

Imperialism, Science and Religion: Two Essays by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, 1883 and 1884 ¹

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Preface

In spite of his name, Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani (al-As^ʿadabadi) was, in fact, born in Iran into a religious family claiming descent from the Prophet Mohammad. His traditional Shiah religious education included early years of study at the religious shrines in Iraq. From that time, Al-Afghani was on the move, living in different Muslim countries and, in one way or another, spreading his anti-imperialist ideas. His hatred of European colonialism developed during his sojourn in British-occupied India in the 1850s, a time of Indian rebellion against foreign rule, which was harshly suppressed by the British. From India and Afghanistan to Egypt and Ottoman Turkey, Al-Afghani tried to influence men of power in favor of his belief in the necessity of Islamic solidarity against European expansion. Sometimes his message carried the additional reforming note that internal change must accompany external watchfulness. Although he obtained access to many rulers, Al-Afghani had limited success in organizing unified action against European (especially British) imperialism during his lifetime. Nonetheless, his activism amounted to more than simply lobbying leaders and ideological haranguing. He was expelled from Egypt in August 1879 by Khedive Tawfiq, (who had just been nudged to power by the British and the French) after agitating against foreign influence. From 1890-1892, he helped to organize successful opposition to Qajar monarch Nasir al-Din Shah's attempt to grant a Tobacco Concession to British interests and, before his death in Istanbul as a closely guarded "guest" of Sultan Abdulhamid II, he instigated the assassination of Naser al-Din Shah in 1896.

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

During Al-Afghani's lifetime, Muslim countries were increasingly under the influence and control of the West. The Ottoman government had instituted the *Tanzimat* (reform) liberalizations of the economy and society at Europe's behest, while the Sultan, the Egyptian Khedive and other Muslim rulers fell increasingly under European financial control. Worse still for the Muslim people who valued their cultural heritage, European material superiority created self-doubt in the minds of the conquered. European customs and governments were corrupt and impotent, while society underwent an internal spiritual crisis.

The two selections printed below provide an interesting juxtaposition of style and content. In one piece, Al-Afghani appears as a righteous champion of his religion; in the other, as a seeker of scientific truth who rejects religion. The result of such disparity has led to much controversy about his true beliefs and intent. The "Answer

¹ Al-Afghani, Jamal al-Din, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, translated by Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 175-187. Original Arabic Source: 'The Materialists in India' in *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* (Paris), 28 August 1884, reprinted Cairo 1958, and 'Exchange with Ernest Renan' in *Journal des Debats* (Paris), 18 May 1883 (written in Arabic and translated into French for publication).

to Renan" is part of a debate between Al-Afghani and the famous Orientalist. Ernest Renan had argued that the Arabs were inherently incapable of developing and sustaining science. Al-Afghani responds by admitting that Islam -- like all religions -- has indeed stifled scientific development, but that the Arab contribution to medieval science was still considerable. This selection is written in an effusive but scholarly style, and is clearly directed to a non-Muslim audience. The second selection, "The Materialists in India," comes from Al-'Urwah al-Wuthqa, (The Firm Bond) the journal published in Paris in 1884 by Al-Afghani and his follower, Mohammad 'Abduh. Only 18 issues of this periodical were published between March and October 1884, but it was circulated (and re-circulated and reprinted) widely throughout the Islamic world. One reason for its eventual failure is that it was distributed to many without charge and seems to have relied on subventions by expatriate Middle Easterners, (for example, Ismacil, the ousted Khedive of Egypt) of contrasting political agendas -- an unreliable source of funding.² Here the believer is sternly warned against the tricks of the English, and their method for the ideological undermining of Islam in India is described.

Document 1: Answer of Jamal al-Din to Renan, *Journal des Débats*, 18 May 1883

Sir,

I have read in your estimable journal of last 29 March, a talk on Islam and Science, given in the Sorbonne before a distinguished audience by the great thinker of our time, the illustrious M. Renan, whose renown has filled the West and penetrated into the farthest countries of the East. Since this speech suggested to me some observations, I took the liberty of formulating them in this letter, which I have the honor of addressing to you with a request that you accommodate it in your columns.

M. Renan wanted to clarify a point of the history of the Arabs which had remained unclear until now and to throw a light on their past, a light that may be somewhat troubling for those who venerate these people, though one cannot say that he has usurped the place and rank that they formerly occupied in the world. M. Renan has not at all tried, we believe, to destroy the glory of the Arabs which is indestructible; he has applied himself to discovering historical truth and making it known to those who do not know it, as well as to those who study the influence of religions in the history of nations, and in particular in that of civilization. I hasten to recognize that M. Renan has acquitted himself marvelously of this very difficult task, in citing certain facts that have passed unnoticed until this time. I find in his talk remarkable observations, new perceptions, and an indescribable charm. However, I have under my eyes only a more or less faithful translation of this talk. If I had had the opportunity to read it in the French text, I could have penetrated better the ideas of this great thinker. He receives my humble salutation as an homage that is due him and as the sincere expression of my admiration. I would say to him, finally, in these circumstances, what Al-Mutanabbi, a poet who loved philosophy wrote several centuries ago to a high personage whose actions he celebrated: "Receive," he said to him, "the praises that I can give you; do not force me to bestow on you the praises that you merit."

M. Renan's talk covered two principle points. The eminent philosopher applied himself to proving that the Muslim religion was by its very essence opposed to the

² Keddie, Nikki, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "Al-Afghani": A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 214-28.

development of science, and that the Arab people, by their nature, do not like either metaphysical sciences or philosophy. This precious plant, M. Renan seems to say, dried up in their hands as if burnt up by the breath of the desert wind. But, after reading this talk one cannot refrain from asking oneself if these obstacles come uniquely from the Muslim religion itself or from the manner in which it was propagated in the world; from the character, manners, and aptitudes of the peoples who adopted this religion, or of those on whose nations it was imposed by force. It is no doubt the lack of time that kept M. Renan from elucidating these points; but the harm is no less for that, and if it is difficult to determine its causes in a precise manner and by irrefutable proof, it is even more difficult to indicate the remedy.

As to the first point, I will say that no nation at its origin is capable of letting itself be guided by pure reason. Haunted by terrors that it cannot escape, it is incapable of distinguishing good from evil, of distinguishing that which could make it happy from that which might be the unflinching source of its unhappiness and misfortune. It does not know, in a word, either how to trace back causes or how to discern effects.

This lacuna means that it cannot be led either by force or persuasion to practice the actions that would perhaps be the most profitable for it, or to avoid what is harmful. It was therefore necessary that humanity looked outside itself for a place of refuge, a peaceful corner where its tormented conscience could find repose. It was then that there arose some educator or other who, not having, as I said above, the necessary power to force humanity to follow the inspiration of reason, hurled it into the unknown and opened it to vast horizons where the imagination was pleased and where it found if not the complete satisfaction of its desires, at least an unlimited field for its hopes. And, since humanity, at its origin, did not know the causes of the events that passed under its eyes and the secrets of things, it was perforce led to follow the advice of its teachers and the orders they gave. This obedience was imposed in the name of the Supreme Being to whom the educators attributed all events, without permitting men to discuss its utility or its disadvantages. No doubt, for man this is one of the heaviest and most humiliating yokes, as I recognize; but one cannot deny that it is by this religious education, whether it be Muslim, Christian, or pagan, that all nations have emerged from barbarism and marched toward a more advanced civilization.

If it is true that the Muslim religion is an obstacle to the development of sciences, can one affirm that this obstacle will not disappear someday? How does the Muslim religion differ on this point from other religions? All religions are intolerant, each one in its way. The Christian religion, I mean the society that follows its inspirations and its teachings and is formed in its image, has emerged from the first period to which I have just alluded; thenceforth free and independent, it seems to advance rapidly on the road of progress and science, whereas Muslim society has not yet freed itself from the tutelage of religion. Realizing, however, that the Christian religion preceded the Muslim religion in the world by many centuries, I cannot keep from hoping that Mohammedan society will succeed in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely in the path of civilization someday after the manner of Western society, for which the Christian faith, despite its rigors and intolerance, was not at all an invincible obstacle. No, I cannot admit that this hope be denied to Islam. I plead here with M. Renan not the cause of the Muslim religion, but that of several hundreds of millions of men, who would thus be condemned to live in barbarism and ignorance.

In truth, the Muslim religion has tried to stifle science and stop its progress. It has thus succeeded in halting the philosophical or intellectual movement and in

turning minds from the search for scientific truth. A similar attempt, if I am not mistaken, was made by the Christian religion, and the venerated leaders of the Catholic Church have not yet disarmed, so far as I know. They continue to fight energetically against what they call the spirit of vertigo and error. I know all the difficulties that the Muslims will have to surmount to achieve the same degree of civilization, access to truth with the help of philosophic and scientific methods being forbidden them. A true believer must, in fact, turn from the path of studies that have for their object scientific truth, studies on which all truth must depend, according to an opinion accepted at least by some people in Europe. Yoked, like an ox to the plow, to the dogma whose slave he is, he must walk eternally in the furrow that has been traced for him in advance by the interpreters of the law. Convinced, besides, that his religion contains in itself all morality and all science, he attaches himself resolutely to it and makes no effort to go beyond. Why should he exhaust himself in vain attempts? What would be the benefit of seeking truth when he believes he possesses it all? Will he be happier on the day when he has lost his faith, the day when he has stopped believing that all perfections are in the religion he practices and not in another? Wherefore he despises science. I know all this, but I know equally that this Muslim and Arab child whose portrait M. Renan traces in such vigorous terms and who, at a later age, becomes "a fanatic, full of foolish pride in possessing what he believes to be absolute truth," belongs to a race that has marked its passage in the world, not only by fire and blood, but by brilliant and fruitful achievements that prove its taste for science, for all the sciences, including philosophy (with which, I must recognize, it was unable to live happily for long).

I am led here to speak of the second point that M. Renan treated in his lecture with an incontestable authority. No one denies that the Arab people, while still in the state of barbarism, rushed along the road of intellectual and scientific progress with a rapidity only equaled by the speed of its conquests, since in the space of a century, it acquired and assimilated almost all of the Greek and Persian sciences that had developed slowly during several centuries on their native soil, just as it extended its domination from the Arabian peninsula up to the mountains of the Himalayas and the summit of the Pyrénées.

One might say that during this entire period, the sciences made astonishing progress among the Arabs and in all the countries under their domination. Rome and Byzantium were then the seats of theological and philosophical sciences, as well as the shining center and burning hearth of all human knowledge. Having followed for several centuries the path of civilization, the Greeks and Romans walked with assurance over the vast field of science and philosophy. There came, however, a time when their researches were abandoned and their studies interrupted.

The monuments they had built to science collapsed and their most precious books were relegated to oblivion. The Arabs, ignorant and barbaric as they were in origin, took up what had been abandoned by the civilized nations, rekindled the extinguished sciences, developed them and gave them a brilliance they had never had. Is not this the index and proof of their natural love for sciences? It is true that the Arabs took from the Greeks their philosophy as they stripped the Persians of what made their fame in antiquity; but these sciences, which they usurped by right of conquest, they developed, extended, clarified, perfected, completed, and coordinated with a perfect taste and a rare precision and exactitude. Besides, the French, the Germans, and the English were not so far from Rome and Byzantium as were the Arabs, whose capital was Baghdad. It was therefore easier for the former to exploit the scientific treasures that were buried in these two great cities. They made no effort

in this direction until Arab civilization lit up with its reflections the summits of the Pyrénées and poured its light and riches on the Occident. The Europeans welcomed Aristotle, who had emigrated and become Arab; but they did not think of him at all when he was Greek and their neighbor. Is there not in this another proof, no less evident, of the intellectual superiority of the Arabs and of their natural attachment to philosophy? It is true that after the fall of the Arab kingdom in the Orient as in the Occident, the countries that had become great centers of science, like Iraq and Andalusia, fell again into ignorance and became the centers of religious fanaticism; but one cannot conclude from this sad spectacle that the scientific and philosophic progress of the Middle Ages was not due to the Arab people who ruled at that time.

M. Renan does do them this justice. He recognizes that the Arabs conserved and maintained for centuries the hearth of science. What nobler mission for a people! But while recognizing that from about 775 C.E. to near the middle of the thirteenth century, that is to say during about 500 years, there were in Muslim countries very distinguished scholars and thinkers, and that during this period the Muslim world was superior in intellectual culture to the Christian world, M. Renan has said that the philosophers of the first centuries of Islam as well as the statesmen who became famous in this period were mostly from Harran, from Andalusia, and from Iran. There were also among them Transoxianian and Syrian priests. I do not wish to deny the great qualities of the Persian scholars nor the role that they played in the Arab world; but permit me to say that the Harranians were Arabs and that the Arabs in occupying Spain and Andalusia did not lose their nationality; they remained Arabs. Several centuries before Islam, the Arabic language was that of the Harranians. The fact that they preserved their former religion, Sabaeism, does not mean they should be considered foreign to the Arab nationality. The Syrian priests were also for the most part Ghassanian Arabs converted to Christianity.

As for Ibn-Bajja, Ibn-Rushd (Averroes), and Ibn-Tufail, one cannot say that they are not just as Arab as Al-Kindi because they were not born in Arabia, especially if one is willing to consider that human races are only distinguished by their languages and that if this distinction should disappear, nations would not take long to forget their diverse origins. The Arabs who put their arms in the service of the Muslim religion, and who were simultaneously warriors and apostles, did not impose their language on the defeated, and wherever they established themselves, they preserved it for them with a jealous care. No doubt Islam, in penetrating the conquered countries with the violence that is known, transplanted there its language, its manners, and its doctrine, and these countries could not thenceforth avoid its influence. Iran is an example; but it is possible that in going back to the centuries preceding the appearance of Islam, one would find that the Arabic language was not then entirely unknown to Persian scholars. The expansion of Islam gave it, it is true, a new scope, and the Persian scholars converted to the Mohammadan faith thought it an honor to write their books in the language of the Qur'an. The Arabs cannot, no doubt, claim for themselves the glory that renders these writers illustrious, but we believe that they do not need this claim; they have among themselves enough celebrated scholars and writers. What would happen if, going back to the first period of Arab domination, we followed step by step the first group from which was formed this conquering people who spread their power over the world, and if, eliminating everything that is outside this group and its descendants, we did not take into account either the influence it exercised on minds or the impulse it gave to the sciences? Would we not be led, thus, no longer to recognize in conquering peoples other virtues or merits than those that flow from the material fact of conquest? All conquered peoples would then regain

their moral autonomy and would attribute to themselves all glory, no part of which could be claimed legitimately by the power that fructified and developed these germs. Thus, Italy would come to say to France that neither Mazarin nor Bonaparte belonged to her; Germany or England would in turn claim the scholars who, having come to France, made its professorships illustrious and enhanced the brilliance of its scientific renown. The French, on their side, would claim for themselves the glory of the offspring of those illustrious families who, after [the revocation of] the edict of Nantes, immigrated to all Europe. And if all Europeans belong to the same stock, one can with justice claim that the Harranians and the Syrians, who are Semites, belong equally to the great Arab family.

It is permissible, however, to ask oneself why Arab civilization, after having thrown such a live light on the world, suddenly became extinguished; why this torch has not been relit since; and why the Arab world still remains buried in profound darkness.

Here the responsibility of the Muslim religion appears complete. It is clear that wherever it became established, this religion tried to stifle the sciences and it was marvelously served in its designs by despotism.

Al-Siuti tells that the Caliph al-Hadi put to death in Baghdad 5,000 philosophers in order to destroy sciences in the Muslim countries down to their roots. Admitting that this historian exaggerated the number of victims, nonetheless it remains established that this persecution took place, and it is a bloody stain for the history of a religion as it is for the history of a people. I could find in the past of the Christian religion analogous facts. Religions, by whatever names they are called, all resemble each other. No agreement and no reconciliation are possible between these religions and philosophy. Religion imposes on man its faith and its belief, whereas philosophy frees him of it totally or in part. How could one therefore hope that they would agree with each other when the Christian religion, under the most modest and seductive forms, entered Athens and Alexandria, which were, as everyone knows, the two principal centers of science and philosophy, trying to stifle both under the bushes of theological discussions, to explain the inexplicable mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Transubstantiation? It will always be thus. Whenever religion will have the upper hand, it will eliminate philosophy; and the contrary occurs when it is philosophy that reigns as sovereign mistress. So long as humanity exists, the struggle will not cease between dogma and free investigation, between religion and philosophy; a desperate struggle in which, I fear, the triumph will not be for free thought, because the masses dislike reason, and its teachings are only understood by some intelligent members of the élite, and because, also, science, however beautiful it is, does not completely satisfy humanity, which thirsts for the ideal and which likes to exist in such dark and distant regions as the philosophers and scholars can neither perceive nor explore.

Document 2: The Materialists in India, *Al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa*, 28 August 1884³

The English entered India and toyed with the minds of her princes and kings in a way that makes intelligent men both laugh and cry. They penetrated deeply into India's interior, and seized her lands piece by piece. Whenever they became lords of the land they took liberties with its inhabitants, and showed anger and contempt regarding their stay among them, saying that the English were occupied only with commercial affairs.

³ From the Cairo, 1958, ed., pp. 382-387.

As for tending to administration and politics, that is not their business. However, what calls them to bear the burdens [of administration and politics] is pity for the kings and the princes who are incapable of governing their dominions. When the kings or princes are able to control their land, no Englishman will remain there [they said], because they have other important affairs that they have abandoned out of sheer compassion. With this, the English stole property from every owner on the pretext that work on property is oppressive to a person and fatiguing for mind and body. It is better for the owner of the property to relax and to die poor and humble, free of the pains of management. [The English] declare that when the opportunity presents itself, and the time comes when the affairs of this world and the hereafter will not influence bodies and thoughts, they are prepared to leave the country (on the Day of Resurrection!). And today they are saying the very same words in Egypt!!

When [the English] entrenched themselves in India, and effaced the traces of Mogul rule, they gave the land a second look, and found within it fifty million Muslims, each of whom was wounded in heart by the extinction of their great kingdom. They were connected with many millions of Muslims in the East and West, North and South. [The English] perceived that as long as the Muslims persisted in their religion, and as long as the Qur'an was read among them, it would be impossible for them to be sincere in their submission to foreign rule, especially if that foreigner had wrested the realm from them through treachery and cunning, under the veil of affection and friendship. So they set out to try to weaken belief in the Islamic faith in every way. They encouraged their clergymen and religious leaders to write books and publish tracts filled with defamation of the Islamic religion, and replete with abuse and vilification for the Founder of Islam (may God free him of what they said!). This abominable activity resulted in what is intolerable to human nature, and what would prevent an honorable man from remaining in a land where such books are published, or from living under a sky whose sun shines on the perpetrators of that great slander. With that they aimed only, on the one hand, to weaken the beliefs of the Muslims, and to induce them to profess the English religion. On the other hand, they began to restrict the means of livelihood available to the Muslims, and to intensify their oppression and disadvantages in every respect. They hurt their interests regarding public works, and plundered *waqfs*⁴ set aside for mosques and *madrasahs*,⁵ and exiled their ulema and leaders to the Andaman and Filfilan [?] Islands, hoping to use this means, if the first one did not work, to alienate the Muslims from their religion, and to reduce them to the depths of ignorance concerning their faith, so that they would neglect what God had ordained for them. When the hopes of those tyrannical rulers for the first means failed, and the period of profiting from the second one seemed too long, they resorted to another policy for the limitation or weakening of the Islamic religion in the land of India, because they fear only the Muslim possessors of that plundered realm and usurped right.

It happened that a man named Ahmad Khan Bahadur (an honorary title in India) was hovering around the English in order to obtain some advantage from them. He presented himself to them and took some steps to throw off his religion and adopt the English religion. He began his course by writing a book demonstrating that the Torah and the Gospel were not corrupted or falsified, in order to ingratiate himself with the English. Then he considered, and saw that the English would not be satisfied with him until he said, "I am a Christian," and that this vile deed would not bring him

⁴ An inalienable endowment, a pious foundation.

⁵ A higher religious school.

a large reward, especially since thousands of clergymen and priests had produced books like his and they had [only] converted a few Muslims from their religion. So, he took another road in order to serve his English masters, by sowing division among the Muslims and scattering their unity.

He appeared in the guise of the naturalists [materialists], and proclaimed that nothing exists but blind nature, and that this universe does not have a wise God (this is a clear error), and that all the prophets were naturalists who did not believe in the God taught by the revealed religions, (we take refuge in God!). He called himself a *neicheri* or naturalist, and began to seduce the sons of the rich, who were frivolous young men. Some of them inclined toward him, escaping from the bonds of the Law of Islam, and pursuing bestial passions. His doctrine pleased the English rulers and they saw in it the best means to corrupt the hearts of the Muslims. They began to support him, to honor him, and to help him to build a college in Aligarh, called the Mohammadan College, to be a trap in which to catch the sons of the believers in order to bring them up in the ideas of this man, Ahmad Khan Bahadur.

Ahmad Khan wrote a commentary on the Qur'an and distorted the sense of words and tampered with what God revealed. He founded a journal called *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* that published only what would mislead the minds of the Muslims, cause dissension among them, and sow enmity between the Muslims of India and other Muslims, especially between [the Indian Muslims] and the Ottomans.

He called openly for the abandonment of all religions (but he addressed only the Muslims), and cried, "Nature, Nature," in order to convince people that Europe only progressed in civilization, advanced in science and industry, and excelled in power and strength by rejecting religions and returning to the goal aimed at by all religions (according to his claim), which is the explanation of the ways of nature. ("He invented a lie against God.")⁶

When we were in India, we learned of certain weak intelligences misled by the hoaxes of this man and his disciples. We wrote a treatise exposing their corrupt doctrine and the ruin that arose from it. We established that religion is the foundation of civilization and the pillar of culture. Our treatise was printed in two languages, Hindustani and Persian.

Ahmad Khan and his followers removed the garb of religion and publicly called for its abandonment, desiring discord among the Muslims and seeking to divide them. They compounded their error, sowing discord between the inhabitants of India and the other Muslims. They wrote a number of books in opposition to the Islamic caliphate.

Those materialists are not like the materialists of Europe; for whoever abandons religion in Western countries retains love for his country, and his zeal to guard his country from the attacks of foreigners is not diminished. He gives freely of his most precious possessions for its advancement, and will sacrifice his life for its sake. But Ahmad Khan and his companions, just as they invited people to reject religion, [also] disparaged to them the interests of their fatherland, and made people consider foreign domination over them a slight thing, and strove to erase the traces of religious and patriotic zeal. They breached those national resources that perhaps the English had neglected to plunder, in order to call the government's attention to them, so that they should not be neglected. They did this not for a considerable reward or an exalted honor, but for a vile piece of bread, a paltry gain. (Thus the Oriental

⁶ Qur'an 6: 21.

materialist is distinguished from the Western materialist by baseness and vileness, in addition to unbelief and impiety.)

The English did well by Ahmad Khan, by appointing his son Maulavi Mahmud member of the council of an Indian village no larger than Shubrakhit in the Buhaira region [in Egypt].

One of the snares for the hunting of weak Muslims was to promise and raise their hopes that if they followed him he would bring them into government service, thanks to his position with the English tyranny. But the English government named only four of his companions to village councils, and no native Indian is found in such positions except they. This is the glory bestowed on Ahmad Khan as the price for his religion and fatherland. As Siddiq Nawwab Hasan Khan, King of Bhopal and the author of famous works, has said: "Ahmad Khan is the arch Deceiver of the Day of Judgment."⁷

The English authorities helped him to employ some to whom they gave preference, but not in the British Indian Government nor in the English Treasury. Rather, the ruler obliged one of the princes remaining in formal independence to employ them in certain inferior functions.

[Ahmad Khan's] doctrine was pleasing to the eyes of the English rulers and they were delighted with it. They considered it a means to their goal of obliterating the Islamic religion in Indian territories.

These materialists became an army for the English government in India. They drew their swords to cut the throats of the Muslims, while weeping for them and crying, "We kill you only out of compassion and pity for you, and seeking to improve you and make your lives comfortable." The English saw that this was the most likely means to attain their goal: the weakness of Islam and the Muslims.

The most faithful disciple of Ahmad Khan, his chief assistant and administrator in all his affairs, is a man named Sami'allah Khan. Sami'allah Khan is the cleverest and most diligent of the materialists in misleading the Muslims, the subtlest in tricks, and the most cunning in creating means to split the unity of the believers and to strengthen the English government in India. This swindler sets himself up as a preacher at Muslim gatherings, and his tears precede his words. He brings forth the utmost of his eloquence in order to destroy the pillars of the Islamic religion and nullify its fundamental beliefs. He even turns on the divine presence, and finds fault with the prophetic mission and its bearer, all this while he weeps, as if he were mourning the religion and its adherents.

When he enters a land in order to carry out this service, he continues for days to enter the mosques and attend religious gatherings; to entice people with agreeable words and charming promises; and to attract them to him without their knowing it. When some of the people assemble around him, blinded by his pleasing exterior, he proceeds to call them to his turbid doctrine of the abandonment of religion.

For these efforts, this evident enemy of Islam and the Muslims has already been given the post of judge (in the English law) in the town of Agra, a town no bigger than Dasuq in the Gharbiyya province [in Egypt]. The newspaper, *The Times*, after highly praising Sami'allah Khan, said that this post, a judgeship in a small town, was the highest post conferred on a native Indian. (Is there any need, in order to demonstrate English justice, for more evidence than this?)

⁷ The Arabic is *dajjal*, a figure in Muslim eschatology comparable to the Antichrist -- the arch-villain who prefigures the End of Time. Aziz Ahmad informs me [Keddie] that Afghani has confused the title and rank of this author, who correctly was Siddiq Hasan Khan, Prince-Consort of Bhopal.

Northbrook, the English lord, one part of whose history in India we referred to in the last issue, fully recognized Sami'allah Khan as soon as he became the ruler in India, and he understood that he was the more faithful of men in service to the English, and the most capable of serving them. Therefore, that lord asked him to be private secretary in Egypt, in order to use him to alienate the Egyptians from the Ottoman Government; to persuade the Egyptians that the government of England wished them well; and to employ him to win over the hearts of the ulema, since he was one of them (according to his claim). Perhaps he intends to enter the mosques and to preach and give sermons, and to relate regarding English justice what has no truth and what is belied by reality. However, we have hope, because of the intelligence of the Egyptians, the correctness of their religious beliefs, and the strength of their ties to the Ottoman Government, that this Indian Rakis will not deceive them. (Rakis in the Sanscrit language is the Devil's disciple. May God not grant success to his goals, and may he not bestow on him his desires!)

Suggestions for further reading:

Keddie, Nikki R, 'The Life and Thought of Sayyid Jamal al-Din' in *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 1-98
----- *Sayyid Jamal al-Din "al-Afghani:" A Political Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972)
Kedorie, Elie, *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* (London-Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997) (originally published in 1965)