ЧЕРЕЗ ПОЛЕМИКУ К ИСТИНЕ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ПОЛЕМИКИ МЕЖДУ Ш. МАРДЖАНИ И ЕГО ОППОНЕНТАМИ В ПОВОЛЖЬЕ В ПОСЛЕДНЕЙ ТРЕТИ XIX ВЕКА)

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В статье на примере богословского спора в вопросах 'акиды (вероучения) между религиозным ученым, богословом и историком Шихабаддином Марджани (1818–1889) и его оппонентами рассматривается полемика как механизм поиска и утверждения истины. Выступая в качестве одного из возможных ответов татар-мусульман на имперский вызов, религиозная полемика анализируется в свете изменившихся политических, экономических и социальных условий Нового времени, когда через теологические дискуссии о каламе и божественных атрибутах очерчивались новые границы религиозной традиции и одновременно пересматривалась окружающая действительность в свете первоисточников.

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THROUGH POLEMIC TO THE TRUTH (THE CASE OF THE DEBATE BETWEEN SH. MARDJANI AND HIS OPPONENTS IN THE VOLGA REGION IN THE LAST THIRD OF THE 19th CENTURY)* **

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The article is focused on the theological debates on the issues of 'aqidah between Shihabaddin Mardjani and his opponents. The debate can be viewed as a mechanism for seeking and affirming the Truth. As one of the possible responses of Tatar Muslims to the imperial challenge, the religious debate is analyzed in the context of changed political, economic and social conditions of the modern period, when the new boundaries of the religious tradition were outlined through theological discussions about the kalam and divine attributes and at the same time the reality itself was revised in the light of the sources.

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Polemic and discussions in which the antique philosophers and Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholastic theologians were engaged have recently attracted the attention of historians, philologists and researchers of religion. An interesting overview of the polemic was made in the study by Sidney Griffit, who showed how the literature genre of apologetic Christian works in the Arabic language was developed through the social institution of Majlises, serving as venues for disputes and discussions (Griffith, 1999). Sarah Stroumsa considered the role of bad manners in the medieval disputes and highlighted that Majlises discussed topical and burning issues inseparable from the surrounding reality (Stroumsa, 1999, p. 66). In the discussions of Iberian Muslims, Gerard Wiegers saw "polemic transfers," influencing the Northern Europe of the 17th century through transnational scholarly and religious networks. The said author also noted that polemic texts created the necessary tools

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for religious discussions between Jews, Christians, and Muslims (Wiegers, 2016). In the above works, polemic was often analyzed in the light of interaction and mutual influence of the three Abrahamic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At a conference at Cordoba (12-14 April 2018), acute interest was caused by the intra-Islamic polemic as an example of intra-confession polemic within a single discourse area[1]. The author of the present article examined the problem of Ijtihād and Taqlīd through the debates of Tatar 'ulama' concerning the reform of Muslim law in the section of worship (*'ibādah*) (Mardanova, 2017).

To continue the theme of polemic, I suggest considering polemic as a mechanism for searching for and establishing the truth (by the example of polemic on the issues of *'aqidah* between Sh. Mardjani and his opponents). Within the framework of this problem the following issues are discussed: 1) the polemical genre in the Islamic world and Majlis as a forum for discussions and debates of Muslims in solving topical issues of the intellectual, religious and social character; 2) the reformation of Islam in the late 19th century among Muslims of the Russian Empire; 3) the discussion of the image of the "true" creed (*'aqidah*) through dogmatic discussions about the *kalam, mutakallims*, the doctrine of the divine attributes; 4) the boundaries of the sources of authority and forbidden innovations (*bid'at*); 5) the return to "uprightness" through a renewal (*tajdid*), which supposed, on the one hand, the introduction to the tradition of "necessary" and "true" conceptions, and on the other hand, the rejection of the "irrelevant," that is, allegedly, "untrue" views; 6) the criticism of Mardjani as a legitimate participant in the dispute, the innovator of Islam (*mujaddid*) and a theologian and jurist capable of ijtihad (*mujtahid*). Such perspective will make it possible to trace how the Muslim scholars of the Volga region adapted the religious doctrine to the social realities of the Russian Empire, against the background of decreased prestige of Bukhara among the Muslims of the Volga-Ural region and the Muslims' gradual reorientation from Central Asia to the Russian Empire (Frank, 2012).

Polemic among Muslims

The genre of polemic has a long and rich history. Scholastic disputes were common in medieval intellectual life, being inherited by the Islamic, Jewish and Christian world from the antique philosophical practice (Novikoff, 2013). Traditionally, the venues for discussions and disputes of the Muslims were Majlises, where the intellectual and religious issues were discussed. Descriptions of such "literature" salons are frequent in the Arabic medieval sources (Stroumsa, 1999, pp. 66-67). Majlises were attended by rulers; thinkers, poets and other learned people used them to submit their skills to the approval of the public. For example, at the court of al-Ma'mūn assemblies were held that served as sites for free discussions for the spiritual leaders of various religious schools, including the Christians, the Zoroastrians and the Manicheans. al-Ma'mūn considered such discussions and scholarly disputes to be a reliable means of searching for the truth. Books were composed based on the results of scholarly discussions and disputes (Shagaviev, 2010, p. 23). A popular pastime was debates of two or more participants on religious and philosophical topics. Often, the debates went beyond the framework of mere entertainment, turning into heated discussions, verbal jousts or even conflicts (Stroumsa, 1999, p. 66). With the lapse of time, certain rules and types of behavior were elaborated to prevent conflict situations. As noted by Stroumsa, the behavior etiquette of the mediaeval Majlises was inspired by the ethics of a dispute. For theologians, the

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1. Patricia Crone Memorial Conference "The Majlis revisited: Inter- and intra-religious and cross-cultural disputations in the Islamicate world" 12-14 April 2018, Casa Árabe. Cordoba, 2018.

main criterion was the truth; thus, correct behavior was the criterion for measuring the debates' efficiency as the way to achieve the truth (Stroumsa, 1999, p. 82). A dispute was considered legitimate and acceptable when the aim of the participants was the joint search for the truth. A dispute was considered forbidden if the aim was to ruin an opponent by revealing his mistakes or to establish one's own point of view. In that case, the rules of acceptable dispute were violated, and the discussion turned into forbidden debate leading to discord. Thus, dispute or polemic could both lead to establishing the truth and become the reason for deep doubt and dissention[2]. As Stroumsa noted, religious and theological disputes were inseparable from their environment, as they touched upon topical and burning issues. In particular, the first Muslim theologians, the Mu'tazilites at the court of Caliph al-Ma'mūn, defended the provisions of Islam and responded to various insinuations about it on the part of the Christians, the Jews and the Zoroastrians; at the same time, at an ideological level the Mu'tazilites struggled against various movements within Islam, which professed such doctrines as the incarnation of God, transmigration of souls, etc. That is, through polemic in disputes and dialectic discourses/discussions[3] the Muslim theologians, using logic, logical regularities and strong inferences, could, on the one hand, disprove and reject an erroneous opinion, and on the other hand, reveal and establish the "truth" most suitable for the given historical conditions. It should be noted that not all scholars agreed with such a theological conception of reaching the truth. In particular, Al-Hallaj and Ibn al-Rawandi opposed such a system of debates. They considered the established code of rules of debate to be a novelty of theologians aimed at reaching their own goals, when Majlises served as a tool for establishing ideas rather than an arena for the free exchange of ideas. That is why both scholars deprecated theologians and their claims for monopolizing the truth (Stroumsa, 1999, p. 82).

Traditionally, disputes at Majlises became a vehicle for discussing theological issues for *mutakallimun* (i.e., the Muslim theologians and specialists in dogmatic theology, including the Mu'tazilites , the Ash'arites, and the Maturidites). The dogmatic theology per se was dubbed *'ilm al-kalām*, or *kalam* in short. In connection with the subject matter of *kalam*, related to the issues of unity of Allah and the principle of monotheism, *kalam* was called the doctrine of *tawḥīd* and attributes of Allah. The limited evidence, used by all Muslims, consisted of the words of *shahadah*. Beyond them, theological and political dissentions began, developing around a certain range of topics: the definition of a faithful Muslim, the nature of the Quran, the character of divine attributes and comprehension of their limits, predestination and the freedom of will, anthropomorphism, eschatological issues, the status of prophecy, etc.

The reform (*al-islah*) and the Muslims of the Russian Empire

At the end of the 19th — beginning of the 20th century, ideas of reforming Islam spread among Muslim scholars all over the world. The catalyst was the challenge launched against the Muslim world by European modernism, which caused a conceptual crisis in Muslim society. The idea of reforming appeared in the works by Russian Muslims in the 18th century, then developed in the 19th — beginning of the 20th century[4]. In the 19th century, when wealthy trading and industrial Muslim bourgeoisie appeared in the Volga-Ural region, the critique of authorities and society became a determinative element in the works by many Muslim authors. Most of the scholars took up a protective position in relation to Islam, calling for wariness of the

2. See Faukiya (1979) for more detail.
3. According to encyclopedias, dialectics is the art of holding a conversation, a dispute.
4. See Yuzeev (2012); Kemper (2008).

novelties coming from the Russians. Alongside the outward critique of the Russian government and elites, there was extensive inward critique aimed at the Muslim community, which resulted in revealing numerous disputable issues. The Muslim scholars proposed new interpretations and ways of reading the texts, which would comply with the requirements of the epoch; that is, legitimation of the contemporary epoch took place through texts. The reformers were interested both in the issues of everyday life and theological themes. One of the key reasons for "decline" and loss of the past grandeur was connected with the deviation from the true religious doctrine (*'aqidah*) as a result of infusion of forbidden novelties (*bid'at*).

The most consistent critic of the surrounding reality at that time was a religious scholar, theologian and historian, Shihabaddin Mardjani, who, according to one of the first researchers of his works, K. Tarjemani, "substantiated the issues of faith [...] with religious proofs from the sacred texts (*naql*), purified them from the novelties based on philosophical views and from the mazhab fanaticism, and returned the Muslims to pure faith, which the Muslims had been taught by the Prophet" (Shihabaddin Mardjani, 2015, p. 164).

As early as during his studies in Central Asia (1838-1849), Mardjani started to think that his contemporaries deviated from true Islam and were living in the epoch of decline. He associated the blessed time, or the "golden age," of Islam with the epoch of Prophet Muhammad and his companions (*sahabah*), and he traced deviation from the truth to the time after the third generation, when the forbidden novelties (*bid'at*) (Mardjani, 1870, p. 84), lies, slander and like "nonsense" (*hazayan*) were introduced into the section of worship (*'ibadah*) and the section of dogmas or doctrine (*'aqidah*) (Mardjani, 1870, p. 108).

In many works, Mardjani touches upon the issues of doctrine (*'aqidah*). In the present paper, the sources of Mardjani's ideas on dogmatic issues are the following works: "al-Hikma al-Baliga" ["Mature wisdom"], published in Kazan in 1889 (in it Mardjani criticized the then popular comment by al-Taftazani to " 'Aqidah al-Nasafi"); the treatise "Nazurat al-haqq" ["Review of the truth"], published in Kazan in 1870; and "Wafiyat al-aslaf" ["About the predecessors in more detail"], published in Kazan in 1883. Not all Mardjani's contemporaries agreed with his "reformatory" proposals in the section of doctrine (*'aqidah*). There was a large group of scholars who criticized Mardjani's views.

The most well-known critical response to "Nazurat al-haqq" was a work by Gabdullah al-Nasavi "al-Djaruda" ["Denunciation of "Nazurat al-haqq"], published in the typography of Kazan University in 1874. Alongside with al-Nasavi, who defended the local tradition, Mardjani was criticized by Abu Nakib al-Tuntari — Mardjani's main ideological opponent, also known as Ishmi Ishan; Mukhammad al-Shaulyankari, who got the "traditional Muslim education by classical books" in Ishmi Ishan's madrasah (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 66); and Dinmuhammad ibn Yarmuhammad ibn Mansur al-Tuntari.

Section of doctrine (*'aqidah*)

The domain of dogmatics, alongside with the genre of corresponding works (declaring the religious-legal "credo" of a scholar), is called *'aqidah* (i.e., faith or conviction). As the main sources of Islam — the Quran and the Sunnah — contain no formal text of creed ('aqidah) (they just outline the basic borders of the Muslim doctrine), several texts of creed were formed, accompanied by comments and subcomments. In the Volga region, following the Central Asian tradition, the text *'Aqidah al-Nasafi* was widely spread, together with comment by al-Taftazani. In the opinion of Zeki Velidi, this text was "the most popular

work in the Muslim, including the Tatar, madrasahs" of that time (Validov, 1923, p. 105). According to Damir Shagaviyev, it is this text that facilitated the popularity of the Maturidi school of *kalam*, which most of the Volga region Muslims adhered to (Mardjani, 2008, p. 93). In dogmatic issues, Maturidism occupied the intermediate position between tradition (*naql*) and reason (*'aql*). "Maturidi rationally substantiated the fundamental issues of faith, without ignoring the apparent religious texts at the same time." Interpretation of the texts was based on reason. For Maturidi followers, reason and tradition were similar paths leading a person to the same goal; there was no contradiction and opposition between them (Muhametshin, Adygamov, 2016, pp. 146-147). According to the Maturidi school, to achieve the true and indestructible faith in (*'aqidah*) issues, a Muslim was barred from blind imitation without comprehending by reason (*taqlīd*), that is why the doctrine based on the Quran and the Sunnah was corroborated with rational proofs.

Mardjani associated the causes of the Islamic world's decline with the forbidden novelties introduced into the section of worship (*'ibadah*) and the section of dogmas or doctrine (*'aqidah*). He associates novelties in the sphere of doctrine with the representatives of speculative theology — *mutakallimun* in the epoch of Caliph al-Maʾmūn (September 786 — August 833) (Mardjani, 1870, p. 387), who, according to Mardjani, brought "a weak imaginary way, on which there is only longing and caprice" (Mardjani, 1870, p. 84). Further, Mardjani gives several examples of authoritative scholars of the past criticizing *kalam*, including Ibn Malik, Abu Khanifa, Abu Yusuf, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and Imam al-Shafiʿi. According to Mardjani, all of them criticized *kalam*, considering it to a forbidden novelty (*bidʿat*), which did not exist under the Prophet Muhammad and which led the Muslims to ruin (Mardjani, 2008, pp. 132-133).

According to Mardjani, *kalam* was invented by the Muʿtazilites , who borrowed philosophers' methodology from Arabic translations of Greek philosophic works. Having borrowed the philosophical methodology, the Muʿtazilites started to search for philosophical substantiation of the Islamic doctrine (*'aqidah*). As a result, according to Mardjani, the Islamic doctrine based on the proofs from the Quran and the Sunnah was supplemented with philosophical aims and proofs. From the Muʿtazilites , *kalam* was inherited by the Ashʿarites, and with the lapse of time *kalam* turned into an independent branch of learning. The initial *'aqidah* appeared to be indistinguishable from philosophical theories; the people who rejected *kalam* were blamed of unbelief. While philosophical views penetrated into the section of *'aqidah*, scholars started to argue about and dispute the correct doctrine (Shihabaddin Mardjani, 2015, p. 162, p. 335). Further, *kalam* spread and gained popularity due to later authors who "... concluded that it was permissible to study *kalam* and to read books about it, as it was necessary to protect the Muslim dogmas against their merging with novelties."

As for Mardjani's opponents (al-Nasavi, al-Kazani, Dinmuhammed and al-Shaulyankari), they, on the contrary, defended *kalam*, considering Mardjani's ideas to be a deviation from the true *'aqidah* and the introduction of the forbidden novelties into it (al-Tuntari, Encouraging, p. 3; al-Shaulankari, 1901b, p. 63). For example, al-Nasavi wrote that Mardjani did not follow the way of true *'aqidah* and that "all human connections built by this person are wrong. The only true way is correspondence of words and deeds to the Prophet's Sunnah." Mardjani's opponents asserted that their way was correct because it corresponded to the Prophet's *'aqidah*, while the way of their rivals was wrong (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 18). "Although they call themselves *ahl al-Sunnah* and *al-jamāʿ*, they actually belong to a deluded sect...," al-Shaulankari wrote (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 12).

Mullah al-Nasavi criticized Mardjani and argued for *kalam*. He asserted that studying *kalam*, if it does not lead to delusion, is not only permitted but, moreover — "ayats and Hadith command us to study *kalam*," as "*kalam* does not lead to unbelief" (al-Nasavi, 1874, pp. 20-21) but "is a means which makes it possible to rid oneself from following the ancestors' religion blindly (*taqlīd* — D.M.) and leads to faith" (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 17). The author of "Djaruda" gave multiple reasons for the need to cognize Allah by means of *kalam*. al-Nasavi wrote that "the learning of the fundamentals of religion is actually *kalam*, which seeks for Allah on the basis of cause-and-effect relations.... *Kalam* is one of the most authoritative scholarships of Shariah." Moreover, *kalam* is necessary in cognizing the essence of divinity, as it "... helps a person to ascend from the level of *taqlīd* to the level of complete confidence (in the existence of Allah)." A Muslim rejecting *kalam* "... did not cognize Allah through reasons. A person adhering to *taqlīd* in the issues of *'aqidah* is a sinner"; as "in the issues of *'aqidah* *taqlīd* is forbidden, each person must cognize Allah and His existence independently, even though in general terms" (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 16; p. 8).

Criticizing *kalam*, Mardjani, nevertheless, uses the methods of the mutakallims (i.e., he follows *kalam*). The opponents repeatedly reproach him for that (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 20; p. 22). Moreover, Mardjani repeatedly called himself a follower of the school of Maturidi (Mardjani, 2008), who was a mutakallim. Thus, one may suppose that Mardjani criticized not the whole *kalam* but certain sections of it. As Mardjani asserted, the mutakallims introduced novelties into the following sections of the doctrine: *tawḥīd* (the attributes and names of Allah), beginning and eternity of the Universe, prophecy and miracles, defining the group of the saved, and the issue of the Quran's creation (Shihabaddin Mardjani, 2015, p. 165). The largest discussions and polemics were caused by Mardjani's views on the divine attributes and names, thus we will consider this aspect as an example.

Polemic around divine attributes

Mardjani wrote: "We [the Hanafites] interpret the attributes as nothing else but the names. They are confirmed by indubitable proofs, tradition and reason" (Mardjani, 2008, pp. 180-181). Describing the attributes, he cited Sheikh al-'Arif Abu Talib al-Makki: "We get information about the attributes from reliable tradition, which transfer is correct. We do not accept this (the attributes — D.M.) and do not confirm through judging by analogy (*qiyas*) and reason (*'aql*). But we believe in the names and attributes by their meanings and essences, belonging to Allah the Almighty. We reject similarity and conferring any form to them (the attributes), as there is nothing adequate to the above to be similar to that, and there is no equivalent to that to be of the same kind with that" (Mardjani, 2008, p. 170). Further: "A duty of everyone in this section [of the doctrine] is to stand by the explanations of a legislator; and to adhere firmly to his borders in describing His qualities and His names, and not to describe Him through Himself [not to derive one quality from others], and to call Him the sent down in His book [the Quran]" (Mardjani, 1870, p. 81). Here, Mardjani differs from Qursawi, who admitted that "from the God's names given in the Quran, one can derive the abstract ones, even if they are not directly mentioned in the sacred texts" (Kemper, 2008, p. 355). Thus, according to Michael Kemper, Mardjani excluded from *'aqidah* the discussions about the properties of matter, bodies and accidents, inherent in classical Maturidi and Ash'ari traditions of *kalam* (Kemper, 2008, p. 592).

In the opinion of Mardjani, the "position of *'aqidah* is simple. Its domain is based on two ayats: Said the Almighty: 'Allah has beautiful names; called Him by them...' (Quran 7:180); Said the Almighty: '... there is nothing similar to Him. He is the hearing, the seeing!'" (Quran 42:11).

On the issue of the attributes, Mardjani argued both with the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. He criticized the Mu'tazilites for asserting the absence of the divine attributes and the later Ash'arites for dividing the attributes into two types — the attributes of essence (*ḏāt*)[5] and the attributes of action (fi'liy)[6]. Ash'arites consider the attributes of essence to be eternal, while the attributes of action (i.e., creation) are wrong according to Mardjani: "Allah the Almighty with all His attributes and names is eternal and non inchoate; the attributes of Allah the Almighty and His names are not Himself and are not anything other than Himself (*lā huwa wa-lā ġayruhu*)" (Mardjani, 2008, p. 196)[7].

Thus, Mardjani admitted only the attributes and names described in the Quran and the Sunnah, while any other attempts to dwell upon the essence of Allah he ascribed to the reasoning of the mutakallimun and considered them to be imported and unacceptable novelties (Mardjani, 2008, pp. 176-177). He wrote: "Have not you heard His words: 'Reason about the benefactions of Allah the Almighty, but do not reason about Allah the Almighty!,' 'Reason about creations, but do not reason about the Creator, as, indeed, His degree is incomprehensible for you' " (Mardjani, 2008, p. 185). Mardjani asserted that a human is not capable of cognizing the essence of Allah with rational means: "...Debar it [the mind — Damir Shagaviyev] from researching the identity and essences of the God's attributes" (Mardjani, 2008, p. 380).

From such ideas of Mardjani, his refusal to use reason for cognizing Allah, al-Nasavi derived, first, a contradiction to "the unanimous opinion of scholars [*ijmāʿ* – D.M.] about the need to cognize Allah with auxiliary means [the mind]" (Mardjani, 2008, p. 185) and, second, to the unethical attitude of "such scholars as Imam al-Ash'ari and his disciples" (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 13). In the opinion of al-Nasavi, all great scholars practiced *kalam*: Abu Hanifa, his disciples, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, Sheikh Abu Khasan al-'ashari, Imam al-Gazali, Fahr ar-Razi (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 15), Ibn al-Khumam (al-Nasavi, 1874, pp. 8-10), etc. Consequently, for al-Nasavi cognizing Allah and His attributes through reason was an obligatory and necessary requirement for a believer. He wrote: "One of the most important and primary duties of a believer is cognizing Allah, His names and attributes" (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 16).

Another opponent of Mardjani — Damullah Dinmuhammed — advocated the divine attributes not mentioned in the Quran. He wrote: "... He [Allah] has eternal qualities indispensable from His Image" (al-Tuntari, Encouraging, p. 13). According to Dinmuhammed, Mardjani rejected these qualities because he did not understand the words of honorable scholars. He noted: "Our teacher, speaking of using the above qualities of Allah, implied their special mentioning in the Quran and the Sunnah. That is why, the word al-Qayum (Allah's epithet "Eternally existing", "the Existing" – D.M.) always follows the word al-Hay (Allah's epithet "Eternally living" — D.M.)" (al-Tuntari, 1909, p. 20). Dinmuhammed thought that Allah possesses "the right of His essence in respect of His eternal indispensable qualities. al-Hamd ["the Glorified"] is among the qualities of His essence..." (al-Tuntari, 1909, p. 31).

Although Mardjani listed himself as a follower of Maturidi and repeatedly cited his works, his doctrine of God's attributes partly differed from Maturidism. According to research by

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5. al-Taftazani was criticized for the same reason; he separated the attributes of essence too much, thus challenging the unity of God.
6. "The eastern Hanafites rejected the difference between the eternal attributes of essence and the temporal attributes of action. For them, the attributes of action, which they usually united into a single notion 'bringing to existence' (takwin), were equally eternal and existed within the essence of God; however, His attribute of 'bringing to existence' differed from 'what was raised.' " See: Attributes of God...
7. See more about *lā huwa wa-lā ġayruhu* in (Spannaus, 2015).

W. Rudolph on Maturidi *kalam* in Samarkand, Maturidi "advocated the need to use speculative conclusions (*nathar*) in theology" (Rudolph, p. 157), explaining that "the existence of divine attributes is conveyed to us both through tradition and through reason" (Rudolph, p. 221). In the book *at-Tawḥīd*, al-Maturidi dwelled upon *kalamic* issues, such as God sitting on the throne (Rudolph, p. 154); that is, he did not limit the description of God by tradition (*naql*) only, admitting the possibility to cognize Allah through reason (*ʿaql*).

Thus, as was noted by I. Marash, Mardjani criticized not *kalam* per se, but penetration of *kalamic* methods into *tawḥīd*. "Mardjani draws a borderline between *kalam* and *tawḥīd*"; that is, he draws new borderlines of the Muslim dogmatics (Marash, 2005, pp. 75-76).

Sources of Tawḥīd

For Mardjani's opponents, the sources of belief in Allah and its main arguments were the Quran, Sunnah, consensus (*ijmaʿ*) and reason (*ʿaql*). Unlike his opponents, Mardjani admitted only what was granted in the Quran and Sunnah, rejecting the possibility of rational interpretation of Allah's attributes and allegoric interpretation of the Quran (*ta'wil*). In Mardjani's *ʿaqidah*, "blind faith" or following the tradition (*naql*) appeared in the place of intelligence (*ʿaql*). Mardjani asserted that the only sources of *tawḥīd* were the Quran's ayats from the category of categorical (*qatiʿ ya*) (Mardjani, 2008, p. 94); that is, one must not use in *tawḥīd* statements from the category of suppositional (*zanniyya*), obtained through *ijtihad* or opinion (*ra'i*). A believer should not doubt anything stated in the asserted ayats and the Hadises and should recognize them as actually true. If that truth is not comprehensible to them, then they should not try to find it (Mardjani, 2008, p. 83). *Tawḥīd* does not contain any deep concepts to be comprehended by intelligence, and an attempt to "immerse" oneself in *tawḥīd* with the help of reasonable arguments leads to a pernicious mistake and, ultimately, to atheism (Mardjani, 2008, p. 82). The Mardjani's opponents considered such interpretation of sources to be sinful and saw a forbidden novelty in it, contradicting the unanimous opinion of the scholars (*ijmaʿ*) about the necessity to cognate Allah through intelligence.

The demand to follow only the reliable proofs in *tawḥīd* is related to Mardjani's idea that a mistake is inadmissible in the fundamentals of faith (*usul al-din*), including *tawḥīd*; thus, *qiyas aqliy* is inadmissible, because it is based on human intelligence and not protected against being a mistake. According to Mardjani, the one who is mistaken in *usul al-din* differs from the one who is mistaken in the fundamentals of *fikh* (*usul al-fikh*). If a *mujtahid* is mistaken in *usul al-fikh*, for example, in the issues of worship (*ʿibadah*), he will not be punished but will receive a reward to a certain extent. If a *mujtahid* is mistaken in *usul al-din*, he does not receive a reward but commits a sin, hence, will be punished (Mardjani, 2008, p. 83).

Takfir of the "great scholars" is the forbidden (bidʿah)

The opponents were most of all bewildered to see Mardjani using the ayats usually applied to the infidels (*kafirun*) to criticize "the great scholars." For example, al-Shaulyankari wrote: "Deriding ahl al-Sunna wa al-jama['], they read the following ayats of the Quran: 'and leave those who practice deviation concerning His names' (7:180), and the ayat: 'those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work' (18:104). Also: 'And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah' (6:116)... These ayats speak of the infidels, while they read them about those who admit additional qualities, who believe in a temporary origin of the world, who believe in un-eternity

of this world, and in resurrection from the dead. Reproaching these people, threatening them[,] you accuse the imams of Shariah in delusion" (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 10).

According to al-Nasavi, accusations of unbelief addressed by Mardjani to scholars are forbidden (*bid'ah*). al-Nasavi wrote: "Know that dispute among scholars goes on since olden times, but no one of them dared to accuse his opponents in delusion, and this adventurer was the first one to do it" (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 5).

"Admonition of opponents is a novelty, and such person is a *mubtadi*[']." A similar opinion on prohibition of accusing "the great scholars" of unbelief was expressed by al-Shaunkari: "Accusing the leaders of the Islamic Ummah of unbelief is unbelief" (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 12). In a similar way, the opponents proved Mardjani's inconsistency as a legitimate debater whose aim was to find the truth.

As for Mardjani, he actually called certain actions of people "unbelief" (*kufr*), like rejecting *ijtihad*, but I never see statements where Mardjani called the people "infidels" (*kafir*). In regard to unbelief, Mardjani wrote that the one who rejects the broadly recognized consensus (*ijma' mutawatir*), such as the five Pillars of Islam, "is accused of unbelief for the reason of denying that," because these regulations were directly listed by Allah and belong to the categorical precepts (*qati'ya*). Mardjani wrote that the one rejecting the obligatory (*fard*) or the due (*wajib*), established by *ijma' qati'ya*, commits *kufr* (Mardjani, 2008, pp. 341-345).

Thus, Mardjani's opponents believed that Mardjani, criticizing the opinions of "the great scholars" and conceptions of the past centuries, resorts to a very serious accusation in Islam; that is, the accusation of unbelief (*kufr*), which could be followed by death in the past centuries of Islam. Polemics around various aspects of apostasy (*kufr*) had a great significance in Islam for forming political conceptions and served as a background for developing important dogmatic and legal issues (Dictionary, 1991, p. 145).

Returning to the "straight way" through *tajdid*

While rejection of the forbidden and excluding it from the tradition was carried out by consigning it to the forbidden novelties (*bid'at*), Mardjani and other reformers believed that returning to the "straight way" should be carried out through reforming. The correction (islah) of Islam should be done "... by 'renovation' (*tajdid*), through refusing to follow traditions (*taqlid*), confirming the 'unlawful novelties' (*bid'at*)" (Alekseev, 2013, p. 73). To substantiate the need for such renovation and defend themselves from accusations of introducing the unlawful novelties, Qursawi, Yalchgul, and then Mardjani cited the well-known Hadith: "Indeed, Allah the Almighty and the Great sends to this community at the beginning of each century the one who renovates the religion" (Idiyatullina, 2006, p. 270).

Mardjani's disciples and followers believed that he not only performed *ijtihad* (i.e., he was a *mujtahid*) but, moreover, performed *tajdid*, that is, he was the renovator of the century (*mujaddid*)[8]. His opponents were of a different opinion: they did not recognize Mardjani as a legitimate participant of the dispute, *mujtahid* and *mujaddid*, capable of deriving legal decisions (i.e., asserting "the truth"). To confirm that, they adduced a list of requirements

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8. Maksudi A.-Kh. described Mardjani as "a perfect *mujtahid* of Shariah"; "he should be considered the first *mujtahid* — hero in correcting the religious traditions and renovating the nation"; Kh.-G. Gabashi saw Mardjani as a "*mujtahid* and *mujaddid* (renovator)", who renovated Islam in compliance with the Hadith: "Indeed, in the beginning of each century Allah will send a renovator to this community"; Atlasi also called Mardjani a renovator of the religion; T. Ilyas called him "a great scholar — *mujtahid*, explaining the truth to the people and leading along the true path," etc. For more detail, see Shihabaddin Mardjani (2015, pp. 201, 323, 328, 349, 413-415).

which, supposedly, Mardjani did not comply with. First, they attempted to show that Mardjani deviated from the true ‘*aqidah*. Dinmuhammed wrote that Mardjani turned “to the (beliefs of) ‘mariqiya communities’ [apostates, renegades — *D.M.*] and ‘inqybaliya (reformers)’ and that he considered their sources to be more reliable even compared to the Quran.” Mardjani put those dubious works above the Quran. Dinmuhammed also compared Mardjani with *rafidits*, *khawarijs* condemning the Sunnites, called him a follower of Wahhabism (al-Tuntari, Encouraging, pp. 13-17). Other opponents called Mardjani a Mutazilite and a philosopher (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 10). An interesting opinion was expressed by al-Shaulyankari: “The authors of ‘al-wafiya’ and ‘al-hizamat,’ having buried the knowledge of pious salafs from Sunnah followers and their community, having preferred the madhhab of Shias, philosopher to the madhhab of the saved, introduced some new *mujaddid* of letters and novelties, presented the truth as the lie, and the lie as the truth” (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 10). Moreover, al-Nasavi questioned the very existence of madhhab in Mardjani: “Maybe, he wanted to conceal his madhhab? Maybe he has no madhhab at all? [...] The part of the citation where he speaks of various groups shows that the author does not belong to *ahl al-Sunnah*, as he excluded Ash‘arites from them, who are true bearers of Sunni theology” (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 55). Second, the very personality of Mardjani was criticized: his knowledge and moral-ethical qualities. Consequently, al-Nasavi concludes, Mardjani just “...wants to say that he reached the level of *mujtahid*, while, as we said above, he is a true *muqallid*” (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 47). Another point of criticism against Mardjani was his “weak” knowledge of the Arabic language. al-Shaulyankari, having shown Mardjani’s “poor knowledge” of Arabic grammar, poses a question: “How can a person, not knowing the Arabic grammar, undertake to write a response to another book?” (al-Shaulankari, 1901a, p. 19). Another critic of Mardjani’s knowledge of Arabic was al-Nasavi, who showed that Mardjani misunderstood an Arabic sentence (al-Nasavi, 1874, pp. 66-67) and used words inappropriately (al-Nasavi, 1874, p. 11).

Due to the contradictions that arose between Mardjani and his opponents, Mardjani’s islah was rejected by his opponents. To prevent or at least reduce the carried out tajdid, his opponents put forward the reasons which, in their opinion, barred its implementation by Mardjani. First, they questioned Mardjani’s belonging to the Abu Hanifa madhhab and Ash‘ari-Maturidi ‘*aqidah*. Second, they attempted to demonstrate Mardjani’s inconsistency as a *mujtahid*, and, consequently, a renovator of religion (*mujaddid*). For that, they criticized Mardjani’s intellectual abilities, the depth of his knowledge, and his ethical and moral qualities.

CONCLUSION

The research allowed the revelation of specific mechanisms of the religious tradition’s adaptation to the new living conditions of the end of the 19th century. As E. Lazzerini noted, the renovation (*tajdid*) taking place during that period had, indeed, rigid orientation, ensuring the viability and sustainability of the religious tradition (Lazzerini, 1992). The negative changes were interpreted by scholars through the conception of deviation from the “straight way” and true Islam; in turn, “the truth” was introduced and established through renovation (*tajdid*) with the help of well-known Islamic methods and tools.

Reconsideration or adaptation of the religious tradition to the new conditions, as well as the reconsideration of the surrounding reality in the light of the primary sources, took place through polemic about the “straight way” and true Islam. At first the “unwanted”, obsolete conceptions were defined as forbidden novelties (*bid’at*) on the basis of authoritative sources

(the Quran, the Sunnah, and *ijmaʿ*); in some cases they were also defined as unbelief (*kufr*), as concepts that were absent in the first Muslim community and, consequently, carrying danger for Ummah. Defining the "unwanted" actions as *bidʿat* or *kufr* ensured the legitimacy of refusing to perform them, despite the long practice of their existence. As for the "required" elements, they were introduced into the tradition with the help of reform (*islah*), implemented through renovation or restoration of "the true tradition" (*tajdid*), allegedly existing at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and thus lodged with his unquestionable authority.

While Mardjani attempted to implement islah through successive *bidʿah-tajdid*, his opponents, on the contrary, tried to defend the tradition, giving evidence of Mardjani's inconsistency as a legitimate participant of the dispute, a renovator of Islam (*mujaddid*) and *mujtahid*. Criticizing Mardjani for violating etiquette norms, rules of dispute and polemic, the opponents showed that the discussion started by Mardjani was forbidden and, consequently, did not lead to establishing the truth. According to them, Mardjani's goal was not to find the truth but to prove his own viewpoint and cause discord and disturbance.

The reform in the sphere of dogmatics (*ʿaqidah*), proposed by Mardjani, complied with the requirements of the epoch. Starting from Catherine II and going on throughout the 19th century, integration of Muslims into the Russian Empire implied creating a common economic, legislative, and historiographic space. Integration of Muslims into the common imperial space demanded a response at various levels. Drawing the new borders in the section of dogmatics (*ʿaqidah*) and excluding the rational proofs acquired through reason (*ʿaql*) from the field of *tawḥīd* were protective measures aimed at defending the Muslim faith under the Christian Empire. They allowed the protection of the religious doctrine from possible innovations related to introducing the interpretations welcomed by the authorities and the government.

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