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**Рецензия на книгу:** Мухетдинов Д. В. Теология обновления. Исламский неомодернизм и проблема традиции / Московский исламский ин-т; Санкт-Петербургский гос. ун-т. — М.: ИД «Медина», 2023. — 736 с. (Серия: «Возрождение и обновление»).

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**Для цитирования:** Маточкина А. И. Рецензия на книгу: Мухетдинов Д. В. Теология обновления. Исламский неомодернизм и проблема традиции / Московский исламский ин-т; Санкт-Петербургский гос. ун-т. — М.: ИД «Медина», 2023. — 736 с. (Серия: «Возрождение и обновление») (на англ. яз.); Anna I. Matochkina. Book Review: Damir V. Mukhetdinov. Theology of Renewal. Islamic Neo-Modernism and the Problem of the Tradition. Moscow Islamic University; Saint Petersburg State University. Moscow: Medina, 2023. 736 p. Series: Revival and Renewal.

**I**t was in his *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* that Franz Rosenthal observed that knowledge (*'ilm*) is the supreme value for Muslim being. With his study, Rosenthal attempted to demonstrate that the concept of knowledge had played a key role throughout Islamic history, and that the fusion of intellectual and spiritual values of Islamic civilization had made all its achievements in scholarship and science possible. In essence, Franz Rosenthal examined the correlation between faith and reason, and religion and science in Muslim tradition, as well as the eternal quest for the harmony between them.

In his *Theology of Renewal. Islamic Neo-modernism and the Problem of the Tradition*, D. Mukhetdinov once again addresses the centuries-old search for harmony between faith and reason. Or rather, he argues that this harmony has always been intrinsic to Islam. As Mukhetdinov points out, “there is nothing out-of-the-ordinary in the neo-modernist strive to develop a new method of understanding Islam, because just like classical tradition, it encompasses both textual testimony and rational activity” (p. 470).

The era of European colonial expansion brought significant changes into the political, socio-economic and cultural lives of Muslims, forcing them to seek a way out of the crisis and further development possibilities for the once-prosperous Muslim civilization. This intellectual quest spurred the renewal movement in Islam, which flourished from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and is still active today. This quite multifaceted movement was a response to the challenges of modernity. However, the idea of renewal (*tajdid*) has been present almost throughout the history of Islam. Any crisis calls for reconsideration of the classical heritage without changing the doctrine. Mukhetdinov succeeds in showing that the renewal attitude is not only characteristic of Islam but that it also treats it delicately.

In view of all this, it is only natural that the author starts examining the renewal movement from its origins, taking us back to the emergence of two groups of jurists, i. e. “the people of opinion” (*ahl al-ra’y*) and “the people of the tradition” (*ahl al-hadith*). The former advocated for rationalism and independent judgment based on the primary sources of Islam, while the latter gravitated toward strict literalism and observance of the tradition. These two groups mark the difference in the approach to matters of law and creed that the community had to face soon after the Prophet Muhammad’s death. A parallel can be drawn here with the responses to the challenges of modernity; Mukhetdinov refers to these as the archaizing and the reformist approaches, respectively. In a way, they echo the dichotomy that emerged in the 8<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of the aforementioned groups. The author favors the latter approach, as it enables both to preserve the tradition and to find a fitting response to the ongoing changes. Already in the very beginning of the book we learn the answer to the question that haunted Muslim philosophers in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, i. e. what caused the decline of Muslim civilization. From Mukhetdinov’s considerations, we can conclude that the solidification of archaic attitudes was made possible by the *ahl al-hadith* movement and its partisans. Along with the marginalization of alternative concepts, later developed by various Islamic schools of thought, this helped cement the idea of reproducing the practices dating back to Muhammad’s times instead of creatively revisiting them. This, in turn, paved the way for gradual stagnation in various spheres of Muslim society.

Nevertheless, the renewal movement of the second formative period,

which began in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, bluntly raises the question of revising the established worldviews. While the archaizing approach was certainly in demand, the reformist voices were being heard more and more clearly. The reformist approach, in particular, is reflected in the views of the reformers of Islamic modernism, including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839–1897), Muḥammad Abduh (1849–1905), and Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). In the Russian Empire, the movement featured thinkers such as Abu Nasr Qursawi (1776–1812), Shihabaddin Mardjani (1818–1889), Husain Faiz-khanov (1823–1866), Ismail Gasprinsky (1851–1914), Rizaadin Fahretdin (1859–1936), Ziauddin Kamali (1873–1942), and Musa Bigiev (1875–1949).

Neo-modernism opened the next chapter in the history of the renewal movement. It can be conveniently divided into two waves. For his book, D. Mukhetdinov selects four prominent figures of the first wave, i. e. Fazlur Rahman (1919–2010), Mohammed Arkoun (1928–2010), Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943–2010), and Muhammad Shahrur (1938–2019), reserving the representatives of the second one, namely Asghar Ali Engineer (1939–2013), Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945), Khaled Abou El Fadl (b. 1963), Abdul-lahi Ahmed An-Na'im (b. 1946), Tariq Ramadan (b. 1962), Amina Wadud (b. 1952), and Adis Duderija (b. 1977), for a future study.

In his book, D. Mukhetdinov addresses neo-modernism as an actively growing and promising movement in contemporary Islamic thought, which makes his study relevant in the light of the ongoing debates on the future of Muslim societies. It is in this movement that Mukhetdinov sees a way out of the lingering crisis. He observes that neo-modernism “strives to bring together the achievements of classical Muslim tradition, global Islamic studies and Western philosophy” (p. 30). In Chapter 6, where he presents his own renewal program, Mukhetdinov also emphasizes the need for a synthesis of classical Muslim methodology (theological, legal, sociological, etc.) and methodology of modern humanities, including Islamic studies (p. 464).

Talking about Islam always implies its two fundamental sources, the Quran and Sunnah, and any renewal involves referring to these sources, especially the Quran; hence Mukhetdinov's focus on Quranic hermeneutics. One of the principles of his own renewal program calls for reconsidering the Quran's status of the Divine Revelation and developing humanistic hermeneutics. This promotes a historical, contextual and ethical approach to the nature of the Quran. When examining the views of Fazlur Rahman in particular, Mukhetdinov draws our attention to the author's understanding of the Quranic text. Mukhetdinov observes that the philosopher's interpretation of the Quran is based on contextual *ijtihad*, which helps to pinpoint a universal ethical principle in an *ayah* or group of *ayahs* and to apply it in the modern context (p. 31). The theory in question here is Rahman's double movement approach, which is supposed to save the Quran from literalism, archaization and secularization (p. 255).

Quranic hermeneutics plays an important part in the works of Mohammed Arkoun as well. Offering a historical and critical perspective on the Quran, he puts forward a three-step hermeneutical methodology, involving the following approaches: historical-anthropological, linguistic-semiotic, and theological-exegetical (p. 322).

Muhammad Shahrur appeals to the methodology of non-synonymity, which assumes the absence of total synonyms in the Quran. Therefore, when examining individual *ayahs*, we need to be aware of semantic aspects of a specific term (p. 334). Guided by rationalism, identification of the most relevant content and the primacy of the ethical, Shahrur urges us to let the Quranic text “speak” for itself (p. 391).

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd’s hermeneutics is defined by his humanistic approach, with a focus on the anthropological dimension of the Quran (p. 398). It suggests reading it as a “created Speech of God”, “language text”, and “human text” (p. 399). It was the emergence of the holy book of Islam that turned Arabic culture into a culture of interpretation, since its meaning can only be unlocked by its interpreters. Abu Zayd also emphasizes the historical context of the Quran, as it enables us to grasp the historical importance and enduring value of the Quranic text (p. 409).

Having analyzed the approaches of thinkers towards the Quran and its interpretation, D. Mukhetdinov writes that “Islamic hermeneutics should be pluralistic and multi-aspect...” (p. 471), and also “if an idea allows us to understand the Quran, then the origin of this idea is irrelevant” (p. 474). This effectively refers to the new hermeneutics developed by neo-modernists, which is “ethical, holistic, and contextual” (p. 480).

Based on how the author examines Quranic hermeneutics, we can see how his thoughts develop. He carefully analyzes and systematizes the views of the selected thinkers, ending each chapter with conclusions and explaining why he considers the thinker to be a representative of neo-modernism. Each point of D. Mukhetdinov’s renewal program, presented in the last chapter of the book, resonates with their perspectives and offers a mosaic field of meanings that meet the need for a new perspective on the established tradition.

The significance of *ijtihad* as a necessary condition for renewal is put forward in the first chapter of the book. The author states that in order to carry out *tajdid*, “the renewer reformed the existing state of affairs not as an (alleged) historical repetition, but through a unique reconstruction of Quranic meanings and ideals...” (p. 61). In the same chapter, the following prominent thinkers of their time are studied as renewers: Abu Hanifa (d. 767), Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Taqi Al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), Shah Waliullah Dehlavi (1703–1762), Musa Bigiev (1875–1949), and Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905).

Addressing the legacy of Musa Bigiev and the Russian theological school is particularly noteworthy as it allows to trace the continuity of renewal ideas

in various regions of the Muslim world and bridge the gap between past and present Russian theological schools. The author emphasizes Bigiev's attitude towards *ijtihad* as the duty of every Muslim, as well as his focus on the theological problem of salvation. Bigiev's recognition of the possibility of universal salvation helps overcome the soteriological exclusivism of Islam and highlights its inclusivity and universality. Analyzing Bigiev's views, the author points out that renewal means eliminating what has become outdated while preserving the core meaning, thus posing no threat to the religion itself. Additionally, following in the footsteps of Musa Bigiev, D. Mukhetdinov also notes that the task of the renewal movement is to integrate Islamic meanings into the global historical context, even if it was created by Western civilization, rather than produce alternative contexts that oppose the Western tradition.

The universal nature of Islam is further emphasized in the seventh section of Chapter 1, dedicated to Muhammad Abduh. Born on the Arabian Peninsula, Islam was able to quickly overcome territorial and time boundaries and grow into a global religion. The task of Islam today is to once again become a factor in universal history by revealing its universal potential. The revival of Islamic civilization will significantly enrich the European cultural and historical world and provide new meanings to all of humanity. The author states that transformation of Islamic tradition into a global-historical one raises an important question of its preservation.

Chapters two through five are dedicated to the views of the previously mentioned representatives of the first wave of neo-modernism. D. Mukhetdinov dedicates Chapter 6 to the renewal program which he proposes based on the analysis of neo-modernism as a comprehensive phenomenon, as well as the positions of Fazlur Rahman, Muhammed Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Muhammad Shahrur, and the entire preceding renewal tradition, including the positions of the Russian religious and philosophical school, along with the author's own findings. The author argues that "the program includes: a new methodology for understanding Islam, rethinking of *kalam*, the theory of Revelation, contextual *ijtihad*, the theory of Sunnah and reviewing the status of *hadiths*, deconstruction of the tradition, socio-political theory, understanding Islam as a platform for pluralism, analysis of the relationship between Islam and the civilizational context, as well as analysis of the prospects for the development of world civilization, particularly in the field of ecology" (p. 459). The program is intended to provide a conceptual framework that will enable Muslim societies to independently find solutions to current ethical and legal issues. If the provisions of the attached renewal program are followed, it should be possible to embody the spiritual prescriptions of the Quran and Sunnah and once again elevate Islam to a global-historical level.

Despite the fact that D. Mukhetdinov indicates the conceptual nature of his renewal program and states that it does not offer specific solutions, the

program offers numerous concrete steps for gradual movement towards renewal of the religion. The book establishes the foundations for a new methodology of understanding Islam, both for Muslims themselves and for those who would like to gain a better understanding of its fundamentals.

D. Mukhetdinov's book has unquestionable scientific and practical value as it provides a definition of neo-modernism and analyzes it as a comprehensive phenomenon with great potential in addressing the problems faced by Muslim societies. The book talks about reformers from different eras and offers a whole constellation of thinkers whose views are given a deeper consideration through the reconstruction of their renewal approaches. The inclusion of Musa Bigiev and other representatives of the Russian renewal movement in this constellation allows us to speak about their role in overcoming the crisis of Muslim society and the need for further study and popularization of their legacy. The meticulous elaboration of the views of Fazlur Rahman, Muhammed Arkoun, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Muhammad Shahrur, and the construction of a conceptual renewal program based on this material allows us to learn more about these thinkers and their projects that previously received little coverage in Russian research. The author's conceptual renewal program provides food for thought and a new methodology for understanding Islam.

This truly fundamental work can be of value to those interested in the current state of Islam as a whole and the renewal movement in particular. It is also relevant for those looking to find the reasons behind the decline of Muslim civilization and ways to overcome the crisis, for everyone who sees the civilizational and humanistic potential of Islam and hopes it is realized.