the Muslim religious sentiments. In order to maintain their political and economic interests in Egypt, they did not publicly encourage missionary work.[36] William Temple Gairdner criticised the British in Egypt by saying that 'the Mohammedans think that the government is simply running the country for them; that they are the only people; that the British officials are afraid of them, and have implicitly declared the superiority of Islam. Such policy can bring nothing but difficulty and disaster in the future. It is cowardly and unchristian; it is not even neutral. It ought to be wholly changed. The British official may one day see that this subservience to the Muslims and neglect of his own faith gain him, neither respect, gratitude, nor affection of the people, but the very reverse of all three.'[37]

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[30] *Al-Manār*, 'al-ʿĀlam al-ʾIslāmī wā al-Istʿmār al-Urūbī (The Muslim World and European Colonialism), second article, vol. 14/6 (Jumāda 1325/June 1911), pp. 432-440.
[31] Ibid., pp. 433-434. Cf. *al-Manār*, vol. 17/7 (Rajab 1332/June 1914), p. 510.
[32] Haddad, 'Nationalism', p. 268.
[33] 'Select Reports and Telegrams from Sir Mark Sykes', report no. 14; as cited in ibid., p. 268.
[34] *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/42 (Shaʿbān 1316/January 1899), p. 827.
[35] *Al-Manār*, vol. 1/44 (Ramaḍān 1316/February 1899), p. 859.
[36] Mustafā Khālidī and 'Umar Farrūkh, *al-Tabshīr wā al-ʾIstiʿmār fī al-Bilād al-ʿArabiyya*, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1957, p. 148.
[37] W.T. Gairdner, 'Islam under Christian Rule', in E.M. Wherry, et al (ed.), *Islam and Missions*, New York and others: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911, pp. 195.

During his stay in office, Lord Cromer had to interfere once or twice in cases of Muslims who were converted to Christianity by American missionaries.[38] One of these cases was a student at Al-Azhar from Jerusalem, whose name was Maḥmūd (later Boulus or Paul), who entered the class of catechumens in October 1905. He confessed the Christian faith in February 1906.[39] When the boy's father learnt about that, he came to Egypt to take his son back. When the father appealed to Lord Cromer, the latter invited the boy to his office, and told him that he was old enough to profess whatever religion he preferred. Cromer asked the boy to sign a document to that effect in his presence and that of other witnesses. The Prime Minister of Egypt and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were present during the interview and witnessed the boy's confession.[40]

It cannot be argued that Cromer had joined missionary activity. However, he was not constrained to provide 'the missionary, the philanthropists, the social reformer and others of the same sort, with a fair field. […] their interests are excellent, although at times their judgments may be defective. They will, if under some control, probably do much good on a small scale. They may even effect reforms more important than of the administer and politician who will follow cautiously in their track and perhaps reap the result of their labour'.[41] He was also not reluctant to describe Islam as an 'inelastic faith that contained within itself the seeds of its own political decadence. As the power of the Crescent waned before that of the Cross, the Frank was gradually transformed from being a humble receiver of privileges into an imperious possessor of rights'.[42] He also took pride in the so-called superiority of the Christian nations over the Muslims, quoting the words of Sir William Muir when saying: 'Christian nations may advance in civilization, freedom, and morality, in philosophy, science, and the arts, but Islam stands still. And thus stationary, so far as the lessons of history avail, it will remain'.[43]

In 1913, Lord Kitchener (1850-1916), a British commissioner following Cromer, made an attempt to ban the publication of *al-Manār* due to its anti-missionary writings. Kitchener was 'in full sympathy with the work that the [missionary] Press is trying to accomplish'.[44] He also had personal interviews with Samuel Zwemer (1867-1952), and Arthur T. Upson of the Nile Mission,[45] who were critical to *al-Manār*'s attacks on missionary activities. Zwemer saw it as one of the mouthpieces of hostility against Christianity and missions.[46]

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[38] Bishrī, *op.cit.,* p. 566.
[39] Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 362.
[40] W.T. Gairdner, *Thornton*, pp. 203-204. See also: Farrūkh*, op. cit.*, p. 148.
[41] Cromer, *op. cit,* p. 642.
[42] Ibid.*,* p. 794.
[43] Ibid., pp. 637-38.
[44] J. Christy Wilson, *Apostle to Islam: A biography of Samuel M. Zwemer*, Michigan: Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1952,, p. 80.
[45] Ibid.
[46] S. Zwemer, *The Disintegration of Islam*, New York and others: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916, pp. 210-216.

Upson reviewed the contents of one of *al-Manār*'s issues by attacking Riḍā and his journal: 'we close this issue of *al-Manār* feeling the worse for having spoiled our minds with some of its blasphemies, but we are glad to know that the editor [Riḍā] has been severely censured for his attacks upon our Lord Jesus'.[47]

Magnus, a biographer of Kitchener, described him as a British colonial officer with religious sentiments.[48] 'The British imperialism was in its heyday during Kitchener's lifetime, and there was confusion in regard to the meaning of the word. Some regarded it with horror as a cloak for barefaced exploitation; while others hailed it with exaltation as the religious mission of a great people elected by God. Kitchener believed in the reality of the white man's burden. He considered that the reluctance to shoulder the idea of imperialism would have constituted a cowardly betrayal of a missionary duty, which God, or providence, had imposed upon the British race'.[49] His 'correspondence with the Coptic Archbishop of Sinai and the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem were of absorbing interest to him and received equally assiduous attention'.[50]

Riḍā stated that after Lord Cromer's rule political and religious freedom guaranteed to the Egyptians became on the wane, especially when Lord Kitchener was reported to have sympathy with missionary work. For instance, Lord Kitchener demanded the Egyptian Minister of *al-Awqāf* (Religious Endowments) to cancel his project of establishing a hospital in Old Cairo, as it was to be situated nearby the British missionary hospital Herber. He feared that the Egyptian hospital would attract the attention of Muslims away from the missionary one.[51] Riḍā was disappointed with the fact that although the Egyptian government had provided missionary societies with many facilities to establish educational and medical centres for the goodwill of the country, they did not cease to maintain an anti-Muslim attitude in their tracts and publications.[52]

Driven by *al-Manār*'s anti-missionary stance, a group of American and British missionaries approached Lord Kitchener to take measures against Riḍā's

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[47] The author reviewed volume 17/2 (Ṣafar 1332/January 1914) of *al-Manār*; see Upson, 'Glance', p. 395.

[48] About his life, George Arthur, *Life of Lord Kitchener*, 3 vols., London, 1920. Philip Magnus, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist*, London, 1958. Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt*, London, 1894.

[49] Magnus, *ibid*., p. 24.

[50] Arthur, *op. cit*., vol. II, pp. 345-346.

[51] *Al-Manār,* 'al-Tabshīr 'aw al-Tanṣīr fī Miṣr: Māḍīhī wā Ḥāḍiruh wā Mūsāʿadat al-Ḥukūma lahū (Missionary work: Its past and present and the Government's support for it)', vol. 33/3 (Muḥarram 1352/May 1933), p. 234. As it was difficult for them to pronounce, the Egyptians used to call Herber hospital as Hermel. M.M. Sulaymān, *al-Ajānib fī Miṣr: 1922-1952*, 1st ed., Cairo: 'Ayn For Human and Social Studies, 1996, p. 294. Kitchener was the first British governor to establish a new ministry to take control of *al-Awqāf* in Egypt, which had been administered previously by the Khedive. This reform, however, provoked controversy. Unlike Cromer and Sir Eldon Gorst, who had considered it to be impossible to interfere, Kitchener had no such inhibitions. He transferred the control of those endowments to a Minister, assisted by an under-secretary and a council of five, who were all Muslims. Magnus, *op. cit*., pp. 271-72.

[52] *Al-Manār*, 'Ḥuriyyat al-Muslimīn al-Dīniyya fī Miṣr (Religious Freedom given to Muslims in Egypt)', vol. 16/12 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1331/November 1913), pp. 958-959.

friend Tawfīq Ṣidqī. They tried to convince him of ordering a publication ban against Riḍā's journal. Riḍā was convinced that missionaries aimed to silence his journal's critical voice towards them, as it was the only Muslim mouthpiece countering their allegations on Islam.[53] It was Ṣidqī's article on the image of Jesus in both Christian and Muslim traditions that caused the conflict. In that article, he accused missionaries of sowing hatred and animosity among people. He also asserted that 'most Europeans (or even all of them) have made lying and breaking promises lawful in politics by using verses of the New Testament.' The same held true, Ṣidqī went further, for the lawfulness of wine-drinking, adultery, excessively violent wars for the minimum of reason, and animosity.[54]

In his diary (7-8 November, 1913), Riḍā recorded that ʿAbd al-Khālik Tharwat (1873-1928), the then Public Prosecutor and later Prime Minister, visited him in his missionary Society of Daʿwa in Cairo (see below in the present chapter) to discuss the matter. Tharwat informed Riḍā that Kitchener was personally involved in the matter and formally complained to Muḥammad Saʿīd Pasha (1863-1928), the then Egyptian prime minister. Kitchener's interference came as a result of a protest by the American ambassador whom missionaries managed to approach as well. After seeing Kitchener's report, Riḍā insisted that his journal would not stop writing against missions so long as they attempted to 'defame' Islam and preached that Muslims should adopt Christianity. He developed his reply only as a refutation to their 'misunderstandings' of Islam, which he saw as binding on every capable and knowledgeable Muslim (see, Appendix IX).[55]

The following day, Riḍā accompanied Ṣidqī to the office of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minster explained the impact of colonial control over the country. He himself was concerned with missionary writings on Islam and complained many times to British officials about the probable danger of their work in causing riots in Egypt. Ṣidqī's article, according to him, had three disadvantages: 1) it would not bear any result in diminishing their anti-Muslim campaigns, 2) it would result in a publication ban on *al-Manār*, and 3) as a civil servant Ṣidqī had no right to involve himself in such affairs, otherwise he might be dismissed from his position. The Prime Minster appreciated the religious role played by *al-Manār* in society, but requested Riḍā to bring his anti-missionary campaign to a standstill in order that he would convince Kitchener to withdraw his decision.

Riḍā explained that his publications in this respect were divided into two different sections: his commentary on the Qur'ānic passages related to Christianity and their logical and historical authenticity, and his defence of

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[53] Ibid.

[54] M. Tawfīq Ṣidqī, 'Naẓrah fī Kutub al-ʿAhd al-Jadīd wā Kutub al-Naṣārā (A view on the New Testament and the scriptures of Christians)', *al-Manār*, vol. 16/8 (Shaʿbān 1331/August 1913), pp. 598-599. He referred to the verses of Luke (22: 36-38) in which Jesus requested his followers to sell their garments and buy a new sword, while it is stated in Matthew 5: 44 that the believers must 'love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you'.

[55] Riḍā's diary, 7-8 November, 1913, private archive in Cairo.

Islam against missionary attacks. Having been asked by the Prime Minister about the allegation of missionaries that it was him who usually started the attack, Riḍā answered that his journal was always in a 'defensive arena'. He had become dissatisfied with the colonial 'tyranny and the great amount of the religious freedom given to missionaries, as measured up to the limitation imposed upon Muslims.' The Prime Minster had agreed with him on this point, but asked him to calm down the tone of his journal.[56] Finally Riḍā pointed out that he did not see Ṣidqī's anti-European statements before publication, otherwise he would have corrected or deleted them. He moreover promised that Ṣidqī would discontinue his strongly-worded writings on mission, confining his writings to medical and scientific extracts and articles in the journal.[57] Riḍā in fact stopped publishing Ṣidqī's articles after this meeting.

In 1921 one of Riḍā's informants in the Sudan reported to him that the British authorities banned his journal at the request of Christian missions there. According to him, copies were confiscated and burnt before reaching his subscribers. Riḍā complained to Sir Wingate, the British administrator (1899–1916) of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, but with no result.[58]

At another level, Riḍā accused colonial politicians in Egypt of excluding devout Muslims from high positions, especially in the field of education. They instead would rather employ their own 'fanatic' clergymen. He referred here to the British 'consultant' in the Egyptian Ministry of Education Douglas Dunlop, who first came to Egypt as a Scottish missionary teacher.[59] Dunlop was known among Egyptian nationalists as 'the assassin of education in Egypt'. He, for example, opposed the use of the Arabic language in Egyptian schools. Furthermore, he encouraged only the hiring of British teachers who knew no Arabic, and were then expected to convey subjects such as history, geography, and mathematics entirely in English.[60]

3.4. Missionary Schools

Riḍā's *fatwās* for his readers in *al-Manār* (see, chapter 7) could construct a general idea of his views of the social dimension and influence of missionary schools on the Muslim local population. His answers to the questions raised to him from various regions concerning attending these schools were apparently undecided, and sometimes incoherent. We find examples of complete acceptance of their existence and useful role in promoting the social life in the

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[56] Ibid.

[57] *Al-Manār*, vol. 16/12, p. 960.

[58] *Al-Manār*, 'al-Siyāsa wā Rijāl al-Dīn fī Miṣr (Politics and men of religion in Egypt)', vol. 22/7 (Dhū al-Qiʿdah 1339/August 1921), p. 523-535. The ban continued up to 1926, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 33/3, p. 235.

[59] *Al-Manār*, vol. 22/7 (Dhū al-Qiʿdah 1339/August 1921), p. 523-525.

[60] Muna Russell, 'Competing, Overlapping, and Contradictory Agendas: Egyptian Education Under British Occupation, 1882-1922', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 21/1-2 (2001), p. 54.

Muslim world, while in other cases he harshly attacked their methods of attracting Muslim children to Christianity through their educational institutions.

The earliest queries Rida received concerning missionary schools did not directly deal with the question whether it was allowed to join these schools or not. In 1903, a Muslim student at a Christian school in Cairo asked Riḍā for a religious excuse not to fast during the month of Ramadan. Having been enrolled in this school with its overloading work and schedule, it became much more difficult for him to fast. Riḍā utterly found no excuse for breaking fasting just because of work. The student's work during the school day was no hard task, especially in the winter with short days and moderate weather. The only solution that Riḍā gave to this pupil was his prayer that God would help the young man to endure fasting.[61]

In the following year, an anonymous petitioner from the city of Asyūṭ (a southern province in Egypt predominately inhabited by Christians) raised a question with regard to an invitation by an American missionary school to attend its yearly festivals. Was it allowed for Muslims to attend missionary activities, while they mostly started with religious prayers and supplications upon Jesus as the Son of God? For Riḍā it was no problem to attend their festivities. He stated that only the emulation of non-Muslims in their religious rites is to be considered apostasy; but it was not forbidden to witness their rites and listen to their prayers, except in case one would fear an inclination towards their religion (such as in the case of children).[62]

In an earlier article (1903), Riḍā praised the American College in Beirut as the 'most ideal' educational institute for Muslims. He also described its then second President Howard S. Bliss, the son of its founder Daniel Bliss, as a 'divine philosopher rather than a Christian priest'.[63] Although he was deeply religious, Howard Bliss was 'very modern in his ideas […] and accepted the implications of Higher Criticism and tried to make the students good members of their own sects, rather than Protestants'.[64] Riḍā's eulogy of the College came at the request of his Christian friend Jabr effendi Ḍumiṭ (1859-1930), a teacher of Arabic at the College in Beirut (see, Appendix X).[65] Ḍumiṭ was grateful to Riḍā for his words, confirming that his request was not for personal interests, but for the public interest. In a letter to Riḍā, Ḍumiṭ wrote: 'I will not say that

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[61] *Al-Manār*, Vol. 6/17 (Ramaḍān 1321/November 1903), p. 823.

[62] *Al-Manār*, 'Ḥuḍūr ʿIbādat al-Naṣārā', vol. 7/6 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1322/June 1904), pp. 239-240.

[63] *Al-Manār*, vol. 6/14 (Rajab 1321/October 1903), pp. 566-67.

[64] Elie Kedourie, 'The American University of Beirut', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 3/1 (October, 1966), pp. 78-79 (Quoted below, 'American')

[65] Letter to Riḍā, Dumit, 25 October 1903. His full name is Jabr Mikhāʾīl Dumit was born in Tripoli, and died in Beirut. He received his education at American missionary schools in Lebanon. He traveled to Alexandria in 1884 and worked as an editor at *al-Maḥrūsah* newspaper. Later he became an interpreter during Gordon's campaign in the Sudan. From 1889-1923 he had been working as a staff member at the American College in Beirut. See, *Ziriklī*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 108-109.

God would sustain me to reward you, as you [Riḍā] are like the sun that expects no acknowledgement or fame.'[66]

Six years later Riḍā again issued a straightforward *fatwā* for the Muslim students at the College permitting them to remain enrolled despite the compulsion practiced by its administration to attend religious classes.[67] Until the end of the nineteenth century the Trustees of the College remained adamant in their refusal to relax the rules concerning attendance at prayers and at Sunday school or to follow separate catering facilities for non-Christians. In the same year, Muslim and Jewish students went on strike against compulsory church attendance, and the Trustee affirmed: 'The College was not established merely for higher secular education, or the inculcation of morality. One of its chief objects is to teach the great truth of Scripture; to be a center of Christian light and influence; and to lead its students to understand and accept a pure Christianity; and go out to profess and comment it in every walk of life'.[68]

Riḍā's *fatwā* came as a result of the request of Muslim students to him during his visit to Beirut (1909). They complained to him about the College's compulsion for all students to attend religious classes. They complained that they were asked to attend the daily chapel for fifteen or twenty minutes to listen to readings from the Bible. In the college there were societies for the Armenians, Greeks, Egyptians (both Christians and Muslims). There were the Young Men Christian Association and the Jewish Student Society. But their request for a permission to establish their own Muslim society was totally discarded. They were neither allowed to celebrate the *mawlid* (the day of the Prophet's Birth), while some of the American teachers made several negative and depraved comments on Islam.

To calm down their sentiments, Riḍā delivered a speech appealing them to keep up their Islamic bond firmly, and be faithfully dedicated to their religious practices and identity. In his sermon, he likewise asked them to be more tolerant with their non-Muslim classmates, while unifying themselves. He stressed the scientific significance and societal benefits of such Christian schools in spreading science and techniques in the Muslim lands, even though they were sometimes harmful for one's belief. Riḍā told them:

> The founders of this school have sought to use education, which benefits all peoples, as a method to spread their languages and religious beliefs into the hearts and minds of whom they educate. That is a lesson for us. We should learn from it and improve ourselves so that we should be more qualified for this achievement than we are today. You must all cooperate, work together and seek the protection

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[66] Letter, Dumit to Riḍā, Beirut, 25 October 1903, Riḍā's private archive in Cairo.

[67] See, *al-Manār,* vol. 12/1 (Muḥarram 1327/21 February 1909), pp. 16-26, vol. 12/8, pp. 637-640.

[68] The Annual Report, as quoted in Kedourie, 'American', pp. 83-84. For more about the history of the College, see, for instance, Bayard Dodge, *The American University of Beirut*, Beirut, 1958; id., 'The American University of Beirut', *Journal of World History*, vol. 4 (1967), pp. 780-800.

> of group effort and consensus. You may face in this world malice and pressure to drive you away from the right path, away from your desire for cooperation and agreement. It behooves you, therefore, to try to be tolerant of all unacceptable treatment you might encounter from those around you [at the college], and to respond with courtesy in work and deed […] Although your conduct should seek only to satisfy your own conscience, and to apply your beliefs to your deeds, you should hold yourselves above intentional disobedience and stubbornness towards your superiors or your teachers, and above snobbery and false pride in your achievements.[69]

Riḍā tended to believe that America had no political aspirations in the East. For this reason, most American missionary schools in the East in general and the American College in Beirut in particular were better, more independent, and less prejudiced as compared to other Western religious educational institutions of countries with political ambitions in the East (such as England). The fair-minded Muslims would know perfectly well and could estimate the zeal of the founders of these religious institutions to spread their religion, wishing that there would emerge among Muslims similar 'generous' groups who would spend their money for the sake of propagating Islam by means of 'useful knowledge' passed through schools and 'good acts' through medical aid. As compared with their Muslim fellows, Christians were geared up to spend a lot of money for many years despite the consequences of converting none of the Muslims. Riḍā moreover argued that missionary institutions sometimes exaggerated the number of converts by annually sending illusive reports to their indigenous institutions in the country of origin in order to raise more funds.[70]

In his analysis, Riḍā maintained that the scientific advance offered by such schools might encourage some Muslim parents to choose them for their children because they firmly believe that a Muslim would never turn into a Christian. Another group would abandon them because of their influence on the children's doctrines, following the *fiqhī* (legal) views of prohibiting Muslims, despite their firm belief, to be involved in venerating other places of worship. For Riḍā, this view could only be applicable to Catholic and Orthodox schools (especially of the Jesuits), which also compelled Muslim children to follow their religious practices, including the veneration of images and saints. He argued that when Muslim students of the American College in Beirut refused to attend religious sermons in the Church, the administration insisted that they would either join them or be dismissed. According to Riḍā, the Ministry of Interior interfered to solve the problem by asking the American Consul in Beirut to appeal to the school, either to abandon the idea and build a

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[69] As translated by M. Haddad, 'Syrian Muslim Attitudes Towards Foreign Missionaries in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', in Teijirian & Simon, *op. cit.*, p. 259 (Quoted below, 'Syrian').

[70] *Al-Manār,* vol. 12/1, p. 17.

mosque inside the school where students could easily practice their religion, or to refuse the enrollment of Muslim students.[71]

Riḍā maintained that a teacher at the American College (probably Ḍumit) had once asked him about his religious views concerning the attendance of Muslim students of Christian classes. He argued that these classes contained ethical and religious admonitions which are also embodied in Islam. The college neither taught Muslim students Christian traditions, nor did it attack other beliefs. Riḍā stressed that these students reject to attend these classes on the basis of the view of the majority of Muslim jurists, who prohibited entering the places of worship of other religions. Although there is no legal Islamic basis of prohibition with regard to entering these places, Riḍā stressed that the choice of the students should be respected. Having respect for schools and houses is one of the pivotal corners of upbringing, but respecting one's belief and consciousness was higher than showing respect to the school regulations only. Thus, compelling those students to do so is worse, as this would corrupt their morality, and there would be no hope to instill them with esteem towards their families or nations.[72]

To conclude, Riḍā requested the college's administration to gain the respect of those students by dealing with them justly in a way comparable to their Jewish and Christian classmates, who were given permission to establish their own societies. They should also avoid all kinds of assaults against Islam in their lectures. If the objective of these lectures was to create harmony among the college's members, away from any political and religious tendencies, they should have attempted to gain the side of the Muslim students by allowing them to have their own activities. He also stressed that the college had only two choices, either to be tolerant in accepting the demands of the Muslim students, or to send them away. In Riḍā's own terms:

> If they made the first choice, Muslims and 'humanity' would appreciate their deed; and they would draw closer to the 'real core' of any religion by establishing harmony among people: something shared by Islam and Christianity. But if they decided upon the second alternative, they would teach Muslims another new lesson that might cause harm to them [as Christians] and [to Muslims] among whom they lived by causing discord and strengthening fanaticism. However, it would be stimulating for Muslims to be more self-sufficient and competitive in establishing their own religious societies, which would found similar schools.[73]

Although Western education, in Riḍā's view, contained plenty of social benefits, it still had its impact upon the feelings of the Muslim umma. Muslims

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[71] Ibid., p. 21. In 1914 the Ottoman Government passed a law that forbade the College from giving religious instruction to any, except to Protestant students, see, Kedourie, 'American', p. 84.
[72] Ibid., p. 20-22.
[73] *Al-Manār*, vol. 12/1, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

should hasten to have good command of the sciences taught in these schools. He advised Muslim students at the American college to gain more scientific eligibility in new educational methods and to translate all the knowledge they acquired into Arabic in order to achieve progress in the whole umma. They should also endure any kind of ill-treatment or inequality practiced by the college, and to be flexible and wise enough by obeying the rules of the college.

Nonetheless, Riḍā gave preference to the view of allowing Muslim children to remain in such schools as long as they did not have ones alike. But they should avoid any disadvantages resulting from instructions which are incompatible with Islam. Besides, Riḍā advised Muslim students to strengthen their religious identity by: 1) studying Muslim books explaining the truth of Islam and the differences between Islam and Christianity; 2) reading Muslim works refuting the Bible and its doctrines; 3) observing all Islamic acts of worship at these schools, such as the five daily prayers, and to fast on the days they were required to attend the Christian religious classes; and 4) keeping their concern of competition with those people, trying to combine both religion and science, and to establish similar schools.[74] Although he presented such solutions for the students, Riḍā at the same time earnestly called upon the Muslims of Beirut to get their children out of the American college and the other missionary schools, and hasten in raising funds for establishing their own Islamic college to replace such institutions.[75]

A further change in Riḍā's attitude towards the college took place after he had received a letter from a certain ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Ghandūr from Beirut at the end of the academic year 1909. In his letter, al-Ghandūr informed Riḍā that the president invited Muslim and Jewish students in his office and asked them to sign an oath that they should carry out certain religious duties in the following year including attending the church service and studying the Bible. The student who would be absent from prayers a number of times would be suspended.[76] In response, Riḍā no longer showed any courtesy or respect to the college, and totally prohibited Muslims from looking into or listening to books belonging to any other religion. Imitating the behavior of such people in their religious acts is unquestionably forbidden in Islam. He moreover attacked 'foreigners […] of spreading their prejudice and partisanship in the East, [while] continuing to claim that the East was the birthplace of fanaticism.'[77]

On the relation between missionary schools and colonialism, Riḍā stressed that powerful colonial nations always attempted to reshape the social, national and religious identity of their colonized people by promoting educational systems according to their political agenda.[78] The idea was further developed in his answers to the afore-mentioned Danish missionary Alfred Nielsen (see,

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[74] *Al-Manār*, vol. 12/8, pp. 639-40.
[75] Ibid., p. 640.
[76] Haddad, 'Syrian', p. 262-263.
[77] Ibid., p. 263.
[78] *Al-Manār*, 'al-Taṭawwur al-Siyāsī wā al-Dīnī wā al-Ijtimāʿī (Political, religious and social developement in Egypt', vol. 21/5 (Dhū al-Qiʿdah 1337/August 1919), p. 274-277.

chapter 7). Riḍā made it clear that the most obnoxious thing done by missionary schools, even the American ones (which he still considered to be the most honest), was that they would make the students doubt their religion, without convincing them of the soundness of Christianity. Thus many of the students would become hypocrites and atheists. The same held true for Christian students and followers of other religions. Such institutions, however, brought benefits by disseminating pure and applied sciences in the Muslim countries, particularly agriculture, commerce and medicine. Although such advantages were worthy of gratitude, they were not attributed to the missions themselves in any way. The specialists in these fields at missionary schools were far remote from the instructions and rulings of the Bible.[79]

Apart from the services rendered by these schools and hospitals, Riḍā went on, they were mainly established to help the 'colonial covetousness', as it was clearly expressed by Lord Salisbury (1830-1902), the well-known English minister, who said: 'Missionary schools are the first step of colonialism'. Riḍā thus insisted that there was an espousal between colonialism and mission:

> Missionary schools, first of all, cause division among the populations of the land where they are established. The people, as a result, fall into intellectual disagreement and dogmatic doubts. The 'foreigners', in that way, would succeed in hitting the people of the country by one another. This will in the end give the colonial powers the opportunity to get them completely under control, humiliate and deprive them of their independence and wealth.[80]

Riḍā maintained that missionary activities had proved to be tragic and catastrophic for many countries by causing hostility and division among the peoples they were sent to. In Syria, for example, dissidence and religious strife were mostly caused by the activities of missionary schools in the country. Deplorable religious fanaticism was weaker before the coming of those missions, even though religious knowledge among Christian groups had been less. He also argued that the converted locals did not become better than the people of their former religion with regard to virtues, morals or the worship of God.[81]

An anonymous Tunisian Muslim also asked Riḍā for a *fatwā* on enrolling Muslim students at secular (*lā dīniyya*) and Christian schools, where emphasis was laid upon foreign languages, while Islamic and Arabic subjects were inappropriately lacking. Nevertheless, they would have the privilege to be exempted from a three-year military service after their graduation in such schools. [82]

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[79] Umar Ryad, 'Rashīd Riḍā and a Danish Missionary: Alfred Nielsen and Three Fatwas from *al-Manār', IslamoChristiana*, vol. 28 (2002), pp. 87-107 (Quoted below, 'Nielsen').
[80] Ibid.
[81] *Al-Manār*, vol. 25/3 (Shaʿbān 1342/March 1924), pp. 188-194.
[82] *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/3 (Dhū al-Qiʿdah 1350/March 1932), pp. 178-181.

Riḍā not only opposed these secular schools, but also severely criticised missionary ones, labeling them as much more dangerous for Muslims than the secular ones. He further denoted that teaching Arabic and Islamic doctrine and rules to children is the duty of every Muslim parent. Unless these schools enabled them to teach their small children Islamic values, there would be no excuse for them to put their children there. For Riḍā, it was no convincing justification to send their children to secular schools only for escaping military service. Muslim parents, however, are obliged to teach their children discipline as well. These schools, in his view, were less dangerous than the schools of 'the preachers of Christianity'. It has been attested, he argued, that such religious schools were solely established by missionary organizations to propagate their religion, and pupils attending their lessons were demanded to practice Christian doctrines, worship and ethics. Missionaries also follow many 'satanic' methods to keep Muslims away from Islam, which vary according the state of knowledge or ignorance of the Muslim. Secular schools were established by secular organizations also 'not only to propagate atheism, but also rejecting all Prophets and their message of guidance'.[83]

Atheism, Riḍā lamented, was in different degrees clearly widespread among those who studied at secular and missionary schools. The outcome of attending these schools could be seen in various ways. Among their graduates were the *al-Muʿaṭṭila,* who do not believe in God, His angels, Books, Prophets, and the Day of Resurrection. Some of them were only religiously committed to the political and social affairs of Islam, such as marriage, inheritance, feasts, funeral ceremonies, but did not perform prayer, pay *zakāt* (almsgiving), nor go on pilgrimage. Some of them acknowledged the sacredness of Ramadan, and sometimes fasted, but they did not abandon what Allah prohibits, such as wine-drinking, gambling, *zinā* (adultery and fornication) and usury. Finally, there were some of them who prayed and fasted regularly, but they did not know the minimum amount of what the real Muslim should know about the Islamic creed, values and rulings.

Most of the children learning at such schools would be ignorant of *al-Ma>lūm min al-Dīn bi al-Ḍarūra* (the necessary minimum amount of knowledge that every Muslim should know). They would also give precedence to foreign languages over Arabic, and ignore that Islam stipulates Arabic as the language of Islam in order to unify Muslims under one banner in terms of worship, morals and law. The education of Muslims at such missionary and secular schools caused Muslims many 'evils' in their religion, life and politics. The reason pushing Muslims to enroll their children in such schools was the lack of similar well-financed Muslim organizations, and the fact that there was no real Muslim government that would take the responsibility of establishing such institutions. If Muslims established their own schools, there would be no need for the education[al institutions] of the enemies of their religion, which they deemed very necessary for their life. For him, establishing similar schools

[83] Ibid., p. 180.

was *Farḍ Kifāya*, a duty that must be fulfilled at least by a sufficient number of Muslims.

Finally, he contended that Muslim parents, even those well acquainted with Islam and capable of raising their children in a real Islamic way, would be only rarely able to preserve their children's doctrines strong, when they join these missionary schools. As an example to support his ideas he told that his brother al-Sayyid Ṣāliḥ (d. 1922) once sent his own daughter to the American School for girls in Tripoli-Syria. Despite his deep knowledge of Islam and ability to debate with missionaries, he failed to convince her of the inaccuracy of hymns praising the saviourship and divinity of Jesus, which she had memorized there. As a result, he took her out of this school even before she finished her studies.

3.5. Encounters with Missions in *al-Manār*

By the end of the nineteenth century, the behaviour of some Christian missionaries in Cairo was strongly criticised in the Egyptian press. Reports on some Protestant missionary institutions that tried to entice Muslims to convert by giving them money were spread over the city. Members of the English Missionary School (situated in Muḥammad ʿAlī Street, Cairo) rejected such rumours.[84] Riḍā quoted at length the views of the Christian paper *al-Falāḥ* (Success) of the Syrian journalist Salīm Pasha al-Ḥamawī as an example of 'enthusiastic' Christian writers, who dared to censure Western missions for their 'transgression'. The paper suggested Muslims to constitute their own missionary associations in order to challenge Western missions. Riḍā, as a result, dwelled upon the idea of initiating a classroom in the Ottoman School of the Syrian nationalist Rafīq al-ʿAẓm (mentioned above, chapter 2) in Cairo, where students would receive religious lessons.[85]

In the same period, Riḍā took a prominent place in two Muslim associations: The *Shams al-ʾIslām* (Sun of Islam) and *Makārim al-ʾAkhlāq* (Good Manners). The two organizations aimed at combating Christian missions, and the revitalization of religious consciousness among Muslims. Riḍā became a member of the Sun of Islam on July 20, 1899.[86] He also toured Egypt in order to help founding new branches for the association in various provinces. He also consistently praised the benevolent activities supported by the association, especially religious propagation and the establishment of new educational institutions.[87]

Riḍā, however, criticised the 'overzealous and fanatic' reaction of both Muslims and Christians. He attributed the origin of fanaticism and disharmony among the followers of the two religions to the behaviour of some religious and secular leaders, who worked only for their own interests. As for his own

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[84] 'Al-Daʿwah ʾilā al-Dīn (Preaching Religions)', *al-Manār*, vol. 2/9 (Muḥarram 1317 /May 1899), pp. 140-143.
[85] Ibid., p. 143.
[86] Riḍā's diary, 1899, private archive in Cairo.
[87] *Al-Manār*, vol. 2/37 (Rajab 1317/November 1899), pp. 589-590.

rejoinders against Protestant missionary writings, he stressed that they were purely defensive against their attacks on Islam. At the same time, he criticised some newspapers, which vehemently attacked missionaries with the purpose of satisfying the desire of 'fanatic' Muslims. By doing so, they intended to inflame the tension between both groups and to cause harm for the society.[88] Some of Riḍā's Muslim readers used to send him missionary publications on Islam so that he might refute them in his journal. In many cases, he would 'soothe their anger' by confirming that missionary writings were 'futile and that their attack on Islam had its advantage that it would renovate the spirit of research and reasoning and refurbish the sense of religious zealousness and national consciousness among Muslims.'[89]

A prominent example of Riḍā's polemics against missionary writings was his answer to the publication of the Arabic translation of the missionary book *The Sources of Islam* by Rev. W.St. Clair-Tisdall (1859-1928) of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1904. Riḍā's answer was part of an intense controversy in the Egyptian press against the book.[90] It was originally published as a Persian treatise in which Tisdall attempted to show that the Qur'ān was partly derived from ancient Arabian traditions, and that there was also Judeo-Christian influence on its narratives. In his foreword to the book, Sir William Muir concluded that 'if it be shown that much of this grand book [the Qur'ān] can be traced in human sources existing daily around the Prophet, then Islam falls to the ground. And this is what the Author proves with marvelous power and erudition.'[91] Compare this praise with the recent judgment of Tisdall's work made by Western scholars, who described it as 'a shoddy piece of missionary propaganda'[92], and 'not particularly scholarly essay or even a polemical one […] It uses the salvation history of Christianity to refute that of Muslims.'[93]

Riḍā ridiculed the book as 'false camouflage' that would only affect weakly-minded Muslims. The author applied similar methods used by European scholars to 'demolish' Judaism and Christianity with investigating the origin of

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[88] *Al-Manār*, 'Arīḥiyyat al-Tasāhul wā al-Wifāq (Munificence of Tolerance and Harmony)', vol. 7/22 (Dhū al-Qi'dah 1322/22 January 1905), p. 879

[89] *Al-Manār*, vol. 5/11 (Jumādā al-'Ākhira 1320/September 1902), pp. 436-439.

[90] W. S. Tisdall, *Tanwīr al-'Afhām fī Maṣādir al-'Islām*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1904; idem, *The Sources of Islam: A Persian Treatise*, translated and abridged by Sir William Muir, T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 1901; idem, *The Original Sources of Islam*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1905; See also, *id*., *The Religion of the Crescent or Islam: Its Strength, Its Weakness, Its Origin, Its Influence*, London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1895. About his life, see, Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, New York, 1997, p. 673.

[91] Tisdall, *Sources*, p. vi. Tisdall's work has been reprinted in *The Origins of the Kuran*, edited by the pseudonym and former Muslim Ibn Warraq (ed.), *The Origins of the Kuran*, New York: Prometheus Books, 1998, pp. 227-292.

[92] François de Blois, 'Book Review [of Ibn Warraq's] *The Origins Of The Koran: Classic Essays On Islam's Holy Book*', *The Journal Of The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2000, vol. 10/11, p. 88.

[93] Herbert Berg, 'Book Review [of Ibn Warraq's] *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays On Islam's Holy Book*", *Bulletin Of The School Of Oriental and African Studies*, 1999, vol. 62/3, p. 558 (557-558).

their sources by proving them of an inaccurate and unholy nature. However, Muslims, in Riḍā's eyes, would continue to believe in the invulnerability of their Holy Book. Imbued by his missionary zeal, Tisdall was enormously puzzled by the methods of the Higher Biblical Criticism on his religion; thus, he attempted to attack Islam with 'the very weapon Christianity had been fought with.'[94] Riḍā was also very skeptical about Tisdall's knowledge of Islam: his method was no less spurious than that of other missionary writings in their attack on Islam. In constructing the sources of Islam, Riḍā believed, the author depended on the *Isrā'iliyāt* (Israelite Lore) and legendary narratives attributed to insignificant authors.[95] Riḍā's general view of this Lore was in line with that of his teacher Muḥammad ʿAbduh, viz. that such stories had been fabricated by the Jews with the purpose of undermining Islam.[96]

In 1911, the French orientalist Alfred Le Chatelier (1855-1929) published his history of Protestant missions in the Muslim world under the title 'La conquête du monde Musulman' in *La Revue du Monde Musulman* of the Scientific Mission of Morocco. Riḍā immediately requested his fellow citizen Mūsā'id al-Yāfī (1886-1943) to make an Arabic translation of the whole French text. Soon his translation, prepared in cooperation with the Salafī writer Muḥḥib al-Dīn al-Khatīb (1886-1969), was published in many Egyptian newspapers, such as *al-Mu'ayyad*, *al-Fatḥ* and *al-'Ittiḥād al-'Uthmānī*.[97] During Riḍā's visit to India in 1911, *al-Manār* also started publishing the entire translation in order to inform its readers about the 'future plans' of missionaries in the Muslim world.[98] Riḍā's above-mentioned brother al-Sayyid Sāliḥ criticised the French magazine for having taken another direction by writing on the subject in order to gain political and religious ends'.[99] In its comment on the purpose of the translation in Arab newspapers, *La Revue* criticised these Muslim journals:

> Nous en venons par là à ce qui séparera probablement notre point de vue et celui de nos confrères arabes. Leurs vœux se bornent à affirmer, à acclamer l'indépendance de l'Islam, avec la certitude de ne pas la réaliser, mais d'achever au contraire de la perdre. Nous voudrions, nous, les voir assurer cette indépendance, par les voies de

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[94] *Al-Manār*, vol. 7/3 (Ṣafar 1322/April 1904), pp. 101.

[95] Such as Abū Ishāq al-Thaʿālibī (d. 1035), *Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' al-Musammā bī 'Arā'is al-Majālis*, Cairo, 1312/1894, see the English edition by William M. Brinner, Brill, 2002. Another work is *Kharīdat al-'Ajā'ib* wā *Faridat al-Gharā'ib* (by Sirāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Wardi (d. 861); edited by Carolus Johannes Tornberg, *Fragmentum Libri Margarita Mirabilium, auctore Ibn-el-Vardi,* Upsaliae, 1838; reprinted by Mahmud Fakhuri (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Sharq al-ʿArabī, 1999.

[96] Brinner, *op. cit.*, p. xxviii, See Aḥmad Muflih al-Qudah, 'Mawqif Tafsīr al-Manār min Riwayāt Asbāb al-Nuzūl wā al-Isrā'iliyāt', 'Symposium on Sheikh Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā: His Intellectual Role, Reformation and Methodology', International Institute for Islamic Thought, Jordan 1999, pp. 13-48.

[97] Later compiled in one small volume, A. Le Chatelier, *al-Ghārā 'alā al-'Ālam al-'Islāmī*, trans. by Mūsāʿid al-Yāfī and Muḥḥib al-Dīn al-Khatīb, Cairo: al-Matabʿa al-Salafiyya, 1350/1931-1932.

[98] See, vol. 15 the issues 3-9.

[99] *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/4, p. 259.

> prospérité encore ouvertes à son avenir. […] Ce n'est pas en se réislamisant que le Musulman d'Égypte échappera à la main-mise britannique : c'est en opposant le gentleman musulman au gentleman chrétien. Si le *Moayyad*, le *Manar* et l'*Ittihad al Othmani* veulent se mettre pratiquement en travers de l' « assaut donné au monde musulman » la méthode est simple. Qu'ils disent à leurs lecteurs : « Sortons de nos petits coins, pour aborder, de face, le réalités qui sont'.[100]

Al-Manār also followed the news circulated on missionary activities in Muslim journals worldwide. In 1910, for instance, it published a translation of an article published in the Russian magazine *Shūrā* in Orenburg on missionary associations in Russia. The article described missions as 'uninvited guests'.[101] It belittled their success in converting or attracting local Muslims, although their numbers were on the increase and their finances were flourishing. Nevertheless, the revival of religious zealousness among the Tatar Muslims was due to missionary movements in Russian provinces. In that sense, missions had their positive impact by consolidating the feeling of brotherhood and unity among Muslim Russians. Any case of conversion was also, according to the article, insignificant, since it was in the favour of Islam to 'root out those [converts as] corrupt members of the Muslim community'.[102]

It is also noteworthy that the Shīʿī Muslim scholar Hibat al-Dīn al-Shahrastānī al-Najafī (1884-1967), the founder and proprietor of *al-ʿIlm* Magazine in Najaf, took part in countering Christian missions in Riḍā's journal. As a Shīʾī reformist, al-Shahrastānī was keen to have relations with Muslim contemporary reformists in Egypt and Syria.[103] In his journal he also published biographies of famous Sunnī and Shīʾī reformists.[104] The ideas of both al-Shahrastānī and Riḍā ran parallel. Al-Shahrastānī intended to connect *al-Manār* with his magazine, as they had the common interest of reform.

In 1911 al-Shahrastānī wrote an article in *al-Manār* on Christian missions about one of his debates with Christian missionaries in Iraq. Riḍā published the article under the title: 'A Debate of a Muslim Scholar with Protestant Missionaries in Baghdad'.[105] In his preface to the article, Riḍā mentioned that although the debate was also published in *al-ʿIlm*, al-Shahrastānī had asked him to republish it in *al-Manār* for the sake of circulation among Muslims

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[100] See, 'Chronique', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, vol. 6 (1912), Paris, p. 286 ; cf. *Al-Manār*, vol. 15/9 (Ramaḍān 1330/September 1912), p. 697-702; vol. 15/10, p. 799-800.

[101] *Al-Manār*, 'Jamʿiyyat al-Mubashshirīn fi Rūsyā (Missionary Association in Russia)', vol. 13/11, p. 853.

[102] Ibid.

[103] See, Muḥammad Bāqir Aḥmad al-Bahādilī, *al-Sayyid Hibat al-Dīn al-Shahristānī: Athāruh al-Fikriyyā wā Mawāqifuhu al-Siyāsiyyā*, Beirut: Muʾassat al-Fikr al-ʾIslāmī, 2000, p. 92.

[104] Ibid., p. 95.

[105] 'Munāzarat ʿĀlim Muslim li Duʿāt al-Protestant fi Baghdād: Baḥthunā maʿa al-Duʾāh al-Brotestāniyyin: Ḥaflat Uns Maʿa Rufqat Fuḍālāʾ', *al-Manār*, *al-Manār*, vol. 14/12 (Dhū Al-Hijjah 1329/December 1911), pp. 914-922.

everywhere. Riḍā's intention of publishing the debate was directed to the common method among Protestant missionaries of using imaginary characters and themes in their articles on Islam, such as the Anglo-Arabic magazine *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*, in which Gairdner used to illustrate imaginary debates with extracts from the Bible as a medium in presenting his Christian texts and his apologetic discussions on Islam.[106]

In February 1911 in Baghdad, while he was touring around Iraqi and Indian cities, al-Shahrastānī attended two meetings with a group of Protestant missionaries, including the members of the Persia and Turkish Arabia Missions Rev. P. Boyes, Dr. F. Johnson and Dr. G. W. Stanley,[107] whom he described as people of 'good manners and [claiming] to have knowledge of practical and spiritual 'divine' medicine'.[108] Both Johnson and Stanley were physicians of the medical missionary team at that time. Among the attendants in the debate were other indigenous Iraqi Muslims and Christians, such as Dawūd Fitto (1865-1921), an Iraqi Christian pharmacist.[109]

The discussion took the form of a *munāẓarah* ('debate') around 'philosophical' and 'theological' issues, such as 1) the sacred character of the Bible, 2) the sonship of Jesus, 3) medical subjects, 4) Jesus as saviour, 5) evil and human sin, 6) and the concept Mahdism and the return of the Messiah.[110] Despite their theological differences, al-Shahrastānī was impressed by the studiousness of missionary physicians, who fulfilled their job with no expectation of any financial return from their patients. Their concern for propagating their faith was immense to the extent that they wrote on the walls of their hospital: 'Believe in Jesus Christ, He will save you and your family from all evil'. In conclusion, al-Shahrastānī ended his article saying: 'The Lord may make all difficulties easy for the seekers of the good, and to reward the people of beneficence with gratitude; He is the One who guides to the right path'.[111]

In his comment, Riḍā construed the praise of al-Shahrastānī of their medical work (even though he knew perfectly well that their only mission was to convert Muslims to Christianity), and it was as a clear-cut indication of Muslim tolerance with missions. But he blamed him for giving them this credit, while giving no attention to their anti-Islamic campaigns.[112] Two months later

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[106] See, Constance E. Padwick, *Temple Gairdner of Cairo*, London, 1929; Werff, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
[107] About the history of the mission, see, *The Persia and Turkish Arabia Missions*, London: Church Missionary Society, 1909.
[108] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/12, p. 915.
[109] Dawūd Fitto was born in al-Mawsil. He is a Syriac Orthodox of origin, who converted with his mother and sister to Protestantism. He studied at Protestant schools, where he learnt Arabic, English, Kurdish, and Turkish. When the Turkish Arabia Mission was established, he was trained as a pharmacist. He wrote scientific articles in the Egyptian magazine *al-Muqṭaṭaf*, and became its agent in Iraq. He worked as a pharmacist at the Protestant Pharmacy in Baghdad. After World War I, and due to the departure of many missionaries from Iraq, Fitto established his own pharmacy. See, Hārith Yusuf Ghanima, *al-Brūtustant wā al-Injīlyūn fī al-ʿIrāq* (*Protestants and Evangelicals in Iraq*), al-Nāshir al-Maktabī Press, 1998, pp. 171-173.
[110] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/12, p. 916.
[111] Ibid., p. 922.
[112] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/12, p. 922.

al-Shahrastānī explained to Riḍā that he neither intended to praise the missionary medical work, nor wished them any success. He only desired to 'awaken Muslims and motivate their thinking'.[113] His supplications at the end of his article were 'relative', and were only meant to be only a concluding statement. On the other hand, he totally agreed what Riḍā repeatedly articulated in his writings about 'their [missionary] activities as harming Muslims in their religion and politics'. [114]

One of the common ideas between Riḍā and al-Shahrastānī was articulated in their fight against missions and the endeavour to promote the *daʿwa* in the face of the Christian propaganda against Islam. Among Riḍā's personal papers I have come across an unpublished manuscript of a treatise by al-Shahrastānī submitted to *al-Manār* for publication (see, appendix XI). The aim of this publication was to inform Riḍā and the readers of *al-Manār* about the author's efforts to strengthen the Islamic *daʿwa* against Christian missionary work during his stay in India in 1913. From there he tried to 'promote preaching, writing, and the advance of an Islamic social power through establishing Muslim schools and societies and distributing publications.'[115] The reason why Riḍā did not publish this work in his journal is not known. Al-Shahrastānī related to Riḍā one of his anecdotes about what he labeled as 'a missionary trick', which happened to him in India. He passed by a group of people surrounding a Christian priest preaching his religion in a park in Bombay. A man dressed as a European came, and started to recount that he traveled around the world in his search for the true religion, but did not find a better religion than Christianity. He took an oath before the priest and sat beside him. The same thing happened with another man, who was dressed as an Arab claiming to be a Hanafī Muslim from Mecca. He was followed by a man acting as a Shīʿī from Karbala, then by a heathen from India with the same story. Al-Shahrastānī maintained that they were four Indians, who converted to Christianity a time ago. Their performance was only a 'trick' in order to deceive the common people. Had he known the Indian language and the Indian mentality, he would have debated with them all![116]

When Riḍā published the above-mentioned Arabic translation of Chatelier's 'La conquête', a Muslim 'traveler' sent *al-Manār* his observations on the influence of Protestant missionary organizations in the Gulf region during his visit as early as 1913.[117] The Arabian Mission had been one of the organizations founded by Samuel Zwemer. During his early stay in Arabia, Zwemer adopted the name 'Dhaif Allah' (the guest of Allah) in order to make a

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[113] Letter, al-Sharistānī to Riḍā, Iraq, 16 Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1330/April 4, 1912.

[114] Ibid.

[115] 'Fayṣal al-Dalāʾil fi Ajwibat al-Masāʾil (The Distinction of Proofs in Answering the Questions)', MS, Riḍā's private archive in Cairo. It contains al-Shahrastānī's answers to a group of questions raised by the Sultan of Oman Fayṣal Ibn Turkī (1864-1913) in his courtyard about a variety of Islamic themes. The treatise is dated 1913.

[116] Letter, al-Sharistānī to Riḍā, Ramdan 24, 1331/August 27, 1913.

[117] *Al-Manār*, 'Duʿāt al-Naṣrāniyyā fī al-Baḥrain wā Bilād al-ʿArab (Missionaries in Bahrain and Arabian lands)', vol. 16/5 (Jumāda al-ʾŪlā 1331/May 1913), p. 379-383.

distinction for himself among the Bedouins. The Arabs, however, called him 'Dhaif al-Shaitan' (the guest of the Devil).[118] Another report asserts that local citizens named him: 'Fātiḥ al-Baḥrain' (the Conqueror of Bahrain).[119]

One of this Muslim traveler's servants went to probe information about their work, and made some pictures of their centers in Bahrain, Muscat, Kuwait and Basra. In spite of the effect of their efforts on Islam and Muslims, he indicated to *al-Manār* that they exaggerated their success among Muslims in order to gain more funding from their native institutions. He counted the number of male and female workers less than twenty persons, who neither had good command of Arabic, nor good acquaintance with the local population. He himself once visited their society in Bahrain and discussed many theological issues related to Biblical and Qur'ānic narratives of the Creation. He also noted that they established a small school consisting of two rooms, where they used to teach children downstairs, and to gather adults for religious services upstairs.[120]

As for the status of Zwemer in Bahrain, he added that the local inhabitants treated him very roughly in his early stay. On the market he established his own bookshop, where he first sold publications on various topics; but later he gradually put up only Christian books for sale. When he decided to purchase a piece of land, the local governor stipulated not to put any Christian symbol on the building. Zwemer appealed to the British Consul, who interfered in the matter and he purchased a spacious piece of land for about four thousand Rubies where they founded their school and their missionary hospital. He ascribed Zwemer's success in the last years to four reasons: 1) his high salary that exceeded 150 Rubies beside other donations from the United States; 2) the increase of the number of male and female missionaries in the region; 3) their exploitation of poor and needy Muslims by taking pictures for them as new converts in order to propagate their 'forged' success; and 4) their distribution of Gospels for free among Muslims.[121]

The traveler also noted that young Arab natives ridiculed their religious work, and developed many critical points to the Bible. Many times he prevented them from burning the distributed Gospel copies or throwing them in the sea. Common Muslims also used to sell their covers and use the paper leaves for making carton boxes for their daily use. He concluded that they handed out thousands of copies for free, which overloaded their societies with financial loss

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[118] Wilson, *op. cit.,* p. 55. The center of the Arabian Mission was first situated in Bahrain and started work in Basra, Muscat and Kuwait. For more details, see, Alfred DeWitt Mason and Frederick J. Barny, *History of the Arabian Mission*, with a foreword by W.I. Chamberlain, New York, 1926; Wilson, "The Epic of Samuel Zwemer", *The Moslem World*, vol. XLII/III (June 1953), pp. 79-93; Id., *Flaming prophet: The Story of Samuel Zwemer*, New York: Friendship Press, 1970; Werff, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-267. Alan Neely, 'Zwemer, Samuel Marinus', in Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 763; about the Arabian Mission, see, for instance, Lewis R Scudder, *The Arabian Mission's Story: In Search of Abraham's Other Son,* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998.

[119] Werff, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

with no real result. Their circulation, on the contrary, would revive the Muslim awareness of the 'vulnerability' of their holy scriptures to criticism.[122]

In his comment, Riḍā maintained that the reason behind missionary publications was primarily to 'scorn' Islam, and to cast doubts on the Muslim faith as the first step towards 'Western peaceful conquest'. He demanded Muslims to boycott their publications as a sign of defending their religion, and that all the books distributed by missionaries had to be destroyed. He encouraged them to replace these missionary writings with Muslim pamphlets and treatises in which a distinction was made between what he called the 'accurate' faith of Jesus and that 'doctrine of Paul'.[123]

When *al-Manār* published an anti-missionary article by al-Tannīr,[124] an unnamed Syrian friend of Riḍā criticised *al-Manār* for hurting the feelings of Christian compatriots by publishing severe anti-Christian statements in its anti-missionary campaign.[125] It was al-Tannīr's phrase *al-Thālūth al-Zinā'ī al-Muqaddas* (the holy trinity of fornication), which disappointed Riḍā's friend. Riḍā maintained that he received the first draft of Tannīr's article under this title, which he immediately amended in order not to hurt the feelings of Christian fellow citizens. The same word was also repeated throughout the whole text. Riḍā maintained that he had deleted all of them because it was *imtihān* (an offense) for *iṣtilāḥāt muḥtaramah* (respected terms). Riḍā justified that this phrase must have been forgotten by mistake during the printing process of this issue of *al-Manār*.[126] He also tried to validate his writings as it was his duty to stand against missionary attacks on Islam. He claimed that he never attempted to propagate his critiques of the Christian scriptures and beliefs in public. On the contrary, he was always preaching the significance of harmony among followers of religions in the one society.[127] Another critical point was that it was not Christian fellow citizens who attacked Islam, but American and Biritsh missionaries. Riḍā confirmed that missionary activity was 'more harmful in the Muslim world than brothels and gambling clubs'. Owners of such places would probably entice the Muslim to commit sins, but missionaries were trying to make him put down their religion entirely and to stir up animosity between Islam and Christianity.'[128]

Elsewhere Riḍā firmly maintained that he would never stop defending his religion, so long as anti-Islamic wiritngs on Islam continued. However, he did not mind that they would preach their religion by demonstrating its merits, while not attacking other beliefs.[129] Riḍā argued that since most foreign

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[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ṭāhir al-Tannīr, 'al-Radd al-Matīn ʿalā Muftarāyāt al-Mubashshirīn', *al-Manār*, vol. 17/2, pp. 138-147.
[125] *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/3, p. 188.
[126] Ibid., p. 187.
[127] Ibid., p. 189.
[128] Ibid., p. 190.
[129] Ibid.; cf. his article, 'Al-'Islām wā al-Naṣrāniyya (Islam and Christianity)', vol. 23/4, p. 267-272.

missionaries had no good command of Arabic they hired Arab Christians for assisting them in publishing anti-Islamic literature in Arabic. He also added that 'Muslims should not stop defending their religion against attacks on the Qur'ān and the prophet just for satisfying the feelings of Christian citizens'.[130]

In 1916, Riḍā published two articles as a refutation of an Arabic article written by Temple Gairdner in his periodical, *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb*. In this article published in April 1916, the legal authority of ḥadīth was broached.[131] This article was one of the routes through which the work of the Hungarian orientalist Ignaz Goldziher on ḥadīth became known in Egypt.[132] Some months after his contribution to the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference (13-23 June, 1910) Gairdner decided to make a *Wanderjahr* in Europe.[133] The trip began in Germany in September, 1910, where he spent 'three months […] for the purpose of learning enough German to give [him] access to the incomparable German literature on Islamic subjects.'[134] In his correspondence with Duncan Black Macdonald of the Hartford Theological Seminary, Gairdner stated that 'it would have been worth learning German only for the sake of […] Goldziher's […] perfect gold-mine'.[135] Gairdner voiced his skepticism of the authenticity of almost all Traditions ascribed to the Prophet. He maintained that the considerations he followed would give ample ground for suspecting the stability of the foundations of Islamic tradition, and consequently of the enormous superstructure which has been erected thereupon. In his view, if the unreliability of traditions is established, the Islamic system ought logically to be discarded. [136]

Many Muslims were disturbed by Gairdner's ideas, and urgently demanded Riḍā to publish his views on the issue. As usual Riḍā looked down at missionary methods of investigating Muslim sources. Missionaries, unlike philosophers, dealt with such questions not to reach the truth as such; but to cast doubts on other beliefs.[137] He added that if Gairdner's only reason was to convert Muslims, let him rest assured that most of the Muslims who abandoned

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[130] Ibid.

[131] *Al-Sharq wā al-Gharb* firstly appeared in January 1905. About this magazine, see, Padwick, *op. cit.*, p. 156ff; W.H.T. Gairdner, *D.M. Thornton: A Study in Missionary Ideals and Methods*, London, 1908, p. 207ff. For Riḍā's reply, *al-Manār*, 'al-Sunnah wā Siḥḥatuhā wa al-Sharīʿa wa Matānatuhā: Radd ʿalā Duʿāt Al-Naṣrāniyya bi Miṣr', vol. 19 (Shaʿbān & Ramaḍān, 1334/June & July, 1916), pp. 24-50 & pp. 97-109. Gairdner's article must have been a translation of the English article published by the same author in The *Moslem World* one year earlier. W.H.T. Gairdner, 'Mohammedan Tradition and Gospel Record: The ḥadīth and the Injīl', *The Moslem World*, vol. 4, no. 4 (1915), pp. 349-378 (Quoted below, 'Traditions').

[132] G.H.A. Juynboll, 'The '*Ulamā* and Western Scholarship', *Israel Oriental Studies*, vol. X (1980), p. 178.

[133] Padwick, *op. cit.,* p. 198 ff.

[134] Ibid., p. 201.

[135] Ibid., p. 204. For more details about his contact with Macdonald, see for example, J. Jermain Bodine, 'Magic Carpet to Islam: Duncan Black Macdonald and the Arabian Nights', *The Muslim World*, vol. LXVII/1 (January, 1977), pp. 1-11.

[136] Gairdner, 'Tradition', p. 363.

[137] Riḍā, 'Sunnah', p. 26.

Islam would never become real Christians, but rather turn into 'atheists' or 'antagonists'. They mostly converted to Christianity due to their poverty and need for missionary financial support, unlike Western converts to Islam, who are in most cases the elite in Europe like the English Baron Lord Headley (to be discussed below).[138]

In 1921, an Arabic translation of one of Zwemer's articles in the Anglican magazine *Church Missionary Intelligencer* appeared in *al-Manār*. In that article, he maintained that Muslims had already started to 'welcome the Gospel'.[139] Zwemer argued that 'political troubles in the Near East were not due to economic factors or any political aspiration for autonomy, but rather to religious discontent among the people'.[140] Due to the change of their 'missiological' approaches, he was rather optimistic about the accessibility of Christianity in Egyptian villages and towns for missionary work. Although Islam did not recognize the Crucifixion of Jesus, there were reports about a responsive spirit among Muslims including teachers and students of Al-Azhar University. The missionary regional conference, held in Helwan at the outskirts of Cairo in the same year, agreed that there was 'a great and remarkable change […] during the past few years in the attitude of Muslims'.[141] They also recommended 'establish[ing] contact with Al-Azhar students; one or more homes or settlements should be located in Al-Azhar neighbourhood with several resident workers, who would show hospitality, make friendships, and encourage free intercourse'.[142] It is noteworthy to mention that Zwemer, later in 1926 and 1927, in fact entered Al-Azhar and distributed missionary tracts among students, an incident that provoked the Egyptian public opinion.[143] Riḍā saw Zwemer's hope as a merely 'missionary wishful thinking'. The missionary writer by such reports also intended to encourage zealous Christians in the West to raise more funds for their missionary plans.[144]

In 1923 a certain Muḥammad al-Rashīdī al-Ḥijāzī, a former military in Berlin, published an article on the activity of the German Orient Mission (Deutsche-Orient Mission) founded by Pastor Johannes Lepsius (1858–1926), an eyewitness to the Armenian genocide.[145] While collecting information about

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[138] Ibid.

[139] As quoted by Riḍā, *al-Manār*, 'Amānī al-Mubashshirīn aw Mukhadaʿtuhum lil-Mūsirīn (Missionaries' Wishful Thinking or their Deception of Rich [Christians]', vol. 22/4 (Rajab 1339/March 1921), pp. 313-314; cf. *al-Manār*, vol. 28/2, p. 140-149.

[140] Ibid., p. 314.

[141] See, *The Conferences of Christian Workers among Moslems 1924*, New York: International Missionary Council, 1921, p. 79.

[142] Ibid., p. 80.

[143] For more, see, B. L. Carter, 'On Spreading the Gospel to Egyptians Sitting in Darkness: The Political Problem of Missionaries in Egypt in the 1930s', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 20/4 (October 1984), pp. 21-22; Bishrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 456-458; J. Christy Wilson 'The Epic of Samuel Zwemer', *The Moslem World*, vol. XLII, no. 3 (June 1953), pp. 89-90.

[144] *Al-Manār*, vol. 22/4, p. 314.

[145] See, for example, his, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918: Samlung diplomatischer Aktenstucke*, Postdam (1919). His archives are to be found at the Martin Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

Lepsius, Ḥijāzī came across the periodical of the mission, *Der christliche Orient* (1900), which he translated into Arabic for *al-Manār*'s readers under the title: 'Cunning Programmes of Mission among the Muḥammadans'.[146] He accused Lepsius of 'fanaticism' by having given a 'false testimony and fabrication' with regard to the genocide. Ḥijāzī laid emphasis on the contribution and biography of the Evanglical Armenian preacher Abraham Amirchanjanz, who was a born Muslim. Another convert named Johannes Awetaranian was also mentioned in the report of the issue.[147] Ḥijāzī summarized an item by Amirchanjanz in that issue on: 'Die Aufgabe der Mohammedaner-Mission'.[148] In his article, Amirchanjanz launched a severe attack on Islam:

> 'Islam is one of the most disastrous phenomena in human history. It is a mixture of truth and falsehood, and therefore more dangerous than the heathendom. This religion, taking over 200 million people, cannot be overcome easily. A carefully thought-out plan, like a military tactic, should be designed and performed well in attacking it.' [149]

In his conclusion, Ḥijāzī expressed his frustration in the negligence of Muslim governments to such 'complots', which were intertwined with colonial plans. He again asked Muslim scholars to learn European languages in order to refute the views of missionaries on Islam. By doing so, they would also have the chance to be the 'delegates' of Islam in the West.[150] Riḍā confirmed the author's words by stating that he himself got frustrated by the failure of Muslim political and religious leaders to support him in his struggle against missions for more than thirty years.[151]

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[146] *Der christliche Orient: Monatsschrift der deutschen Orient-Mission,* Berlin, 1900. Ḥijāzī, 'Baʿthat Tanṣīr al-Maḥamaddiyyīn wā Barnāmaj Kaydihā lil-ʾIslām wā al-Muslimīn (Christian Missions [among] Mohammedans, and their cunning programmes for Islam and Muslims), vol. 24/10 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1342/November 1923), p. 785-795. Among Riḍā's papers I have found a booklet of *Kunstblätter* from Berlin signed as a gift to Riḍā on 4 August 1923, a couple of months before the publication of his article in *al-Manār*. As is indicated in a letter sent to Riḍā (12 September 1923), Ḥijāzī was probably an Egyptian former military stationed in North Africa during the Great War. He tried to publish many articles in *al-Manār*, but his contributions were not suitable for the journal's interests. He also had contact with other Egyptian journals, and managed to publish a few contributions.

[147] See, Johannes Awetaranian, *Geschichte eines Mohammedaners der Christ wurde: Die Geschichte des Johannes Awetaranian. Von ihm selbst erzählt.* Nach seinem Tode ergänzt von Richard Schäfer, Potsdam, 1930.

[148] *Der christliche Orient*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-88.

[149] As quoted in, Ḥijāzī, *op. cit.*, p. 788. Compare the German text: 'Der Islam ist eine der verhängnisvollsten Erscheinungen in der Menschengeschichte. Er ist ein Gemisch von Wahrheit und Lüge, und darum gefährlicher als das Heidentum. Diese 200-millionenköpfige Religion kann nicht so leicht überwunden werden. Ein wohlbedachtes […] des Angriffs mit genauester militärischer Taktik muss entworfen und gut ausgeführt werden'. Ibid., p. 84.

[150] Ḥijāzī, ibid., p. 789.

[151] Ibid.

3.6. A Muslim Missionary Seminary

As reaction to missionary work, Riḍā formed his short-lived project Jamʿiyyat (or Dār) al-Daʿwa wā al-ʾIrshād, which has been mentioned in many places above. It was founded in Cairo in 1912 as a well-structured private Muslim seminary. The idea of such a society first occurred to him when he was a student in Syria, where he used to frequent and read the literature provided by the American missionaries in that city, and he wished that Muslims would have had similar societies and schools.[152]

Conversion of Muslims in Cyprus, for example, greatly saddened him as well. He attributed that to their ill-information of their religion due to the lack of Muslim propaganda. Christian missions were more successful in propagating their faith into the native languages, and in a way suiting the mentality of the indigenous inhabitants. As was his habit, Riḍā strongly held Muslims obliged to raise funds to start missionary centres in order to train young propagators of Islam.[153]

During his visit to Turkey in 1909, Riḍā managed to raise funds for his seminary from the Supreme Porte. The Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments also accepted to participate in funding the school by a contribution of four thousand Egyptian pounds a year.[154] The project was also dependent on gifts and donations from rich Muslims. During his visit in Egypt in 1911, Sheikh Qāsim Ibn ʾĀl ʾIbrāhīm, a wealthy Arab merchant in Bombay and a senior honorary member of the board of the al-Daʿwa school, made a contribution of two thousand pounds, and a yearly donation of a hundred pounds. In March 1911, Prince Muḥammad ʿAlī Pashā, the brother of the Egyptian Khedive, was selected as the honorary president of the al-Daʿwa school.[155] ʿAbbās Ḥilmī, the Khedive of Egypt, also supported Riḍā's missionary plan by paying an official visit to the school, and meeting with the staff and students in May 1914.[156]

The society took the shape of a boarding school, which was primarily an endeavour to train two groups of people: the *murshids* (guides), who would function within the Muslim community by combating religious deviation, and the *duʿāh* (propagators) who would convey the Islamic mission to non-Muslims and defend Islam against missionary attacks. Riḍā included in his educational program subjects such as international law, psychology, sociology, biology, introductory mathematics, geography and economics. He also introduced the study of the Bible and the history of the Church. In the curriculum he

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[152] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/1, p. 42; cf. C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London: Oxford University Press, 1933, p. 196.
[153] *Al-Manār*, 'Tanṣīr al-Muslimīn fī Qubruṣ (Christianization of Muslims in Cyprus)', vol. 9/3, pp. 233-34.
[154] Draft of letter from Riḍā to the Prime Minister Hussein Rushī, 13 January 1918, Riḍā's private archive in Cairo.
[155] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 191-196; archival document relevant to the organization of the school; about other contributors, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 14/6, p. 480.
[156] *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/6, p.461-468.

proposed for the category of *murshids* to choose a well-circulated missionary treatise on Islam for study in order to enable them in defending Islam against the missionary allegations, especially in the minds of common Muslims. These allegations should be also collected, well studied, and debated among the future *murshid*s.[157] We have already mentioned that Ṣidqī was appointed as a teacher at the society, where he taught the students scientific and medical subjects as well as his views on Christianity already crystallized in his polemics in *al-Manār*.

It was also intended to recruit qualified Muslim students from all over the world, especially from poor regions such as China or Indonesia. The school provided students with accommodation, books and the costs of living. Students were supposed to live strictly according to Islamic values. Those who would 'commit sins' should be sent away.[158] Although the school had to close down after the First World War, it had counted amongst its graduates well-known leaders, such as Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, the prominent grand mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Yusūf Yāsīn, the prominent Saudi official and private secretary of the Saudi royal family, and other leaders of thought in India, Malaysia and Egypt.[159]

In order to update the students with the developments of missionary work, one of Riḍā's friends in the Sudan sent *al-Manār* a detailed report. In his account, he confirmed that schooling was the most significant way of disseminating Christian religious ideas. Missionary schools provided families of their students with needed materials, such as corn, clothes, jewellery, and medication. Social work was also one of their priorities. For example, students were trained a variety of professions, such as manufacturing, commerce and agriculture. They also established beehives in the European style in order to benefit the local population.[160]

Riḍā's missionary effort was hotly contested. Members of the Egyptian Nationalist Party opposed his establishing of the Daʿwa School. They considered it as a 'futile and far-fetched' missionary project with no prospect, since English or Dutch colonial authorities in such lands as Indonesia and the Sudan would never give the graduates of his school the opportunity to propagate Islam there. However, Riḍā was confident that his missionary graduates would be given a good chance in these colonies. If not, they would have been capable of propagating Islam in other countries, such as China and Japan. [161]

Sheikh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Jāwīsh (1876-1929), the editor-in-chief of the National Party mouthpiece, accused Riḍā's school of being an underground organization working on demolishing the Ottoman State and separate the Arabs from the Turks by appointing an Arab Caliph. Riḍā vigorously denied

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[157] Vol. 14/11, pp. 811-812.
[158] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/1, p. 52.
[159] Zaki Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, London: Croom Helm, pp. 116-117.
[160] *Al-Manār*, 'Mudhakkira ʿan ʾAʿmāl al-Mubashshirīn fī al-Sudān (A report on missionary work in Sudan), vol. 14/4 (Rabīʿ al-Akhar 1329/April 1911), pp. 311-313.
[161] *Al-Manār*, 'Madrasat al-Tabshīr al-ʾIslāmī (Islamic Missionary School)', vol. 14/2, pp. 121-134. In his response to Jāwīsh's attack on his project, Riḍā cited many articles which praised his efforts from various newspapers in Turkey, Beirut, India and Egypt.

such charges.[162] Riḍā sent the protocol of his society to the editors of Gairdner's *al-Sharq wā al-Gharb,* which he considered then as 'the most decent among missionary papers'.[163] Riḍā considered their feedback more reasonable than that of these Muslim nationalists, such as Jāwīsh. In their comment, the missionary periodical was positive about the school because of its non-interference in politics.[164]

Riḍā, however, had no more funds from Turkey, and his project was consequently suspended. The reason was possibly Riḍā's sympathy and activism for Syrian Arab nationalism.[165] According to Riḍā, 'plots' of British authorities and *Bahā'ī* groups in Egypt were behind closing down his seminary.[166] He attempted to revive his project by appealing to the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments to resume its funding to the school, but failed.[167] In 1931, Riḍā himself was requested by Al-Azhar to give advice about the establishment of its new department of al-Waʿẓ wā al-'Irshād (Preaching and Guidance). In the same year, he made a similar attempt during the General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem, when he was nominated as a chairman of its (sub)Committee of Guidance and Preaching. In that congress, a report on missionary work in the Muslim world was read before the attendants.[168] Through this committee he tried to revive his seminary project by presenting his suggestions to constitute a society under the same name in Jerusalem.[169] The society could have its own college committed to train Muslim preachers. He also suggested that the congress should take speedy measures against Christian missionary activities by promoting Islamic education, encouraging the publication of works in different languages countering missionary doctrines, and circulating them for free in all Muslim countries, such as the works of the late Ṣidqī on Christianity. The Congress should also entrust a group of qualified scholars to write treatises refuting 'atheism', and promoting Muslim brotherhood. These works would also contain responses to missionary 'allegations' on Islam.[170]

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[162] Ibid.

[163] *Al-Manār*, vol. 14/3, pp. 239-240.

[164] Ibid., p. 240.

[165] Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 125-126.

[166] *Al-Manār*, vol. 24/7 (Dhū al-Qiʿdah 1341/July 1923), p. 559.

[167] Draft letter to Rushdī, *op. cit.*

[168] *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/3, 200-202; for more about the congress, see, H. R. A. Gibb, 'The Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in December 1931', in Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of international affairs 1934*, London, 1935, pp. 99-109; Uri M. Kupferschmidt, 'The General Muslim Congress of 1931 in Jerusalem', *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 21/1 (March 1978), pp. 123-162; Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled, the Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1986, pp. 1931-1931; Weldon C. Matthews, Pan-Islam or Arab Nationalism? The meaning of the 1931 Jerusalem Islamic Congress reconsidered', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35 (2003), pp. 1-22.

[169] *Al-Manār*, vol. 32/4 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1350/April 1932), p. 284.

[170] Ibid., pp. 203-209. When Riḍā read his proposals before the congress (Shaʿbān 1350/December 1931), Sheikh Sa'id Darwīsh, an anti-Wahhābī participant from Aleppo, openly opposed Riḍā's proposals, describing him as 'tyrannical' president who did not give others their

3.7. Conversion to Islam versus Evangelization

Riḍā's ambitions of establishing Islamic missionary institutions were also expressed in his support for the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. After its victory in the war against Russia (1904), Japan, for instance, was held in the Muslim world as an example to be followed and was seen by many Muslims as a prospective good place for Islamic propagation.[171] Even before its victory, the Egyptian nationalist Muṣṭafā Kāmil wrote a monograph in which he catalogued the history of Japan and predicted the defeat of Russia. His treatise was proved to be popular, and attracted so much attention that it was translated into Malay by a group of Muslim reformers in Singapore who had strong educational connections with Cairo. Due to its political success, Tokyo was also seen be 'the *qiblah* of Muslims in the Far East just as the Sublime Porte was to the Muslims in the Near East.'[172]

In face of the Christian expansion in the Orient, Riḍā also hailed the need for dispatching Muslim missions to Japan as well.[173] He criticised Muslims for rushing to advocate the idea without taking into consideration the lack of financial resources and qualified candidates to carry out such a mission as well. Politics, in his view, were the reason behind the hope of Muslims for converting Japan to Islam. He believed that the Japanese people were ready to accept only a religion compatible with science and civilization. The lack of capable Muslim scholars would be an obstacle in the face of propagating Islam in a developed country like Japan. A group of rich Muslims approached Riḍā to sponsor a missionary association for taking up this task. But the committee was

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chance to utter their views. Other participants tried to calm the intense situation down by delivering speeches on the significance of Muslim unity and brotherhood. Cf. Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine*, Brill, 1987, p. 213.

[171] The idea of preaching Islam in Japan started as early as 1889, when the Turkish naval frigate Ertugrul sailed for Japan on the orders of Sultan Abdülhamid II, see, *al-Manār*, 'Daʿwat al-Yāpān ʾilā al-ʾIslām (Inviting Japan to Islam)', vol. 8/18 (Ramaḍān 1323/13 November 1905, pp. 705). The Egyptian ʿAlī Aḥmad al-Jirjāwī, the founder of *al-ʾIrshād* paper, was one of the early Muslims, who resolved to travel to Japan propagate Islam during the Second World Congress of Religions in Tokyo (1907). See his travelogue to Japan (1908), *al-Riḥla al-Yābāniyya* (The Japanese Journey); Michael F. Laffan, 'Making Meiji Muslims: The Travelogue of ʿAlī Aḥmad al-Jarjāwī', *East Asian History* 22 (December, 2001), pp. 145-170.

For more details, see, Muṣṭafā Kamil, *al-Shams al-Mushriqa*, Cairo: al-Liwa, 1904; Michael Laffan, 'Waṭan and negeri: Muṣṭafā Kamil's 'Rising Sun' in the Malay World,' *Indonesia Circle* 69 (1996), pp. 156-75; idem 'Muṣṭafā and the Mikado: a Francophile Egyptian's turn to Meiji Japan', *Japanese Studies* 19:3 (1999), pp. 269-86. About Islam and Japan, see, Yuzo Itagaki, 'Reception of different cultures: the Islamic civilization and Japan', *The Islamic World and Japan: in pursuit of mutual understanding*: International Symposium on Islamic Civilization and Japan, Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, series 6, 1981, pp. 139-149; Bushra Anis, 'The Emergence of Islam and the Status of Muslim Minority in Japan', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 18/2 (October 1998), pp. 329-346.

[172] Laffan, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[173] See his articles in *al-Manār*, 'Daʿwat al-Yapān ʾilā al-ʾIslām', vol. 8/18, pp. 705-712; vol. 9/1 (Muḥarram 1324/February 1906), pp. 75-78.

very short-lived and unsuccessfully stopped all its work for no specific reason.[174] When the Japan Congress of Religions was announced (1907), Riḍā suggested to the Supreme Porte to delegate Muslim representatives, who had a vast knowledge of Islamic history and philosophy and a good knowledge of other world religions, such as Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity.[175]

Riḍā repeatedly used the conversion of European Christians to Islam as an argument for the expansion of Islam, despite the fact that Muslims, unlike Christians, had no organized missionary enterprise. In December 1913, he published at length the story of the conversion of the well-known Muslim fifth Baron Lord Headley (1855-1935), which drew the attention of the British public to Islam as a faith.[176] Riḍā hailed the conversion of Headley, even though he knew that he was a convert to Islam through the Lahore *Ahmadiyya* sect.[177] *Al-Manār* quoted his interviews to British weeklies after he embraced Islam in November 1913.[178] Headley later developed some his ideas of these interviews in his book, *A Western Awakening to Islam*.[179] In this book, he criticised 'zealous Protestants who have thought it their duty to visit Roman Catholic homes in order to make 'converts' of the inmates. Such irritating and unneighbourly conduct is of course, very obnoxious, and has invariably led to much ill-feeling – stirring up strife and tending to bring religion into contempt. I am sorry to think that Christian missionaries have also tried these methods with their Muslim brethren, though why they should try to convert those who are already better Christians than they are themselves […] Charity, tolerance and broadmindness in the Muslim faith comes nearer to what Christ himself

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[174] *Al-Manār*, 'Mu'tamar al-Adyān fī al-Yabān (Congress of Religions in Japan), vol. 9/4 (Rabīʿ al-Akhar 1324/24 May 1906), pp. 317-19.

[175] *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Dawlah wā Muʾtamar al-ʾAdyān fī al-Yabān' (The State and the Congress of Religions in Japan), Manar, vol. 9/6 (Jumadā al-Thāniya 1324/23 July 1906), p. 480. A photo in Riḍā's archive of showing the gathering of the Islamic Society with Japanese notables in the Council of the Qurʾān and Dissimination of the Religion Islam in Tokyo (dates to July 1934) would indicate his aspiration in the spread of Islam in Japan, even shortly before his death (see, appendix M).

[176] *Al-Manār,* 'ʾIslām al-Lord Headley wā mā qālahū wā katabahū fī Sababī (The conversion of Lord Headley: What he said and wrote about its reason)', vol. 17/1 (Muḥarram 1332/December 1913), p. 34-40. See, Ali Köse, Conversion to Islam: A Study of Native Biritsh Converts. London and New York, 1996, p. 14-18; cf. L. Tibawi, 'History of the London Central Mosque and the Islamic Cultural Centre 1910-1980', *Welt des Islams*, vol. 1/4 (1981), pp. 193-208; James Thayer Addison, 'The Aḥmadiya Movement and Its Western Propaganda', *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 22/1 (Jan., 1929), pp. 1-32.

[177] About some of Riḍā's reactions to the Aḥmadiyya and the translation of Maulana Muḥammad Ali of the Qur'ān, see, Nur Ichwan, M., 'Response of the Reformist Muslims to Muḥammad Ali's Translation and Commentary of the Qur'an in Egypt and Indonesia: A study of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's Fatwa', Unpublished paper submitted to the Seminar 'Islam and the West: Their Mutual Relation as Reflected in Fatwa Literature', Leiden, 1998.

[178] Riḍā quoted *The Daily Mail* (17 November 1913) and the weekly *The Observer* (23 November 1913).

[179] Lord Headley, *A Western Awakening to Islam*, London: J.S. Philips, 1915. A softcopy of the work is available at: www.aaiil.org, which Riḍā reviewed in 1925 in his journal as a challenge to atheists and missionaries, vol. 26/1 (Ramaḍān 1343/April 1925), pp. 60-64.

taught.'[180] Riḍā proudly confirmed Headley's statements and added that political and sectarian conflicts and superstitions among Muslims on the one hand, and the ill-information presented in the West on Islam on the other represent a big obstacle for Europeans to embrace Islam.[181]

Followed by Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, the founder of the Woking Muslim Mission in London,[182] Headley went on Ḥajj in 1923. On their way, reception committees were formed in Port Said, Alexandria and Cairo, and Headley became the object of marked attention of the press in the country. Riḍā himself was not able to meet Headley personally during his stop in Egypt, but he again quoted his conversion story in an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *al-Siyāsa* (Politics).[183] In his comment, Riḍā again expressed his wish that 'if a group of knowledgeable Muslim missionaries would arise in England and the United States in order to 'uncover the swindle of politicians and […] missionaries, who have caused enmity and animosity between Islam and Europe, the people of the two countries would in droves embrace Islam.'[184]

3.8. Al-Azhar Criticised

Riḍā always took pride in his journal as one of the few Muslim journals of his time that concerned themselves with defending Islam against missionary work.[185] His statements always carried the tone of criticism to religious official bodies, such as Al-Azhar, for their leniency. In 1913, he made an observation on the intensification of missionary work even among the students of Al-Azhar University.[186] He also criticised those students for their feeble knowledge of Islam, confirming that the curricula they were learning during their long schooling were not helpful enough to assist them to defend Islam. He expressed his worries that without establishing solid knowledge of Islam through renewing the teachings of Al-Azhar, some of those students would probably convert to Christianity and abandon their religion. Missionaries would therefore use that as a pretext to prove that the greatest religious institution had failed to refute the 'allegations' of Christianity. In order to enable them to achieve this task, Riḍā suggested two things: 1) the whole curriculum of *'Ilm al-Kalām* (Sciences of Islamic Theology) should be changed, and 2) to appoint a leader to each group of students who would investigate their conditions. The university board should prohibit them from attending missionary meetings, and

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[180] Ibid., p. 13.
[181] *Al-Manār*, vol. 17/1, pp. 39-40.
[182] About Riḍā's views of Kamal-ud-Dīn, see, *al-Manār*, vol. 33/2 (Dhū al-Ḥijja 1351/April 1933), pp. 138-141.
[183] *Al-Manār*, vol. 24/7, p. 555-559.
[184] Ibid., p. 559. In 1928, Riḍā published Headley's critique of missionary writings on the Prophet of Islam, see, vol. 29/5 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1347/September 1928), p. 344-351.
[185] *Al-Manār*, 'A'dā' al-ʾIslāmal-Muhāribūn lahū fī Hādhā al-A'hd (The Combating Enemies of Islam in this Age)', vol. 29/2, pp. 115-117
[186] *Al-Manār*, 'Al-Azhar wā Duʿāt al-Naṣrāniyya (Al-Azhar and Missionaries)', vol. 16/11 (Dhū al-Qiʿdah 1331/October 1913), p. 878.

any student who would get in touch with them without permission should be dismissed. An exception could be made for brilliant students, who would visit their meetings with the purpose of informing their colleagues about their activities.[187]

After the appearance of the first issue of the mouthpiece of Al-Azhar, *Majallat Nūr al-ʾIslām* (The Light of Islam, 1930), Riḍā commended it in his journal, wishing that the magazine would take the place of his *Manār* in propagating the Islamic values and fighting against the increase of missionary attempts among Muslims.[188] But Riḍā soon expressed his disappointment with the lax position taken by Al-Azhar and the Corps of its High ʻUlamā in that regard. His critique coincided with the anti-missionary press campaign against the observable increase of missionary work in Egypt culminated during the period 1931-1933 with the coming of the unpopular and undemocratic regime of Ṣidqī Pasha. The Egyptian government and official religious leaders (represented by Al-Azhar scholars) were heavily criticised for their weak reactions against missionary activities in the country.[189]

In his criticism, Riḍā claimed that although the Egyptian press was immensely preoccupied by the news of missionary events in the country, the Al-Azhar scholars, who were supposed to be the religious leaders of the community, had not taken a proper stance against missionary attacks on Islam. He strongly accused the institution and its then rector, the conservative Sheikh al-Aḥmadī al-Ẓawāhirī (1878-1944), of 'making a poor defense against unbelief and the attacks of the Christian West.'[190] Al-Ẓawāhirī had a conflict at that time with the reform-minded Azhari scholar Sheikh Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945),[191] who was a good friend of Riḍā and a disciple of Muḥammad ʿAbduh as well. The newspaper *al-Siyāsa*, the voice of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party, depicted Al-Azhar scholars of immersing themselves in ritual matters, and turning their back against the Christian proselytization of Muslims.[192]

In 1931 the above-mentioned Sheikh Yūsuf al-Dijwī (see chapter 1),[193] became Riḍā's greatest opponent in his polemic with Al-Azhar. The debate

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[187] Ibid., p. 878.

[188] *Al-Manār*, vol. 31/2 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1349/24 August 1930), p. 155, cf. Riḍā's *Azhar*, p. 15; Abdullāh al-Najdī al-Qusaimī, *Shuyūkh Al-Azhar wā al-Ziyādah fī al-ʾIslām*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1351 AH, pp. 12-13.

[189] Carter, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

[190] Crecelius, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

[191] More about his life, see, Anwar al-Jundī, *al-Imām al-Marāghī* (Cairo, 1952). Muḥammad 'Izzat al-Tahtāwī, 'Muḥammad Mustafā al-Marāghī,' *Al-Azhar Magazine* (1414/1993), pp. 715-722; Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of Dār al-Ifta*, Leiden, New York, Cologne: Brill, 1997, pp. 152-53 (Quoted below, *Defining*). When al-Marāghī took the office for the second time in 1935, the name of the mouthpiece of Al-Azhar Sheikhdom was changed into *Majallat Al-Azhar*, which is still being published in Cairo under the same title.

[192] See, Charles D. Smith**,** *Islam and the Search for Social Order in Modern Egypt: A Biography of Muḥammad Husayn Haykal,* New York: Sunny Press, 1984, pp. 112-113.

[193] About al-Dijwī, see, *Ziriklī*, *op. cit.*, vol. 8, pp. 216-217. Sheikh al-Dijwī is the author of *Rasā'il Al-Salām wā Rusul Al-ʾIslām* (Epistles of Peace and Apostle of Islam), Cairo: Al-Nahdah Press,

between both Riḍā and Dijwī around many religious issues became very intense and serious, and later developed into hostility and serious friction between the two men. They exchanged insults, and Dijwī accused Riḍā of unbelief.[194] Al-Dijwī now recalled Riḍā's *fatwā* for the students of the American College in Beirut (mentioned above), which he interpreted as allegedly allowing Muslim students to attend Christian prayers.[195] According to him, Riḍā forgot that his permission 'would implant Christian rituals in the pure hearts [of Muslim students], and engrave what they would hear from missionaries and priests in their naïve minds'.[196]

By 1933 the anti-missionary press campaign reached its climax. Missionaries were charged of using methods, such as hypnotism, torture, bribery and jobs, enticing children by sweets, kidnapping, adoption of babies, abusing the prophet Muḥammad, burning the Qur'ān and using it as toilet paper.[197] As a result of the pressing need of the public opinion, Al-Azhar High Corps of 'Ulamā convened two consequent meetings (26 June, and 17 July, 1933) to discuss the matter.[198] In one of their manifestos Al-Azhar ʿUlamā requested the government to prescribe strict laws in order to root missionaries out of Egypt. Riḍā believed that this demand was 'peculiar and unreasonable'. The government would never accept it. He also wondered how could the committee 'entrust the Sheikh of Al-Azhar to carry out the suggestion, while he was following the government in its shade'.[199]

Riḍā, on the other hand, joined *Jamʿiyyat al-Difāʿ ʿan al-ʾIslām* (the Committee of the Defense of Islam), held in *Jamʿiyyat al-Shubbān al-Muslimūn* (Young Men's Muslim Association) in Cairo and attended by more than 400 scholars. The Committee was headed by al-Ẓawāhirī's opponent al-Marāghī. It gained a wider popularity than Al-Azhar, and included many influential figures, such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haikal, the editor of *al-Siyāsa* and Hasan al-Bannā. In one of its reports, the British Residency noted that al-Ẓawāhirī and many other scholars felt that their role as the 'public defenders' of Islam was being undermined by al-Marāghī. The British Residency also intimidated the King by

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n. d.; the English text of the book is also included the supplement of *Nour El-Islam Review* (*Al-Azhar Magazine*), vols. 2-3, 1350-51/1932-33. It contains arguments of defense of Islam, and was originally written as guidelines of the Islamic faith for American converts to Islam.

[194] Crecelius, *op. cit.,* pp. 314-15.

[195] Dijwī also gave a number of *fatwās* attacking the *Wahhābī* kingdom in Saudi Arabia. Skovgaard-Petersen, *op. cit*., pp. 152-53.

[196] Dijwī, 'Sāḥib', p. 337. Some other Azharīs had earlier pleaded that a committee from Al-Azhar should be established to study Riḍā's views and give the government its advice to close down *al-Manār*. See, *al-Manār*, vol. 20/1, pp. 6-7

[197] 'Current Events: 'The anti-missionary Campaign in Egypt', *The Moslim World* 24 (1934), 84-86; 'Contro l'attiviá dei Missionari protestanti in Egitto,' *Oriente Moderno* 13,7 (1933), 373-375.

[198] See, Umar Ryad, 'Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in Egypt: With a Special Reference to the Al-Azhar High Corps of *'Ulamā* (1925-1935)', in Heleen Murre-van Den Berg (ed.), *New Faith in Ancient Lands: Western Missions in the Middle East in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Brill, 2006, pp. 281-307 (Quoted below, 'ʿUlamā').

[199] *Al-Manār*, 'Muqāwamat al-Mubashshirīn wā Takhādhul al-Muslimīn (Resisting missionaries and the laxity of Muslims),' vol. 33/4 (Rabīʿ al-ʾAwwal 1352/June 1933), p. 312.

stating that the British had the right to protect foreigners in Egypt and could well be pressed by other foreign governments to take action. As a result, the government forbade anti-missionary gatherings including the meetings of the Committee for the Defense of Islam. The High Corps of 'Ulamā was the only organization which could safely continue the work of collecting donations.[200]

At the proposition of the meetings, the members passed some recommendations to be carried out by Marāghī's committee: 1) to submit a petition to King Fu'ād about missionary activities, stressing the importance of diminishing the missionary attacks against Islam and the Muslim community; 2) to send another similar petition to the Egyptian government, asking them to take strict decisions towards the 'illegal' missionary work; 3) to send messages to the ministers plenipotentiary, to attract their attention to the danger and consequences of missionary activities and asking them to use their influence to stop the missionary arguments against Islam and Muslims; 4) to publish a public announcement to the whole Muslim community, warning the people against the enrollment of their children in missionary schools, as well as against entering their hospitals and orphanages; 5) to appeal for public subscription in order to establish Muslim institutions instead of that of missionary institutions; 6) to establish a committee, consisting of Muslim scholars and writers for the Islamic propaganda and publications; 7) to write messages to the Christian Patriarchs, stating that the resistance is only directed against missionary attacks on Islam, and that the Committee is keen on maintaining a good relationship between Muslims and other religious groups living in the same country on the basis of the national mutual understanding.[201] Riḍā believed that the resolutions of the Committee came as a 'thunderbolt on the heads of the [Western] governments which protected these missionary organizations.'[202]

3.9. Conclusion

We have studied *al-Manār*'s anti-missionary responses on different levels. *Al-Manār* placed particular emphasis upon the necessity of counteracting their activities through establishing similar schools that could provide instruction in the doctrines of Islam. Its anti-Christian polemics were also 'an apologetic directed towards Muslim doubters.'[203]

Riḍā remained firm in his conviction of the espousal between Christian mission and colonialism. In the beginning, however, he was ready to criticise any 'overzealous and fanatic' reactions against missionaries, while considering his own writings as purely defensive. The political and religious changes of the Muslim world had major impact on the change of this calm tone. He became frustrated by the protection given to missionaries under the Capitulatory System. He regularly contrasted their freedom with the restrictions imposed

[200] Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[201] Ryad, "Ulamā", pp. 305-306.
[202] *Al-Manār*, vol. 33/4, p. 313.
[203] H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, 1947, p. 53.

upon him not to write against them. He was also convinced that there was a missionary attempt of intervention in order to close down his journal by approaching Lord Kitchener. He felt that this 'collaboration' endangered his career and diminished his role as a Muslim scholar in defending Islam.

The diversity of missionary movements and their different religious and political backgrounds sometimes caused Riḍā's response to be undecided. However, he clearly differentiated between what he called 'paid preachers' and the 'wise and virtuous Christians'. The first category always depended on their salaries from missionary societies, seeking discord, attacking Islam and many times falsifying the facts about the number of converts among Muslims in order to gain more funds from their mother institutions in the West. The second group were those who had real zealotry for their faith, and were working for the good of all, such as the Danish missionary Alfred Nielsen (discussed below).

Regarding the influence of missionary schools, his views were not decisive either. He neither fully allowed Muslims to enter such schools, nor wanted them to abandon them entirely. In fact, he was inclined to recommend Muslims by way of selective borrowing from the West to make use of the scientific advances of such schools, while keeping the strength of Islamic traditions. Apparently, he was anxious of the ramifications of their establishment in the Muslim society, and feared that they would produce an antagonistic generation among Muslims. When Riḍā tried to make a balance by permitting enthusiastic Muslims to enroll their children in such schools for a better future, while firmly observing their articles of faith, some of Al-Azhar scholars led by al-Dijwī exploited his views in enflaming their polemics against him.