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## Muḥammad Muṣṭafā I-Marāghī (1881–1945)

Rainer Brunner

### 1. Introduction

Born in 1881, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā I-Marāghī belonged to that generation of Egyptians who lived through a period of intense political and intellectual change both in the country and beyond. Egypt, which had been placed under British suzerainty in 1882, gained its formal independence (albeit under the continued strong influence of the former colonial power) in 1922. Two years later, the newly established Turkish Republic abolished the Caliphate and thereby plunged the entire Muslim world into a deep identity crisis, which was further aggravated by the advance of the Wahhabis, who in the mid-1920s conquered the Arabian Peninsula and in 1932 established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These changes and upheavals brought about manifold transitions on the intellectual level as well. The most noticeable one was certainly the further erosion of the traditional spiritual and legal authority of the *'ulamā'* over the believers and the dramatically decreasing stance of the time-honoured centres of learning and their curricula. This resulted in the emergence of a new stratum of religious intellectuals and *salafiyya* associations, the most noteworthy among them being the Society of the Muslim Brothers (*Jam'iyat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*) that was founded by the young school teacher Ḥasan al-Bannā (d. 1949) in Egypt in 1928. But it also affected, at least temporarily, other fields of religious activities, such as the mutual relations between Sunni and Shiite dignitaries, or the role accorded to the Qur'ān under these political circumstances. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā I-Marāghī, in his capacity of scholar-cum-politician, was an important protagonist in the majority of these developments.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Given al-Marāghī's importance to the course of Muslim reformism, it is astonishing that only one scholarly monograph has so far been devoted to him: Francine Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste à l'université al-Azhar: Œuvre et pensée de Mustafā al-Marāghī (1881-1945)* (Cairo/Paris: Karthala, 2005); apart from this, there are two short (and rather hagiographic) books in Arabic: Muḥamad 'Imāra, *al-Iṣlāḥ ad-dīnī fī l-qarn al-'ishrīn: Al-Imām al-Marāghī namūdhajan* (Cairo: Maṭābi' al-Ahrām at-Tijāriyya, 2007); Anwar al-Jundī, *al-Imām al-Marāghī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1952). The

## 2. Al-Marāghī, Muslim reformism, and Politics

Al-Marāghī was a brilliant Sunni Muslim jurist who increasingly took to the political stage during the later phases of his career. He received his primary education with his father, who was a local scholar in his home town Marāgha in Upper Egypt, before moving to al-Azhar in Cairo at the age of 11, where he soon became a favourite student of Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), the Grand Mufti (since 1899) and figurehead both of Muslim reformist thought in general and the institutional reform of al-Azhar in particular.<sup>2</sup> After graduating in 1904, at the unprecedented young age of 23, he took up his first post (on ‘Abduh’s recommendation) as a judge in Dongola and Khartoum (Sudan). Following a short interlude in Cairo at the *awqāf* ministry and al-Azhar, he returned to Sudan in 1908 and held the position of Supreme judge (*qāḍī l-quḍāt*) until 1919. Upon his return to Egypt, he served as inspector and president of various religious courts, before becoming a public figure and an influential and controversial Azhar rector (*Shaykh al-Azhar*) from 1928 onward, as we shall see shortly. He died in August 1945.<sup>3</sup>

The strong emphasis in modern scholarship about Islamic reformism on the trinity Afghānī – ‘Abduh – Rashīd Riḍā as the main protagonists of the Egyptian reformist movement between roughly 1880 and 1940 at times obscures the role of other figures. With regard to al-Marāghī, this has not always been the case: Charles C. Adams, his contemporary and the first Western historian of what he called “the ‘Manār’ party”, stated as early as 1933 that al-Marāghī “is commonly recognized by the press of to-day as ‘the oldest of the pupils of Muḥammad ‘Abduh’.”<sup>4</sup> Two decades later, Anwar al-Jundī (d. 2002), a prolific writer with strong Salafi leanings, portrayed him as “one of the pupils of the *Salafiyya* school whose seeds were sown by the Imam Muḥammad ‘Abduh” and linked his reformist thought explicitly to Taqī d-Dīn b. Taymiyya (d.

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book *ash-Shaykh al-Marāghī bi-aqlām al-kuttāb*, edited by his son Abū l-Wafā’ (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a al-Muniriyya, 1957), consists mainly of obituaries, personal memoirs and a selection of shorter texts and articles penned by al-Marāghī.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of ‘Abduh’s activities in this regard, see Indira Falk Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 165–96.

<sup>3</sup> On al-Marāghī’s biography, see ‘Imāra, *al-Iṣlāḥ ad-dīnī*, 3–18; Abū l-Wafā’ al-Marāghī, ed., *ash-Shaykh al-Marāghī bi-aqlām al-kuttāb*, 5–11; Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, *Ḥadīth Ramaḍān. Tafṣīr jāmi‘ li-khams suwar min al-Qur’ān al-karīm, wa-hiya: al-furqān, wa-Luqmān, wa-l-ḥujurāt, wa-l-ḥadīd, wa-l-‘aṣr* (n.p. [Cairo]: Dār al-Jumhūriyya 2018, 3–10 (preface by Ibrāhīm Ṣalāḥ Hudhud).

<sup>4</sup> Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt. A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muhammad ‘Abduh* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 205, 208.

728/ 1328) and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/ 1111), followed by Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1314/1897) and ‘Abduh.<sup>5</sup> His judgement seems justified, since al-Marāghī was held in high esteem by his contemporaries: in the quarrels about al-Azhar reform from 1928 onward, it was Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā in particular who hailed him as the standard-bearer of Islamic reform. In one breath with proud references to the Wahhabi advance on the Arabian Peninsula as well as to the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, ‘Abduh’s *Risālat at-tawḥīd* and his own (and ‘Abduh’s) *Tafsīr al-Manār*, he counted it among the “glad tidings of reform” (*bashā’ir al-iṣlāḥ*) that the leadership of the ‘ulamā’ had devolved upon al-Marāghī, who was after all a disciple of ‘Abduh.<sup>6</sup> After Rashīd Riḍā’s death on 22 August 1935, it fell to al-Marāghī to give a funeral oration in which he described the deceased as “a Sunni Salafī man who abhorred *taqlīd* and called for *ijtihād*,” and whose worst enemies had been those Muslims who forsook the wisdom of the sunna and the guidance of the Qur’ān.<sup>7</sup>

Another notable activist of Islamic reformism with whom al-Marāghī associated was Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Like in the case of the independent religious intellectual Rashīd Riḍā, the newly established neo-Salafī organization that quickly evolved into a mass movement represented a serious challenge to the university’s institutional authority. On the one hand, it tried to profit from the network of Azhar preachers throughout the country for its own purposes. On the other hand, relations between the Brotherhood and al-Azhar remained strained from the very beginning, and al-Bannā rarely missed an opportunity to denounce what he saw as the traditional scholars’ complete failure to act as vigorous religious guides and to defend Islam against the various external threats.<sup>8</sup> This, however, did not hinder the two lead-

<sup>5</sup> Al-Jundī, *al-Imām al-Marāghī*, 42, 44; he remarkably left out Rashīd Riḍā from this genealogy; cf. also *DhTM* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2000), 2: 433. On al-Jundī (1917–2002) see Werner Ende, “al-Jundī, Anwar,” in *EF*<sup>3</sup>, ed. Kate Fleet et al., accessed May 29, 2023, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_32879](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_32879).

<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, “Fātiḥat al-mujallad ath-thalāthīn,” *al-Manār* 30, no. 1 (June 1929): 1–16, quotation on 14–15; Rainer Brunner, “Lātiniyya lā-dīniyya – Muḥammad Raṣīd Riḍā über Arabisch und Türkisch im Zeitalter des Nationalismus,” in *Osmanische Welten. Quellen und Fallstudien. Festschrift Michael Ursinus*, ed. Christoph Herzog, Raoul Motika and Johannes Zimmermann (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2016): 96.

<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, “Khuṭbat al-ustādh al-akbar, Shaykh al-Jāmi‘ al-Azhar,” *al-Manār* 35, no. 3 (March 1936): 186–88, quotation on 188. Incidentally, al-Marāghī was to die to the day ten years later, on 22 August 1945.

<sup>8</sup> Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, new edition 1993), 211–14; Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt. The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1829-1942* (Reading: Ithaca, 1998), 224–27; Gudrun Krämer,

ing figures from entertaining a personal friendship. When al-Bannā managed to obtain the license to resume publication of *al-Manār* after Rashīd Riḍā's death, al-Marāghī composed the preface to the first issue in July 1939.<sup>9</sup> Beyond debating the question of what modern Islam should look like in society, these contacts had the added value for the Brotherhood that it found easier access to the royal palace, for al-Marāghī in the meantime had become the highest ranking liaison man between religion and politics.<sup>10</sup> When al-Marāghī assumed the rectorship of al-Azhar for the first time, discussions about the need to adapt al-Azhar's curricula, textbooks and teaching methods to the modern era had already been under way for several decades.<sup>11</sup> The first reform laws were enacted in 1872 and 1911, and they were characterised by controversies between reformist scholars (such as, for instance, Muḥammad 'Abduh) and their obstructionist counterparts from among the traditionalist scholars. To these intellectual quarrels was added the political problem whose prerogative it was to nominate the rector, when the Egyptian parliament, due to its growing influence after the independence, successfully challenged the King's hitherto undisputed right to decide this issue on his own. After Abū l-Faḍl al-Jīzāwī's demise in 1927, the parliament's candidate, al-Marāghī, was appointed as the new rector in May 1928. He set to work immediately by submitting a memorandum – characteristically published in Rashīd Riḍā's journal *al-Manār*<sup>12</sup> – calling for a far-reaching re-organisation of al-Azhar. In it, he did not make do with the widespread complaint about al-Azhar's dwindling authority and the growing aberration of its scholars, but presented concrete propositions how to counter this decay: by

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*Der Architekt des Islamismus. Hasan al-Banna und die Muslimbrüder* (Munich: Beck, 2022), 192-93; on the concept of neo-Salafīyya see Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der islamischen Weltliga* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 87-93.

<sup>9</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, "Taṣḍīr," *al-Manār* 35, no. 5 (July 1939): 1-2; it was, however, a short-lived affair, as only five more issues appeared before the journal was finally closed down for good in September 1940.

<sup>10</sup> On the relations between the Muslim Brothers and the political establishment, see Lia, *Society*, 214-23.

<sup>11</sup> On the background of al-Azhar in the 13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century, see Gesink, *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*, passim; on the following see in more detail Rainer Brunner, "Education, Politics, and the Struggle for Intellectual Leadership – al-Azhar between 1927 and 1945," in *Guardians of Faith in Modern Times: 'Ulama' in the Middle East*, ed. Meir Hatina (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 109-40, esp. 116-24 and 131-37; Wolf-Dieter Lemke, *Maḥmūd Ṣaltūt (1893-1963) und die Reform der Azhar. Untersuchungen zu Erneuerungsbestrebungen im ägyptisch-islamischen Erziehungssystem* (Frankfurt/Main etc.: Peter Lang, 1980), 47-126; Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 64-106.

<sup>12</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, "Iṣlāḥ al-Azhar ash-sharīf," *al-Manār* 29, no. 5 (September 1928): 325-35; see Lemke, *Maḥmūd Ṣaltūt*, 65-75; Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 69-73; Francine Costet-Tardieu, "Un projet de réforme pour l'Université d'al-Azhar en 1928: le Mémorandum du shaykh al-Marāghī," *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 95-98 (2002): 169-87.

putting more emphasis on individual reasoning (*ijtihād*) instead of emulating tradition (*taqlīd*), by renewing the curricula and introducing new subjects (such as comparative religious studies) and modern textbooks, and by restructuring the administration in three new faculties (Arabic language, Islamic law, moral guidance and mission). Although the memorandum was enthusiastically greeted by the reformist camp, all attempts at its practical realisation remained unsuccessful. Al-Marāghī stepped down in October 1929, and Muḥammad al-Aḥmadī z-Ẓawāhirī (d. 1944) who already in the previous year had been the King's candidate took his place.

Born in 1878, az-Ẓawāhirī belonged to the same generation as al-Marāghī, and he, too, was a graduate (1902) of al-Azhar. Yet he embodied the conservative counterpart to the reformists and attached great importance to traditional customs and gestures. His understanding of the necessity of reform was considerably more limited than al-Marāghī's: The comprehensive reform law that was passed in 1930 did adopt some externals from al-Marāghī's memorandum, such as the establishment of the three faculties, but no mention was made of *ijtihād*, and no new methods or textbooks were introduced. Nevertheless, az-Ẓawāhirī did not manage to appease the heated atmosphere within al-Azhar and the ongoing struggle with the political institutions. In the following years he was moreover increasingly confronted with external pressure from the *salafī* reformist camp, in particular from Rashīd Riḍā.<sup>13</sup> Following growing protests among the students, az-Ẓawāhirī finally resigned in April 1935, and thus paved the way for al-Marāghī's second tenure which was to last until his death in 1945.

Contrary to many hopes, however,<sup>14</sup> this decade did not turn out to be a reformist reset of al-Azhar. When the reform of 1936 fell short of preparing the ground for a thorough reorganisation of the educational system and the introduction of new subjects, many reform-minded scholars of a younger generation became disillusioned and turned away from al-Marāghī.<sup>15</sup> It emerged that the institutional and conceptual reform of al-Azhar was no longer al-Marāghī's top priority: he had given himself to politics, and conse-

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<sup>13</sup> In 1934, Rashīd Riḍā published his last book, *al-Manār wa-l-Azhar*, which contained not only his autobiography, but also a fierce critique of what he perceived as the obscurantism of many Azhar scholars; cf. Brunner, "Education," 125–31.

<sup>14</sup> Only a few weeks before he passed away, Rashīd Riḍā welcomed al-Marāghī's comeback as "a major revolution": al-Azhar, al-Azhar, al-inqilāb al-akbar," *al-Manār* 34, no. 10 (May 1935): 764–73.

<sup>15</sup> The most noteworthy example in this regard was Maḥmūd Shaltūt (1893–1963) who was to play a decisive role in future Azhar reforms. On the 1936 reform and its consequences, see in detail Lemke, *Maḥmūd Šaltūt*, 101–5, 123–49; Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 112–16. On Shaltūt, see also

quently, at least part of his theological statements needs to be regarded in this light as well. A characteristic case in point is the issue of relations between Sunnis and Shiites. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, serious efforts to overcome the long-standing mutual animosity were taken, and it was only logical that al-Azhar – which had after all been founded by the Shiite Fatimids in the 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century – at some point would become involved in these discussions. Al-Marāghī’s reform memorandum in particular spread his reputation among Shiite reformist circles which by then followed closely the developments in Egypt.<sup>16</sup>

The hitherto most promising step was made by the Iraqi scholar ‘Abd al-Karīm az-Zanjānī (d. 1968) who arrived in Cairo in October 1936. Several large receptions were organised in his honour, both by some neo-Salafī associations and by al-Azhar, and by celebrating the beginning of Ramadan (1355h/November 1936) together, al-Marāghī and his guest indicated that they were willing to engage in serious efforts of a more ecumenical nature.<sup>17</sup> In fact, their initiative seemed to bear fruits on a theological level, too, when they dealt with the most controversial issue: the question of legitimate leadership in Islam. For generations, the strife about the Sunni caliphate and the Shiite imamate had been the essential fuel of dissent, now it should be the point of departure to reach an understanding. In their talks, they agreed that the indispensable foundations of Islam as a belief system be limited to three points: the belief in the unity of God (*tawhīd*), in Muḥammad’s message (*risāla*), and in the hereafter (*ma‘ād*). The question of the imamate/caliphate, on the other hand, was declared to be a purely politically motivated problem that had nothing to do with religion proper, and thus rendered innocuous. Exempted from the realm of religious belief, it was assigned to a newly invented category of its own, namely the “principle of the legal school” (*aṣl madhhabī*) that was valid merely for the followers of the respective legal school. It was a matter of *ijtihād*, and seeking refuge in *ijtihād* was a core principle both of Shiite law and of Sunni modernism anyway. In order then to substantiate their demand for legal unification, the two scholars suggested the establishment of an Islamic scientific legislative

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the chapter on him in the present volume and the references given there.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. [Anonymous], “Sā‘a ma‘a al-ustādh al-akbar, ash-Shaykh al-Marāghī,” *al-Irfān* 18, no. 1–2 (Aug.-Sep. 1929): 145–51 (where he was also compared to Muḥammad ‘Abduh); cf. also Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the Twentieth Century. The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 45–50.

<sup>17</sup> On az-Zanjānī’s (1887–1968) visit to Cairo and his talks with al-Marāghī, cf. in detail Brunner, *Is-*

committee (*majma' tashrī'ī 'ilmī islāmī*) whose task it would have been to review the legal opinions of the five schools in question in the light of Qur'ān and the sunna so as to extract a common essence (*khulāṣa*). Concrete modalities about follow-up conferences, participants, or competences were deliberately left open for the time being – and petered out later on. When, in February 1938, al-Marāghī again approached az-Zanjānī and reminded him of the common project, the Iraqi scholar voiced so many reservations as to the where and how of the envisaged conference that it was more or less equivalent to its outright rejection.

Az-Zanjānī had apparently understood al-Marāghī's ulterior motives which touched upon one of the most sensitive political issues of the day, namely the question of the caliphate. Heated debates about this issue had been going on already well before its formal abolition by the Turkish parliament March 1924, and al-Marāghī had participated in them early on. In 1915, while serving as a judge in Sudan, he wrote a letter to the British Governor General, Sir Reginald Wingate, in which he put forward two extraordinary contentions: for one thing, contrary to the traditional theory of the caliphate, it was not necessary that the caliph belonged to the Prophet's tribe of the Quraysh; and secondly, "the question of the caliphate is a purely worldly one," although it "has certain connections and relations with religion."<sup>18</sup> This was a fairly obvious attempt to capitalize on the impending bankrupt assets of the Ottoman empire (and to counter the simultaneous efforts of the Meccan Sharīf Ḥusayn to have himself acknowledged as caliph) in order to secure the caliphate for Egypt. While this venture found no echo, the time seemed ripe for another go when the sixteen-year-old prince Fārūq had been crowned King of Egypt by his mentor al-Marāghī in April 1936. In the following years, the *Shaykh al-Azhar* did his very best to make the King appear as a dignified pretender to the caliphate, not even shrinking from describing him "with respect to theology [to be] Salafi in doctrine and methodology."<sup>19</sup> As we shall see below, the

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*lamic Ecumenism*, 103–13.

<sup>18</sup> Elie Kedourie, "Egypt and the Caliphate, 1915-52," in *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies*, ed. Elie Kedourie (New York: Praeger, 1970; repr. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004): 179 (full translation of the letter *ibid.*, 208–12). Al-Marāghī also later on enjoyed good relations with the British, and his two appointments as Shaykh al-Azhar were discreetly, but noticeably backed by the British colonial authorities; cf. Brunner, "Education," 117f. and 133.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted by Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism. Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 122; it is open to discussion whether this was an act of "obsequious flattery" as Lauzière calls it, or whether one may consider it as a brazen attempt to manipulate the inexperienced young king for his political agenda; cf. also Israel Gershoni and James

monarch's pious aura was also an important element of al-Marāghī's Ramadan lectures about the Qur'ān. Al-Marāghī's renewed initiative, in spring 1938, to win az-Zanjānī over, has therefore to be seen in this context. After the Iraqi scholar's withdrawal, the project was pursued for a while, and occasionally the King was even addressed as *amīr al-mu'minīn*. But in the end, it came to naught, as also within Egypt, opposition against a relaunched caliphate became too strong; even al-Marāghī's allies from the Muslim Brotherhood backed out and began to spread rumours about Fārūq's not-so-pious lifestyle.<sup>20</sup> Al-Marāghī's most ambitious political plans thus flatly failed, and it is characteristic that from this moment on, his previous theological approaches – such as the doctrinal rapprochement with Shiism – no longer played any role for him.

### 3. Al-Marāghī and the Qur'ān

In comparison to the average output of Muslim scholars in the fields of jurisprudence and theology, al-Marāghī left a remarkably small oeuvre, both in terms of number and of size. Most of his publications are short epistles on the occasion of particular exigencies (such as his reform memorandum in 1928), or resulting from his tasks as supreme judge and *Shaykh al-Azhar*.<sup>21</sup> There is no monograph among them, as even his thesis (*risāla*) which he wrote in order to be admitted to al-Azhar's circle of grand scholars (*hay'at kibār al-'ulamā'*) apparently remained unpublished.<sup>22</sup> This, by consequence, also applies to the field of Qur'ānic studies, with which al-Marāghī dealt in a rather eclectic way, in the form of a short treatise on the translation of the Qur'ān and a series of Ramadan lectures centred around specific verses of the scripture.

When al-Marāghī published his *Study on the Translation of the Qur'ān and its Rules* in 1932, feelings about this issue had been running high for several years.<sup>23</sup> In pre-

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Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 158–63.

<sup>20</sup> Lia, *Society*, 218f. This lifestyle further increased considerably after the War. When he was ousted by the revolution in 1952, he went into exile in Europe where his life ended under gargantuan circumstances in 1965; see P.J. Vatikiotis, "Fārūq," in *EI<sup>2</sup>* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 12: 299–302.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 16f.; for lists of al-Marāghī's publications, see *ibid.*, 283; Muḥammad 'Izzat aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī, "al-Ustādh al-Imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī," *Majallat al-Azhar* 66, no. 5 (November 1993): 722.

<sup>22</sup> Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 17 and 23, note 4 (citing the title of the *risāla* as *Kitāb al-Awliyā' wa-l-mahjūrīn*). Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī's statement (*al-Mu'āshirūn* [Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1993], 386), that "like his teacher Muḥammad 'Abduh, he did not leave large works where he put down the gist of his knowledge and the cream of his affirmation" (*lubāb 'ilmīhi wa-zubdat taḥqīqihi*) seems, however, a little farfetched with regard to 'Abduh's published legacy.

<sup>23</sup> *Baḥṭh fī tarjamat al-Qur'ān al-karīm wa-aḥkāmihā*; it was reprinted in the al-Azhar journal after his

modern Islamic scholarship, the two main aspects related to this question had temporarily played a significant role: is it permissible, let alone possible, to translate the scripture into foreign languages, and is it licit to recite in the ritual prayer Qur'ānic passages in a language other than Arabic? After all, the Qur'ān itself refers expressly to the close relation between revelation and the “clear Arabic language” (*lisān 'arabī mubīn*, Q 16:103 and 26:195) in which it happened, and the dogma of the “inimitability” (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān is largely built on its Arabicity. Nevertheless, many classical Muslim exegetes, such as Abū Muḥammad b. Qutayba (d. 276/889) or Abū Ishāq ash-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), on the whole handled the matter with comparative ease. They distinguished between a literal translation (*lafẓī*, deemed to be impossible) and semantic one (*ma'nawī*), and often used interlinear versions that also reproduced the Arabic original text – although most of them insisted on the superior character of the Arabic language, and although there were literalist scholars like Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) who stressed that everyone who read the Qur'ān in a foreign language was not reading God's word.<sup>24</sup> That the debate, after a quiet interlude of several centuries, resurfaced around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was due to reasons that went beyond Qur'ānic scholarship proper. In the course of the modernist dispute against European colonialism, the protagonists of the nascent Arab nationalism referred also to the Arabic character of Islam. Once again, it was the indefatigable Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā who resumed this idea in his journal *al-Manār*. Since in his eyes, Islamic reform was indissolubly tied to the Arabic language, there was no question of allowing for a translation of the Qur'ān: it would undermine its miraculous character and finally result in the Turks having a Turkish Qur'ān, the Persians having a Persian one, and so forth.<sup>25</sup> This tense atmosphere was further aggravated in the 1920s when various Turkish and English translations started to appear. The former ones were the logical continuation of the new republic's attempt to sever the old religious ties with the Arab world and to bring Islam under state control, the latter ones were accomplished by non-Arab Muslims or European converts to Islam, mostly for missionary reasons and

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return as rector: *Majallat al-Azhar* 7 (1936): 77–122; see also Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 238–46; Meir M. Bar-Asher, “Avis musulmans sur la question de la traduction du Coran,” in *Controverses sur les écritures canoniques de l'islam*, ed. Daniel de Smet and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (Paris: Cerf, 2014): 308–20.

<sup>24</sup> The classical debate is summarized by Bar-Asher, “Avis musulmans,” 298–305.

<sup>25</sup> Brunner, “*Lātiniyya lā-dīniyya*,” 100f.

intended to counter the activities of Christian missionaries in the Muslim countries.<sup>26</sup>

Remarkably enough, al-Marāghī did not side with the Salafī focus on the Arabic character of the scripture. His treatise was, on the contrary, an attempt to argue for a comprehensive permission to translate the Qurʾān and to even use translated passages for prayer. What is more, he did not refer to the contemporaneous quarrels and polemics, but was intent on relying on classical scholarship and on exerting his own *ijtihād* instead. By doing so, he avoided the impression of merely giving a compliant answer to external pressure, and made it appear as a landmark decision well-founded on genuinely theological reasoning within Islam. Basically, he claims from the outset, there is no difference between a translator of the Qurʾān and an exegete – the latter explains the scripture in Arabic, the former in another language – and since interpreting the Qurʾān in a foreign language is allowed by universal consensus (*ijmāʿ*), so must be its translation.<sup>27</sup> He is well aware of the most common objections of the opponents of any translation, and he goes on to refute them one by one. As to the most important qualm, the reference to *iʿjāz*, he states that the Qurʾān's inimitability is not tied to its style (*naẓm*), but to its meaning (85): anyone without a sufficient knowledge of Arabic neither understands this *naẓm*, nor experiences the deep emotion that emanates from it for the Arabic-speaking listener – but a translation may very well enable him to grasp the elegance and the rapture of the meaning (*ṭalāwat al-maʿānī wa-ladhdhatuhā*; 90). It is therefore perfectly permissible to deduce judicial stipulations from these translated meanings, because this is nothing but a matter of a kind of *ijtihād* which is absolutely compatible with exercising *taqlīd* with regard to the translator's work (88). In the delicate issue of using translated passages for prayer, al-Marāghī is ready to concede that there are contradictory reports even about Abū Ḥanīfa's (d. 150/767) changing attitude in this regard, but he nevertheless resolves to follow the Ḥanafī jurist Fakhr ad-Dīn

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<sup>26</sup> M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qurʾān in an Age of Nationalism. Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 190–213; the fact that one of the English translations was effected by the Aḥmadiyya movement which had originated shortly before in India was an additional challenge for someone like Rashīd Riḍā who considered them to be outright heretics. With regard to the Christianity, al-Marāghī was also active, as he is credited with the foundation of an association named *Jamʿiyyat ad-difāʿ ʿan al-Islām*, directed specifically against Christian missionaries: see Umar Ryad, *Islamic Reformism and Christianity. A Critical Reading of the Works of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā and His Associates (1898-1935)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 172; Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār wa-l-Azhar* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Manār, 1934), 262.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Baḥth*, 79f. (quoted here following the pagination in the *Majallat al-Azhar*); further references are given directly in the text.

Qāḍīkhān (d. 592/1196) according to whom anyone not able to read Arabic *must* use a translation for prayer (98).<sup>28</sup> After all, the fellow Ḥanafī Shams al-Aʿimma as-Sarakhsī (fl. 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>29</sup> had explained Abū Ḥanīfa’s permission by the analogy that those who physically are not able to prostrate in prayer may indicate it by gestures (91). Al-Marāghī is a little more reserved with regard to the question whether it is allowed to write down and recite the translated Qurʾān (sc. in its entirety), as a number of scholars equated this with either madness or heresy. But here, too, he follows Abū Ḥanīfa via a posterior jurist, ʿUbayd Allāh al-Maḥbūbī (d. 747/1346)<sup>30</sup> who decided that someone who is unsuspecting of anything in this regard may recite some words in Persian, and that it is only forbidden for those who know Arabic to acquire the habit of reciting from a translation, as this would in fact expose them to the suspicion of being mad or heretic. While they would thus be in danger of neglecting the Qurʾān, someone who does not understand Arabic would neglect it precisely by not searching for what is within his capacity, i.e. using a translated Qurʾān (101f.); all in all, it seems to be a fairly obvious decision for him: those who know Arabic must use an Arabic Qurʾān, those who don’t must use a translation. At any rate, al-Marāghī stresses, one has to distinguish between a literal translation and a semantic one. As to the Ḥanafiyya, they concede that the latter is equivalent to exegesis and therefore permissible for all verses, but they restrict use in prayer to those verses which can be translated literally (103, 107f.). But he makes a point in concluding that the Ḥanafiyya was not alone in having a positive attitude towards the translation of the Qurʾān, by adding supportive testimonies of scholars of other schools of thought. The Muʿtazili exegete Abū l-Qāsim az-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144),<sup>31</sup> for instance, is quoted with the statement that the Prophet was sent to all peoples, but that it was sufficient that the message was sent only in Arabic, because the translators would see to it that it was spread and explained among the other peoples as well (110).

<sup>28</sup> It is perhaps this statement that led some authors to render the title of al-Marāghī’s treatise as *Baḥṭh fī wujūb tarjamat al-Qurʾān al-karīm*; cf. aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī, “al-Ustādh al-Imām,” 722; al-Marāghī, *Ḥadīth Ramaḍān*, 9 (preface by Ibrāhīm Ṣalāḥ al-Hudhud). On Qāḍīkhān see Th. W. Juynboll, “Qāḍī Khān,” in *EF<sup>2</sup>* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 4: 377.

<sup>29</sup> On him see Norman Calder, “al-Sarakhsī,” in *EF<sup>2</sup>* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 9:35f.

<sup>30</sup> On him see Philipp Bruckmayr, “Knowledge of Good and Evil: ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Masʿūd Ṣadr al-Sharīʿa al-Thānī al-Maḥbūbī al-Bukhārī (d. 747/1346), *al-Tawḍīḥ fī ḥall ghawāmiḍ al-Tanqīḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*,” in *Māturīdī Theology. A Bilingual Reader*, ed. Lejla Demiri, Philip Dorroll and Dale J. Correa (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022): 203-13.

<sup>31</sup> On him see W. Madelung, “al-Zamakhsharī,” in *EF<sup>2</sup>* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 12: 840f.

Al-Marāghī had apparently no illusions about the highly controversial character of the issue, and his perceptible sigh that the further one went back in time, the more tolerant and open-minded the jurists were, while the closer one drew near the present, the more the pendulum swung to the contrary (108f.), may well be read as a hidden criticism of some contemporary ‘*ulamā*’. In fact, intransigent opposition to the translation of the Qur’ān did not immediately die down: the former Ottoman *ṣeykh ül-islām*, Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī (d. 1954), who lived in exile in Cairo, published a long and polemic answer to al-Marāghī’s article, not only with regard to the latter’s reasoning from classical sources, but also, and in great detail, by referring to the contemporaneous debate about a Turkish translation sponsored by Atatürk’s new secular republic. Small wonder that in the former religious dignitary’s eyes, such an undertaking was a serious threat (*fitna*) that more or less amounted to paving the way to atheism.<sup>32</sup> Although Ṣabrī’s book appeared in the *Salafiyya* publishing house run by Muḥibb ad-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1969), it surprisingly did not spark more like-minded comments and polemics. For in the meantime, even Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, who in the past had rarely missed an opportunity to denounce the new Turkish government’s alleged unbelief, had considerably toned down his critical stance towards the translation of the Qur’ān. In view of the circulating translations by European orientalists and the continued activities by Christian missionaries, he even went so far as to state that a “sound semantic translation” (*tarjama ma’naviyya ṣaḥīḥa*) was the collective duty of the Muslim community. It could not be a literary translation, nor would it be used for prayer, but as an “exegetical synopsis” (*khulāṣa tafsīriyya*) it would serve the purpose of defending Islam and performing mission (*da’wa*) among non-Muslims.<sup>33</sup> It is not altogether improbable that this change of heart was brought about by the epistle of his comrade-in-arms, al-Marāghī. Within al-Azhar, al-Marāghī managed to find some supporters among the younger reform-minded scholars,<sup>34</sup> and he even launched an initiative to organize offi-

<sup>32</sup> Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī, *Mas’alat tarjamat al-Qur’ān* (Cairo: al-Maṭba‘a as-Salafiyya wa-Maktabatuhā: 1932–33), 5, 72; see also Wilson, *Translating the Qur’an*, 213–17. The term *fitna* (lit.: trial, temptation) denotes also the first civil war in Islam after the killing of the caliph ‘Uthmān that is usually regarded to be the starting point of the split of the community into Shiites and Sunnis.

<sup>33</sup> Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, “Tarjamat al-Qur’ān wa-kawn al-‘arabiyya lughat al-islām,” *al-Manār* 32, no. 3 (March 1932): 184–89, quotation on 188; see also Brunner, “*Lātiniyya lā-dīniyya*,” 104f.

<sup>34</sup> Cf., e.g., the articles by Muḥammad al-Khiḍr Ḥusayn “Naql ma‘ānī l-Qur’ān ilā l-lughāt al-ajnabiyya,” *Nūr al-Islam* 2 (1930): 122–34; Maḥmūd Abū Daqīqa “Fī tarjamat al-Qur’ān al-karīm,” *Nūr al-Islam* 2 (1930): 29–35; Maḥmūd Shaltūt, “Tarjamat al-Qur’ān wa-nuṣūṣ al-‘ulamā’ fihā,” *Nūr al-Islam* 7 (1936): 123–34.

cial translations of the Qurʾān by al-Azhar itself, which, however, did not go beyond some preliminary meetings of committees.<sup>35</sup> One reason for this failure may have been the lack of adequate linguistic competence among al-Azhar scholars, al-Marāghī himself included, to actually evaluate any translation.<sup>36</sup>

Al-Marāghī did not write a comprehensive Qurʾān commentary. Sometimes, a partial *tafsīr* on the suras 67–77 (the so-called *juzʾ tabāraka*) is mentioned among his unpublished works, which he supposedly composed as a completion of ʿAbduh’s (printed, but not well-known) commentary on the suras 78–114 (*juzʾ ʿamma*).<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, Muḥammad Ḥusayn adh-Dhahabī (d. 1977) ranks al-Marāghī’s dealing with the Qurʾān in the same breath as ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā.<sup>38</sup> He does so on the basis of a series of lectures that al-Marāghī gave regularly – supposedly at the initial suggestion of King Fārūq – during the fasting month of Ramadan between 1356 (Nov./Dec. 1937) and 1363 (Aug./Sep. 1944), and that were consecutively published in small booklets under the programmatic title *ad-Durūs ad-dīniyya*.<sup>39</sup> All in all, al-Marāghī selected twenty-one complete suras or groups of verses most of which he discussed in lectures at al-Azhar and in three cases in sermons he gave at the neo-Salafī association

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<sup>35</sup> Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 242–46; Lemke, *Maḥmūd Šaltūt*, 111–15.

<sup>36</sup> While Kurd ʿAlī, *al-Muʿāširūn*, 376, emphasises that al-Marāghī had learned English during his residence in Sudan so that he even corrected mistakes in translations of the Qurʾān, the English convert Marmaduke Pickthall testifies to the contrary. According to him, al-Marāghī himself – whom he consulted in the context of his own translation of the Qurʾān – “regretted that he himself knew no English, and so could not appreciate the work.” He goes on to relate that after his translation was published in 1930, he received a letter from al-Azhar informing him that the *ʿulamāʾ* (under the rectorship of az-Zawāhirī) would condemn his work: “The latest rumour was that Al-Azhar had decided that the work must be translated word for word back into Arabic and submitted to their judgment in that distorted form, as none of the professors could read English.” Marmaduke Pickthall, “Arabs and non-Arabs, and the Question of Translating the Qurʾān,” *Islamic Culture* 5 (1931): 425, 432. Knowledge of foreign languages was not a trait of other protagonists of the debate either: Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā freely acknowledged that he could not assess the existing Turkish translations, as he did not understand Turkish: “Tarjamat al-Qurʾān wa-kawn al-ʿarabiyya lughat al-islām, wa-rābiṭat al-ukhuwwa wa-s-salām,” *al-Manār* 32, no. 7 (July 1932): 535–44, quotation on 543. On the apparent lack of knowledge of Persian at al-Azhar in the late 1930s, see Brunner, *Ecumenism*, 119f.

<sup>37</sup> Aṭ-Ṭaḥṭāwī, “al-Ustādh al-Imām,” 722; ʿAbduh’s commentary is reprinted in Muḥammad ʿAbduh, *al-Aʿmāl al-kāmila*, ed. Muḥammad ʿImāra (Beirut/Cairo: Dār ash-Shurūq, 1993), 5: 299–550; see also Johanna Pink, “ʿAbduh, Muḥammad,” in *EQ*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe. Brill, 2001–2006, accessed March 11, 2020, [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/abduh-muhammad-EQCOM\\_050483#d107189331e392](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/abduh-muhammad-EQCOM_050483#d107189331e392).

<sup>38</sup> *DhTM*, 2: 433–47 (on ʿAbduh and Rashīd Riḍā, 405–32); cf. also Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī’s preface to Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, *ad-Durūs ad-dīniyya li-sanat 1361 bi-qalam ḥadrat šāhib al-faḍīla al-ustādh al-imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Azhar, 1943), 3. By contrast, Jacques Jomier in his authoritative analysis *Le commentaire coranique du Manar* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1954) does not even mention al-Marāghī once.

<sup>39</sup> Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 246–55.

The fact that these lectures were designed to be sermons in the fasting month predetermined the choice of verses.<sup>41</sup> It also determined al-Marāghī's basic approach in his exegesis, as his lectures were not primarily addressed to his fellow theologians, but to a very general audience of people who did not normally consult Qur'ānic commentaries.<sup>42</sup> Thus, he does not regularly refer to the classical *tafsīr* tradition and to previous exegetes, but rather follows a method often applied in modernist commentaries to explain Qur'ānic verses by making cross-references to other verses and thus explaining the Qur'ān by itself (*tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi-l-Qur'ān*).<sup>43</sup> Nor does he make use of biblical or other non-Islamic traditions (*Isrā'īliyyāt*).<sup>44</sup> In accordance with the themes of the respective verses, most of al-Marāghī's lectures were of an edifying, yet also admonishing tone; sometimes, the Qur'ānic wording itself only serves as a convenient starting point for general preaching of a more pedagogical character. For instance, when dealing with Q 42:13–14 which stresses the continuity of Islam from pre-Islamic prophets and warns of division and polytheism, al-Marāghī only briefly stays with the wording before embarking on a rather general lecture on divine guidance, the need for Muslim unity and the delusion and limitation of Muslims by rationality and philosophy.<sup>45</sup> And it is certainly not by chance that he reverted several times over the years to the central ethical commandment in Islam, namely the provision “to command right and forbid wrong” (*al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-n-nahy 'an al-munkar*). For al-Marāghī, this is “the distinguishing mark of the virtuous community, without which it would lose the

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<sup>40</sup> Al-Marāghī allegedly died while working on the Ramadan lecture for 1364h (Aug. 1945): al-Marāghī, *Ḥadīth Ramaḍān*, 9. This book that appeared for the first time in 1952 and was reprinted several times since then, is a collection of those four suras (31, 49, 57, 103) which al-Marāghī commented in their entirety, plus the selected verses from sura 25. In his Ramadan lectures, he dealt with the following Qur'ānic passages: 1356: Q 2:177; Q 3:133–38; Q 42:13–14; Q 6:151–53 – 1357: Q 2:183–86; Q 8:24–29 – 1358: sura 49 – 1359: sura 57 – 1360: sura 31 – 1361: Q 6:160–65; Q 7: 199–203; Q 41:30–36 – 1362: Q 7:1–9; Q 11:112–17 and 118–23 – 1363: Q 4:58–59; Q 13:17–24; Q 28:83–88; in his sermons at the *Jam'iyat ash-Shubbān al-Muslimīn*: 1359: Q 25:63–77 – 1360: Q 25:1–10 – 1361: sura 103. See also Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 279f.; *DhTM*, 2: 434.

<sup>41</sup> Most of the passages deal with general piety and fundamental religious duties (e.g., Q 2:177; 6:151–53), remind the believer to fear of God and His retribution (Q 7:1–9; 8:24–29), and call for overall ethical behaviour (Q 7:199–203; 41:30–36).

<sup>42</sup> J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 78, goes so far as to state that the lectures “read more like sermons than like exegesis.”

<sup>43</sup> Costet-Tardieu, *Un réformiste*, 253.

<sup>44</sup> *DhTM*, 2: 437.

<sup>45</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā I-Marāghī, *ad-Durūs ad-dīniyya allatī alqāhā ḥaḍrat ṣāhib al-faḍīla al-ustādh al-imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā I-Marāghī, Shaykh al-Jāmi' al-Azhar fī shahr Ramaḍān 1356h* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Azhar, 1938), 26–40.

attributes of the good and be harmed by evil, as it is a duty of everyone for everyone.”<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, God’s punishment of the wrongdoers looms large, and al-Marāghī reminds his audience that God did not only send the scripture (*kitāb*) with the rules and the balance (*mīzān*) to judge people accordingly, but also the iron (*ḥadīd*) to punish those who are refractory.<sup>47</sup>

A group of verses which is often used by exegetes to paint the portrait of an ideal Muslim society is Q 2:183-87, which contain the central regulations for fasting in Ramadan, and it is only logical that al-Marāghī treated them as well. On the one hand, he emphasizes the function of fasting as physical and mental training, destined to separate the brave from the coward, and to contribute to a society of strong and fearless men of pure blood who push religion and build and defend their fatherland and their tribe – in short, he propagates an image of man that is entirely compatible with various worldly, hero-oriented ideologies. On the other hand, however, he shows himself remarkably indulgent by recalling the various occasions for being exempted from fasting, either because of travelling or of sickness. For the Ḥanafīs, he explicitly points out, it is sufficient that someone is healthy, but is afraid of being sick, because everyone is his own mufti in this regard.<sup>48</sup> Also, when mentioning Muslims living close to the polar regions where there may be no change of night and day during Ramadan, he is pragmatic: without mentioning him by name, he follows Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s advice by saying that they have to calculate (*taqdīr*), either by following the timetable of Mecca or by keeping to the closest “moderate” region nearby.<sup>49</sup>

In general, al-Marāghī rejected the idea to explain the Qur’ān in the light of modern natural sciences (*tafsīr ‘ilmī*). Already in his study on the translation of the Qur’ān, he had criticized those scholars who were keen on finding all new discoveries confirmed

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<sup>46</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Ḥadīth Ramaḍān*, 80 (on Q 31:17); further references are Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, *ad-Durūs ad-dīniyya allatī alqāhā ḥaḍrat ṣāhib al-faḍīla al-ustādh al-imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, Shaykh al-Jāmi‘ al-Azhar fī shahr Ramaḍān 1357h* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Azhar, 1939); 26; al-Marāghī, *Durūs 1361*, 15–16; Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, *ad-Durūs ad-dīniyya li-sanat 1363 bi-qalam ḥaḍrat ṣāhib al-faḍīla al-ustādh al-imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Azhar, 1946), 9; cf. the authoritative study of this topic, Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Ḥadīth Ramaḍān*, 200f. (on Q 57:25).

<sup>48</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Durūs 1357*, 6–7, 10–12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 19; for ‘Abduh’s interpretation, cf. Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-ḥakīm al-mashhūr bi-Tafsīr al-Manār* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999), 2: 132. Interestingly enough, al-Marāghī makes do with the verses 183–86 and abstains from discussing verse 187 which contains the more

by the Qurʾān, and stressed that the scripture was not an arithmetic, astronomical, or scientific book, but one of divine guidance and for organizing human relations.<sup>50</sup> Yet, he did not always himself stick to this insight, such as in his exegesis of Q 31:10, a kind of abridged story of creation. Here, he describes God as the one who holds the laws of gravitation and keeps them in motion “for the predestined time.” He then goes on to add contemplations about the origin of the planets and the heliocentric nature of our universe, including – by referring to Q 53:11 (God as “the Lord of Sirius”) – about the brightness and heat of Sirius, the sun, and other stars, and their respective distance from the earth.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, however, al-Marāghī shows no doubts defining natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes or volcanic eruptions as earthly anticipations of God’s punishment, or accepting the existence of *jinn*s; it may be no coincidence that those last two remarks occurred in sermons he gave during the Second World War.<sup>52</sup>

As far as finally politics is concerned, al-Marāghī was surprisingly circumspect, considering the practical role he played in Egyptian politics during the 1930s. Although he did, in his very first sermon, in November 1937, lament the weakness of the Muslim societies, which he attributed to their growing distance from God’s guidance and to the world struggling with invented ideologies such as materialism, he did not regularly pursue this modernist credo.<sup>53</sup> He made some general political appeals rather in passing and in conclusion, when he warned against discord (*fitna*) and called for the protection of religion and the fatherland (*dīn* and *waṭan* came usually in pairs).<sup>54</sup> Only in one instance did al-Marāghī deal with a passage that has always been used for legitimizing purposes in political issues: Q 4:58–59 which call for justice and demand obedience towards God, His messenger, and “those of you who are in authority” (*ūlū l-amr*, Pickthall’s translation). And again, one may surmise that the timing (August / September 1944) was deliberate. Al-Marāghī’s intention – apart from reminding of the fear of God and of the ethical principle *al-amr bi-l-maʿruf* – is twofold: for one, he

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detailed prescriptions concerning eating, drinking, and sexual intercourse during Ramadan.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Baḥth*, 87.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Ḥadīth Ramaḍān*, 67f.

<sup>52</sup> Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī, *Ad-Durūs ad-dīniyya li-sanat 1362 bi-qalam ḥaḍrat ṣāḥib al-faḍīla al-ustādh al-imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad Muṣṭafā l-Marāghī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Azhar, 1945), 7 (on Q 7:4) and 20 (on Q 11:119).

<sup>53</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Durūs 1356*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Durūs 1357*, 31 (on Q 8:24–29), *Durūs 1363*, 22 (on Q 13:17–24).

sings the praise of the religious scholar who discloses the secrets of Islam to the humans who nowadays have lost track of things; he is nothing short of the guarantor of making the entire mankind happy (*kafīl bi-is‘ād al-bashar ajma‘*).<sup>55</sup> And secondly, he deduces the principles of Islamic law from Q 4:59: the order to obey God and the Prophet denotes for him the first two infallible legal sources, i.e. the Qur’ān and the sunna. As to the *ūlū l-amr*, they are the third source – and they have thereby become infallible, too, as otherwise God would not have ordered to obey them, he quotes Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 605/1209).<sup>56</sup> In the question who exactly may be understood by the *ūlū l-amr*, he again cites ar-Rāzī: they are the *ahl al-ḥall wa-l-‘aqd*, that is the leaders (*zu‘amā‘*) whose opinions the community follows, the scholars, jurists, the military commanders and the heads of the tribes, in brief: all those who set a good example.<sup>57</sup> Their consensus thus forms the *ijmā‘* as the third pillar of Muslim law, their disagreement leads to referring the matter to God which then constitutes the fourth pillar, *qiyās*. While in the duties (*‘ibādāt*) it is no problem that all ordinary believers follow their own *mujtahids*, the habit to follow any imam instead of the Qur’ān that commands to obey the *ūlū l-amr* led to chaos (*fawḍā*) and non-Islamic encroachment in the laws that regulate human interactions. According to al-Marāghī, it is therefore obligatory that the laws have the quality of the holy (*ṣifat al-qudsiyya*) which can be acquired only by following the infallible Qur’ān and obeying the infallible *ūlū l-amr* in cases where there is no explicit Qur’ānic text available.<sup>58</sup> Al-Marāghī thus not only propagated an utterly traditional view of Muslim society where the religious scholars, as already ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (d. 1825/26) had emphasised, occupied the upper echelon, just beneath the prophets.<sup>59</sup> What is more, these statements that he made towards the end of his life may also be read as a far-reaching break with the principle of *individual* reasoning beyond the limits of the traditional schools of law which had for many decades been the hallmark of his public activities. For someone who both in

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<sup>55</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Durūs* 1363, 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11; on ar-Rāzī see G.C. Anawati, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī,” in *EI<sup>2</sup>* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 2: 751–55.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Durūs* 1363, 11; on the *ahl al-ḥall wa-l-‘aqd*, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “Ahl al-ḥall wa-l-‘aqd,” in *EI<sup>3</sup>*, ed. Kate Fleet et al., accessed May 29, 2023, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_ei3\\_COM\\_0027](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_0027).

<sup>58</sup> Al-Marāghī, *Durūs* 1363, 12–13.

<sup>59</sup> Brunner, “Education,” 109.

his lifetime and posthumously was regarded as one of the most important disciples of Muḥammad ‘Abduh, this was a remarkable about-face.<sup>60</sup>

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