UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN REFORM DISCOURSES RELATING TO WOMEN WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO EGYPT AND ENGLAND IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the views and achievements of Christian and Muslim reformers in relation to women's social status during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Egypt and England. It argued that liberal feminists were not the only ones who worked for the benefit of women because Christian and Muslim reformers also participated in the debate over the development of women's social status in these two regions. This investigation of reform discourses within the arena of women's issues revealed that Muslim and Christian reformers were influenced by two coherent and systematic, but different schools of thought; the Anglo-Catholic revival in England and the Islamic revival in Egypt. The historical approach of this study focused on the views and achievements of religious reformers and represented their participations within a systematic construction of a religious reform discourse. In this context, this study aimed to compare the reform discourses of conservative Muslims and Christians on women's issues in order to find points of similarity and difference.

The findings of this study indicated that Muslim and Christian reformers aimed to reform women's social status and they had offered women real benefits in the two regions. This study also defined the significance of reform and the attributes of conservative reformers within the arena of women's issues. The comparison of Muslim and Christian reformers' discourses on women's issues revealed that although English and Muslim women had had different beliefs, religious practices and history, both of them indicated that the message of reform is to morally guide their societies within a religious context. Finally, this study concluded that when religion is practised, different beliefs can be respected, and thus encourage fruitful communication between different cultures.

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and peace and blessings be upon His Prophets and
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I have followed the transliteration system of *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*

All translations from Arabic into English are my own unless otherwise indicated.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> Edward Said once asked [the] question, "How can one understand the other?" One could answer, "One has to do one's best."[1]
>
> Albert Hourani

This view of Hourani, a committed Christian scholar of Islam, represents the core of this study, which investigates women's status in society throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries from the perspective of Muslim and Christian reformers. This study represents an attempt "to do one's best" to demonstrate the views and achievements of conservative Muslims and Christians regarding the reform of women's social status in order to enable each party to understand women's issues according to their own religion. Thus, while this study is mainly devoted to investigating Muslim and Christian reformers' discourse on women's issues, it also compares them.

1.1 General background & research motivations

This study has emerged from my need as a Muslim woman in a modern Western society to investigate women's issues within a religious context: Islamic and Christian. My move to England has brought new experiences into my life which inspired me to think of the comparison between Muslim and Western Christian women. In fact, it is not a theological comparison of women in Islam and Christianity that motivated this research but the communication between Muslim and Western women that has become my main interest. In other words, I have been looking for what Western women think regarding the social status of women according to their religion. I came to this thought because in Egypt I used to communicate with

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[1] Derek Hopwood, "Albert Hourani: Islam, Christianity and Orientalism", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 30, no. 2 (2003): 136

Christians as school mates, teachers, colleagues, and neighbours. In my communication with Christians I have always kept in mind this Qur'anic verse:

> Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall but worship none Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him). (3:64)[2]

Despite having different religious beliefs and practices, this difference does not negate the possibility of our communication in one society because we have something to share. In my view, although our religious beliefs and practices differ, what underpins communication as 'Muslims and Christians' in my country is our belief in the existence of God. However, since my move to England and my commencing of academic studies, I have begun to wonder whether this basis for communication is missing in England.

In Western society, particularly within academic studies, I have found that religious teachings and practices appear odd. I remember an academic colleague's comment that Muslim women's veiling (the reference was to face covering) is an odd practice because it aims to keep women politically isolated. When I tried to explain my view that the veil has nothing to do with politics, but is based on Muslims' belief that sometimes we need to do what will make us better before God, the practice was still perceived as odd.[3] Hence, I realise that the veil was interpreted as 'odd' not so much because only some Muslim women wear it, but because of a thorough-going marginalisation of any claims to religious faith. In other words, although Christian women in Egypt do not wear the veil, they appear to have more understanding of what it might mean for a Muslim woman to have a religious obligation to wear the veil in

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[2] Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an: An Explanatory Translation* (Hyderabad-Deccan: Government Central Press, 1930)

[3] This discussion was during an academic seminars I attended during my MA degree at Lancaster University,2006.

obedience to God. Thus, I conclude that it is different and more difficult for Islamic practices to be understood within a secular society than within a Muslim-Christian one.

What I referred to in the previous paragraph does not mean that academic studies in Western societies do not discuss women's issues from a Christian perspective. In fact Western academia has known a long history of feminist theology that analysed women's issues within a Christian theological discourse. [4] Feminist theologians have been concerned with constructing a radical Christian thought regarding women's status in church and theological texts.[5] In other words, they have attempted to reject male domination over these constructions; the Church and theology. Subsequently feminist theologians have formed their own interpretations of theology and looked for leadership roles in the Church and theological education. However, I believe that because this field of knowledg has intended to reconstruct former Christian thought, it has participated in drawing an odd image of women retaining or thinking according to former tradition in Western societies.

Albert Hourani once said:

> Certain groups of modern educated Arabs…regard Islam and Christianity as mere survivors of a dark age, and… look forward to their imminent extinction… This hope is vain. Revealed religion cannot vanish from the world to which it has brought light.[6]

Yousuf al-Qaradawi, a contemporary prominent Muslim scholar, also said:

> There is no need for political hypocrisy, there should be reconciliation, I am a Muslim and I have my shari'a and Allah commands me to implement this

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[4] Natalie K. Watson, *Feminist Theology; Guides to Theology* (Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 1
[5] Ibid, 2
[6] Hopwood, "Albert Hourani: Islam, Christianity and Orientalism", 130

shari'a. These laws of shari'a are based on higher religious ethics rooted in all religions, so it is reasonable to agree on them.[7]

These views of Hourani and al-Qaradawi support my proposal regarding the difference between an investigation into women's issues within a religious context, Muslim and Christian, and such an investigation within a secular context where religion becomes irrelevant. Subsequently, I determine to investigate the topic of women's status in society within a Muslim and Christian context. Hence, this study hopes that this investigation would enable Muslim and English women in the West to co-exist with co-operation and fruitful communication. Finally, this study also aims to enable Muslim and English women in the West to better understand the role of their religion throughout their journey to reform women's social status.

My previous research investigates the views of Rashid Rida, a prominent Muslim reformer and scholar at the turn of the century, regarding women's rights in Islam. This represents the first phase of my investigation into women's issues within a religious context.[8] Rashid Rida's views on Muslim women's issues indicate that liberal figures, e.g. Huda Sha'rawi and Qasim Amin, were not the only ones addressing women's issues in Egypt at the turn of the century. My investigation of Rida's views reveals a serious lack of references regarding the contributions of religious reformers within the literature dealing with the history of Muslim women. I find that most resources focus on Egyptian feminists who have become dominant voices in academic studies, media and the press. Besides my personal experience, my previous research motivates this study to compare the discourses of Egyptian Muslim

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[7] Yousuf al-Qaradawi, *Leqa'at wa Muhawarat hawl al_Islam wa Qadaya al-'Aser (Meetings and Discussions about Islam and Issues in the Contemporary Age)* (Egypt, 2001), 38 (my translation)
[8] Nahla Hassan. "Rashid Rida: A 20th Century Reformer and Women Rights in Islam", MA Dissertation, Lancaster University (2006).

and English Christian reformers on women's issues during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

This study focuses on Egypt because of its leading well-known history among other Islamic countries in the history of women's rights.[9] England can also be considered a major leading Western country in the history of women's rights.[10] This research returns to the 19th and early 20th centuries because this period is crucial within the history of the woman question. During this time, the comparison between Muslim and Western women becomes a significant issue within debates between colonialists, feminists and religious figures.

1.2 Key terms definitions

In this section, I intend to clarify the meanings of certain key terms: **Feminist**, **reformer**, and **secular** according to their significance in this study. At this point I would indicate that the term **religious** in this study means within Islamic or Christian contexts. On the other hand, when I use **religious** in order to refer to persons, I mean that these English and Egyptian figures are committed to their Christian or Islamic beliefs by word and deed.

1.2.1 Feminist

Before investigating the discourses of Egyptian and English religious reformers on women's issues, this study investigates the thought of first wave feminists in these two regions. I suggest that feminism either in theory or practice is based on Western thought; this point is discussed in the following section.

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[9] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (U.S.A: Yale University Press, 1992),130
[10] Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from 1790s to 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993)

Many studies demonstrate the main characteristics of feminist thought in order to determine who is a feminist. In her historical investigation of this word and her classification of two forms of feminism; relational and individualist, Karen Offen indicates that feminists are males and females who are "at odds with male-dominated culture and society". Offen also states that feminists want to challenge and reject prevailing ideas and social institutions that, in their views, empower men and humiliate women.[11] Similarly, Susie Steinbach indicates that feminists are activists who believe that there are many obstacles and restrictions facing women in nearly all fields of life, e.g. education, occupations, and marriage.[12] In addition, Steinbach states that feminists intend to challenge the inherited beliefs that make women appear "more emotional and moral" and make "marriage and family their only destiny".[13] Furthermore, Maggie Humm indicates that feminists want to "transform society" in order to end women's dependence on men and terminate their exclusion from the outer sphere.[14] To sum up, Valentine M. Maghadam, in her study of Islamic feminism, argues that the main concern of feminist thought and practice is "women not religion".[15]

Based on the above views, this study states that feminists are those activists, either male or female, who want to challenge, reject or terminate traditional views and institutions in order to enlarge women's opportunities in education, occupation and social life. Although this study does not deny that feminists have achieved many goals for the social development of women, it argues that they mainly think of women's individuality, equality and liberty in relation to men's position. In other words, it

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[11] Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: Comparative Historical Approach", *Signs*, 14, no. 1 (1988), 152
[12] Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History,* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson History, 2004), 245
[13] Steinbach, 245
[14] Maggie Humm, ed. *Feminism: A Reader,* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 4
[15] Valentine M. Maghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontent, Toward a Resolution of the Debate" in *Gender, Politics and Islam* edited by Therese Saliba et al. , (University of Chicago Press, 2002),45

argues that feminists mainly interpret the reform of women's social status within the context of equal rights. For example, feminists think of education as a tool that can liberate, empower and place women on an equal footing with men although another approach, usually supported by religious reformers, might have a different view. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, religious reformers thought of better education because women have a duty to seek knowledge for the benefit of self-refinement and what Elizabeth Wordsworth calls "higher ends"[16] that link women not only to worldly success but also to the hereafter.

1.2.2 Reformer

In English dictionaries, 'reform' refers to attempts and endeavours that intend to improve social, political and legal conditions in societies without changing their fundamental construction.[17] In other words, 'reform' means to improve conditions by removing the sources and forms of vice and corruption that can threaten and weaken the construction of societies. Therefore, 'reform' refers to the procedures that result in certain social changes, yet with the fundamental construction of societies remaining unchanged. The Oxford Movement leaders, e.g. Dr. Edward Bouvarie Pusey, indicated that their reform project was not to make "a new doctrine" but to improve the conditions of their society within a moral and spiritual Christian context.[18] Thus, in this study, English reformers are those figures who followed this reform thought that did not aim to change the construction of English society, religion or identity, but aimed at raising the moral and spiritual standards of English people within a Christian context.

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[16] Elizabeth Wordsworth, "Colleges For Women", in *Ladies at Work,* papers on paid employment for ladies by experts in different branches introduced by Lady Jeune, (London A.D, Innes & Co., 1893), 28
[17] Prof. R. S. Downie "reform" *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2005
[18] Alec R. Vidler and Alexander Roper Vidler, *The Pelican History of the Church: The Church in an Age of Revolution; 1789 to the present day,* (Penguin Books, 1971)*53*

I also use 'conservative' within its English context to mean maintaining Christian beliefs and teachings within Anglo-Catholic thought. I limit the significance of **reform** as well as **conservative** to the ethos of the Oxford Movement that called for and intended to revive catholic teachings while maintaining its loyalty to the English Reformed Church. In fact, the Oxford Movement leaders, e.g. William Palmer, indicated that they were conservative because they retained their former Christian beliefs and teachings and refused any "innovations in doctrine and discipline".[19]

In its Islamic Arabic context, 'reform', or *Islah,* means to remove corruption and seek what is better, constructive, valuable and useful.[20] Muslims believe that 'reform' was the message of all Prophets who intended to retain and revive the creed of monotheism in order to remove corruption and vice resulting form people's deviation from this creed.[21] Therefore, 'reform' does not change Islam, but implies the submission as well as the implementation of Islamic teachings and the rejection of any innovations that have no basis in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.[22] Many reform movements appeared throughout Islamic history, for example, the Islamic revival movement in the 19th century. Reform within the thought of this movement aimed at reviving the teachings of Islam according to its main sources. It also aimed at reviving Muslims' awareness of their roles as well as responsibilities and retaining their identity within an Islamic context.[23] In this study, Muslim reformers followed this reform thought.

The term 'conservative' within its Islamic context means that reformers were committed Muslims. Muslim reformers were conservative because they refused blind

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[19] Vidler, 52-53
[20] Al-Maurid al- Waseet Arabic dictionary
[21] Mohammad 'Imara, *M'rakat al-Mustalahat bin al-Gharb wa al-Islam (Controversy over concepts between The West and Islam)*, (Cairo: Nahdat Misr, 2004), 134
[22] *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. John L. Esposito, ed. Oxford University Press Inc. 2003
[23] 'Imara, *M'rakat al-Mustalahat*, 136

imitation of Western thought and innovations. They opposed *taqlid* (adherence to tradition) and called for the practice of *ijtihad* according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. In fact, some historians, e.g. John L. Esposito and Charles Adams, described Muslim reformers, e.g. Muhammad ibn Abdel Wahab and Muhammad Rashid Rida, as conservative because they followed this Islamic thought.[24]

1.2.3 Secular

I usually use the term 'secular' to differentiate between the thought of religious reformers and that of other prominent figures who participated in the woman question during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A historical background precedes the investigation of reformers' discourse on women's issues in order to determine the ways women's issues were perceived during this time. In the English part, many historians indicate that secularisation was a marginalised phenomenon in English society during the 19th century.[25] On the other side, some argued that secularisation was possible within Christian societies as it is the Church that forms religious construction and authority while other activities and practices outside this construction are usually perceived as secular.[26] This does not mean that English people outside Church, e.g. physicians, poets, and teachers become non Christians. Rather this means that what they are practicing is considered secular because it was not within the authority of the Church. At this point, I would argue that secularisation refers to the marginalisation of the importance and centrality of the Church within English society. Therefore, when I use the term 'secular' within this English context, I

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[24] "Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, Muhammad" *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. John L. Esposito, ed. Oxford University Press Inc. 2003 and Charles C. Adams. *Islam and* Modernism in Egypt, (Russell & Russell, 1968), 185.
[25] Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 2
[26] C.John Sommerville, "Secular Society /Religious Population: Our Tacit Rules for Using the Term 'Secularisation'", *Journal for The Scientific Study of Religion*, 37, no.2 (1998), 249

mean "the attempt to ignore rather than deny religion"[27] because people, institutions and activities became more concerned with individual goals for worldly success.[28]

In an Islamic context, there is no such a distinction between secular and religious life or between the practice of Islam inside the mosque or outside it.[29] For example, a Muslim physician in a hospital can be as religious as an Imam in the mosque, and an Imam can be a physician, or a teacher, or have any other position. In addition, Muslims' acts of worship do not have a limited construction because every lawful act a Muslim does is an act of worship.[30] However, secularisation that differentiates between spiritual and material life in order to separate religion from politics, law and other fields of public life, was introduced into the Muslim world by colonialists and Westernised Muslim and Christian intellectuals.[31] At this stage, some intellectuals, e.g. Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayyid, called for the separation of Islamic thought and law from legal and political life in order to encourage Western scientific thought to guide and develop Muslims as it had in Europe.[32] Thus, I would state that in the second part of this study, the term 'secular' refers to colonial and Westernised thought that intended to encourage Muslims to abandon their Islamic history and restrict the practice of Islam.

1.3 Western and Egyptian women's issues in the 19th and early 20th centuries

Rapid industrial and scientific growth in England during the 19th century encouraged English women to reconsider their status in society.[33] Women's awareness of their position and needs in this changing world resulted in a sequence of reactions. Firstly

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[27] Azzam Tamimi, " The Origin of Arab Secularism", in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* edited by Azzam Tamimi and John L. Esposito, (C. Hurst & Co., 2000),15
[28] Sommerville, 250
[29] Tamimi, 26
[30] Muhammad 'Imara, *Al-'Almanya bayna Al-Gharb wa Al-Sharq (Secularism between the West and the East,* (Kuwait, 1996), 19
[31] Tamimi,19
[32] Ibid, 24, 25
[33] Barbra Caine*, English Feminism* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 5

they called for the reform of their social status in order to have better education, employment and legal rights. Then, they considered women's emancipation, and some English women advocated the refusal and rejection of both institutional and social obligations within their claims to liberate and empower women in society.[34] Karen Offen argues that there were two forms of feminist arguments during the 19th century; relational and individualist.[35] The relational feminist argument, which represented the dominant argument during the 19th century, emphasised the different and complementary roles of women.[36] The individualist argument, inspired by Western liberal and secular thought, emphasised women's equality with men. Since the 20th century, individualist feminism has been the main focus of current Western studies on women's issues.[37]

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) is considered one of the initiators of liberal feminist thought; in fact, he was inspired by his wife Harriet's views regarding women's liberty.[38] According to Mill, social and private institutions enslaved and oppressed women.[39] In his view, marriage was based on economic and social pressures supported by customs and traditions in order to enslave women. In addition, he argued that women had to play the roles of mothers and wives, as otherwise they would not be able to survive.[40] Subsequently, Mill called for women's right to equal opportunities in education and paid work because this equality would result in women's emancipation and ultimate happiness.[41] Before John Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), a significant figure in early feminist thought, had a

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[34] Offen, 142-143
[35] Ibid, 135
[36] Ibid
[37] Ibid
[38] Mariana Szapuova, "Mill's Liberal Feminism: Its Legacy and Current Criticism", *Prolegomena*, 5, no. 2 (2006), 183 and John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* edited by Sue Mansfield (Harlan Davidson, 1980), xi
[39] Szapuova, "Mill's Liberal Feminism", 183
[40] Ibid
[41] Ibid, 184

similar liberal argument regarding women's emancipation, although she was more radical. She used the same rhetoric regarding women's oppression, slavery, inferiority and subordination in society.[42] She also interpreted women's issues within a social and economic context. For example, marriage was in Wollstonecraft's view a profession that could be substituted by proper education and paid work.[43]

In my view, liberal feminist thought encouraged what Offen categorises as "individualist feminism" a similar argument to liberal Egyptian feminism that was addressed by some Egyptian women's rights activists, e.g. Qasim Amin and Huda Sha'rawi, at the turn of the century. Qasim Amin, a prominent figure in the history of Egyptian feminist, used liberal rhetoric to describe the status of women in Muslim societies. He argued that Muslim women were oppressed, enslaved and regarded as worthless in Egyptian society. Subsequently, he called for the same demands of equality, liberty, and emancipation that liberal English thinkers called for.[44] Although Amin and Mill insisted on the traditional division of roles in the family,[45] I suggest that both of them encouraged and supported the development of liberal and secular thought that marginalised and criticised the role of religion in their societies. Thus, it can be argued that feminist thought has been mainly based on Western liberal thought that feminists and their advocates admitted would emancipate and empower women in society.

This focus on the liberal thought within the arena of women's issues has motivated this study to consider the following questions: Why have women's issues, for example, marriage, been interpreted within the context of economic and social

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[42] Steinbach, 225 and Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* ed. Ashley Tauchert (London: Everyman/Dent, 1995)
[43] Steinbach, 225
[44] Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman,* translated by S S. Peterson (American University Press, 1992), 130-131
[45] Szapuova, 189 and Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 159

pressures? Did all or most women and men experience and accept such an image of oppressed women and tyrannical patriarchal systems in their English society? What about the view of John Angell James (1785-1859), a prominent congregational minister, who stated that "woman can be spared from the lecture's chair and the scene of public business, but she can not be spared from the heart of her husband and the circle of her children. Substitutes can be found for her in the one but not in the other"?[46] Can this view represent another context of reform within the discussion of women's issues? These questions suggest that feminists have excluded the views of religious figures from the discourse on women's rights because these views do not empower women. Leila Ahmed opposed Victorian paternalistic views because, in her view, it exclusively delineated women's roles to domesticity.[47] However, it can be argued that since there are other views regarding the reform of women social status, liberal and secular feminists' views can not represent the sole discourse within debates on women's issues. Thus, this research proposes that the views of religious figures can have another significance of reform which is worth investigating in order to trace the achievements of English women within this religious context.

Hugh Mcleod argues that secularism has dominated discussion of Western life in the 20th century, but it was a marginalised phenomenon throughout the 19th century.[48] Popular discourse on Western women's issues was supported by the teachings of Christian reformed denominations, e.g. Methodists, Quakers and Unitarians, who called for the reform of women's status in society rather than a change in women's traditional roles.[49] Within this context, I suggest that Mary Wollstonecraft's and John Mill's perspectives regarding women's issues did not reflect the mainstream view

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[46] Dale A. Johnson, *Women in English Religion 1700-1925*, (The Edwin Mellan Press, 1983), 130
[47] Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam, 151
[48] McLeod, 2
[49] Steinbach, 272

during this age. These liberal activists and others similar to them can represent what John Angell James perceived as "a few wild visionaries, and rash speculatists and mistaken advocates of women's rights".[50] However, feminist studies and many historians mainly focus on these few liberal figures and, if there is any reference to religious figures, it is to criticise religion. Within this context, although religion empowers and elevates men, it humiliates and imprisons women.[51] Feminists seldom refer to the achievements of conservative English reformers within their discussions of women's issues.[52] Western feminist thought associates religion with oppression, patriarchy, and misogyny,[53] although women outnumbered men in church attendance and religious publishing during the 19th century.[54] In fact, many Christian conservatives sought to uphold religious teachings while intending to reform women's issues as they believed that these teachings were the source for Christian women's reform and welfare.[55] Subsequently, this study suggests that religion can represent another context for the reform of women's social status. Thus, I focus on religious reformers' discourse on women's status in society in order to investigate and compare it with Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues.

In Egypt, calls for the reform of women's social status had been initiated and supported by Muslim thinkers, rulers and scholars within the modernisation process that began in the 19th century.[56] Some studies of Muslim Egyptian women state that calls for better education and employment opportunities were indigenous demands by

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[50] Johnson, 128

[51] Elaine Storkey, "Modernity and Anthropology" in *Faith and Modernity* , ed. Philip Sampson et al. (Regnum Books International, 1994), 146

[52] Gail Malmgreen, ed. , *Religion in the Lives of English Women 1760-1930,* (Croom Helm, 1986), 1

[53] Steinbach, *Women in England; A Social History* , 133

[54] Malmgreen, 5 and Tony Walter et al. , " The Religiosity of Women in the Modern West", *The British Journal of Sociology,* 49, no. 4 (1998), 644

[55] A. S. Roald, " Feminist Reinterpretation of Islamic Sources: Muslim Feminist Theology in the Light of the Christian Tradition of Feminist Thought" in *Women and Islamization; Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*, ed. Karin Ask and Marit Tjomsland, (Berg Publishers, 1998), 22

[56] Margot Badran. *Feminists, Islam and the Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 7

Muslim women, for example, Huda Sha'rawi, before they were influenced by Western women or Western feminist thought.[57] In addition, modern studies investigate Egyptian women's participation in journalism and national movements at the turn of the century.[58] Among all active figures, Huda Shar'awi and Qasim Amin are represented as heroes and pioneers in the history of Muslim women in Egypt. Other Muslim figures, as Beth Baron states, have been "left out of the story"[59]. In these studies, it is indicated that Egyptian feminist discourse had a real existence and impact upon the development of Muslim women's social status in comparison to what colonial discourse established regarding the lack of feminism in Muslim Arab world at the turn of the century.

When Westernised and colonial figures discussed Muslim women's issues, they referred to the higher level of education as well as the social and intellectual participation of Western women in comparison to the inferior and backward status of Muslim women in Egypt.[60] According to Lord Cromer, the British Consul in Egypt, this image of educated and respected English women was due to the teachings of Christianity, because in his view, Islam did not offer Muslim women this elevated status.[61] In Egypt, Lord Cromer supported the liberal thought of Western suffragists and feminists that he had opposed in his country.[62] Leila Ahmed argues that Cromer's view was based on the image of Victorian womanhood.[63] Ahmed also argues that Cromer was a patriarchal colonialist because he did not support women in any way,

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[57] Badran. *Feminists, Islam and the Nation,* 4
[58] Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, Culture, Society, and the Press (Yale University Press, 1994), 6, 22.
[59] Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt* , 5
[60] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 152-153
[61] Ibid, 153
[62] Ibid, 153
[63] Ibid, 151

but the colonialist Cromer pretended to support Western women's calls for equality and liberty in order to indicate the superiority of the West over the East.

Qasim Amin argued that the inferior status of Muslim women was due to their ignorance of Islamic teachings as Islam is not against the social development of women; he added that it was Christianity that did not offer women any rights.[64] Within this context, he critically discussed the issues of veiling, segregation and polygamy, while other issues that in my view might have been more important to women, e.g. education, were not thoroughly discussed in his texts. Ahmed argues that because Qasim Amin was "the son of Cromer",[65] his discourse did not offer women any benefits and he was as a patriarchal as Cromer. At this point, I would argue that Ahmed's argument is primarily based on her feminist viewpoint, which interpreted males' views within a patriarchal misogynistic vision that aimed to enslave women either within an Eastern Islamic dominance or a Western Christian one.[66] On the other side, I suggest that although Qasim Amin and Lord Cromer encouraged liberal claims regarding women's issues, their argument referred to the role of religion in the reform of women's social status. Amin praised Islamic teachings regarding the reform of women's issues and Lord Cromer praised Christian teachings regarding the same issue. I do not say that they were religious figures, but part of their argument represented another criterion of how religion can reform women's status in society. This process of religious reform was followed by Christian reformers in England and Muslim reformers in Egypt. However, because of the distinction that colonialism and Orientalism imposed between the two regions, these figures appeared to support liberal feminist thought. This religious aspect of reform was marginalised or may be

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[64] Amin, *The liberation of Women*, 7
[65] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 163
[66] Ibid, 161, 163

ignored because current studies discussing women's issues have focused on feminist thought.

At this point, I would state that most current studies discuss Muslim women's rights at the turn of the century according to feminist viewpoint that focuses on equality and emancipation. For example, Leila Ahmed primarily focuses on the thought and contributions of feminists and their advocates. Subsequently, the views and achievements of conservative Muslim figures regarding the reform of women within a religious context have been marginalised. Similarly, English feminist studies have delineated women's issues within feminist discourse and marginalised the role of religion within this issue. Thus, it can be argued that there is a need to investigate and construct a religious reform discourse on women's issues during this period in contemporary studies.

1.4 Research questions, objectives and methodology

The central research questions of this thesis are: What did the reform discourse represent in relation to Muslim and English women's issues during the 19th and early 20th centuries? How were they constructed? What did feminist discourse represent during this time on both sides? Finally, how can the discourse of Muslim and Christian reformers on women's issues be compared?

One of the main objectives of this study is to introduce the discourse of religious reformers on women's issues in contemporary studies on Muslim and Western women's issues. It also aims to change the stereotypes that are dominant in reviewing the literature on Christian-Muslim relations which tend, within mainstream academia

and media, to be presented as opponents.[67] Subsequently, the focus on the religious reform discourse can encourage a Christian-Muslim dialogue that takes women's issues beyond a solely secular feminist debate that have intended to marginalise the role of religion within feminist universal claims to unite and improve women's status in society. Finally, this research can supply future researchers with religious interests with sufficient data about religious reformers' contribution within this arena of women's issues.

This study investigates and compares Muslim and Christian reformers' discourses on women's issues during the 19th and early 20th centuries. 'Reform and reformers' have had broad significance and connotations; this is one of the major problems that this study faces in its early stages of investigation. This is due to the fact that feminists, e.g. liberal, radical and secular, have established a coherent discourse that dominates discussions on women's issues in these two regions. Consequently, reform is usually interpreted according to feminists' viewpoints. For example, Ahmed argues that the replacement of shari'a code with Western secular code which resulted in the abolition of polygamy and veiling in some Muslim countries, e.g. Turkey, is considered 'reform', but Muslim women's resurgence of Islamic practices delay this reform process.[68] Similarly, current Western feminists emphasised the difference between a Christian view of women and liberal feminist thought, especially, that the latter reformed the status of women and it is the former that is against this process of reform.[69] However, religious figures support the reform of women's issues within this resurgence of religious teachings and models. Thus, this study employs the method of

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[67] Yahya R.Kamalipour, ed. *The U.S. Media and the Middle East; Image and Perception*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), 51,52 and Mahmoud Ayoub, *A Muslim View of Christianity; Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A.Omar, (Orbis Books, 2007), 50
[68] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 168
[69] Elaine Storkey, *Modernity and Anthropology*. In *Faith and Modernity*, ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel et al, (Regnum Books International, 1994), 146

discourse in order to identify 'reform' within a religious context. It aims at representing a different argument to that of feminists regarding women's issues. Although this study is primarily devoted to the construction of a religious reform discourse within the debate on women's issues, it also performs a comparison between Muslim and Christian reform discourses on women's issues. Therefore two main methods are used in this thesis: discourse and comparison.

This study uses discourse in order to represent religious reform within a systematic construction that demonstrates how religious reform can be understood, and what it represented regarding the reform of women's status in society in Egypt and England during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This study follows the same course that Edward Said follows when he investigates and represents Orientalism. Said intends to represent a systematic discipline of Orientalism in order to understand how it happens, what it presents and why?[70] Ahmed also uses discourse within her investigation of women's issues in Islamic Middle Eastern societies because in her own words, "discourses shape and are shaped by specific moments in societies".[71] When a discourse is traced as a system or a body of knowledge, it represents an influential object within specific contextual and historical limits.[72] Subsequently, the use of discourse identifies the regulation of ideas and views into certain structures that would have an impact upon societies.[73] Thus, this study employs the method of discourse in order to represent a construction of religious reform and investigate its impact upon women's social status during that time.

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[70] Edward Said, *Orientalism, (London: Penguin*, 1995*)*, 3
[71] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 2
[72] Sara Mill, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997), 6
[73] David Zeidan, "A Comparative Study of Selected Themes in Christian and Islamic Fundamentalism Discourses", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, (2003), 46

The second main method is comparison. Jeffrey R. Carter defines comparison as "the consideration of how two apparently distinct entities are similar and different for the purpose of determining the degree to which they can intellectually grouped or separated".[74]   Based on this definition, this study adopts comparison as a basic method in order to demonstrate similarities and differences between Muslim and Christian reformers' discourses on women's issues. This method can be used to compare what Carter calls "far reaching circles".[75] Therefore, instead of focusing on close or similar religious, cultural, or geographical circles, this study compares apparently distinct circles: Egyptian Muslim reformers and English Christian reformers.

There are many techniques of the comparison method.[76] Some of these techniques are adopted in this study as follows: firstly the method of comparison identifies similar phenomena in different contexts in order to compare them. [77] In this study, religious reform is the phenomenon investigated within two different contexts, Egyptian Muslim and English Christian, in order to compare religious figures' views and achievements. As stated earlier, the issue of religious reform within the discussion of women's issues in these two regions has not been examined before. Secondly, comparison is based on similarities as well as differences.[78] In this study, looking for similarities is the main target because colonial and feminist discourses focused primarily on differences between Muslims and Christians when they investigated women's issues during this time. This does not mean that I intend to overlook differences, but as I demonstrate early in this chapter being different does not negate

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[74]Jeffrey R. Carter, " Comparison in the History of Religions: Reflections and Critiques", *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 16 (2004) , 5
[75]Jeffrey R. Carter, "Description is Not Explanation: A Methodology of Comparison", *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 10 (1998), 133
[76] Robert A. Segal, "In Defence of Comparative Method", *NUME* 48 (2001):349- 352
[77] Ibid, 348
[78] Ibid, 349

the fact that there can be common ground which requires investigation in order to enable both parties to communicate and co-exist. In addition, the method of comparison studies phenomena within their contexts.[79] I investigate the thought of reform in Egypt at the turn of the century within its Islamic context. I investigate conservative Muslims' understanding of reform and the impact of this thought upon women during this time. This is the same course followed in the investigation of English reform during the 19th and early 20th century. I investigate the thought of reform in England within an Anglo-Catholic context and its impact upon the status of women in English society.

Although comparison of Muslim and Western women's social status had been frequently demonstrated by colonialists and feminists, what is new in this study is the implementation of the methods of discourse and comparison within a religious context in order to connect the discussions of women's issues. These methods were not adopted within colonial and Western feminist discourse on Muslim women's issues, as they mainly represent women's issues within a Western liberal feminist context[80].

1.5 Research resources and data collection

This is a text-based study that focuses on written texts, e.g. memoirs, biographies, journal articles as well as histories; both primary and secondary resources are used. Memoirs, e.g. Huda Shar'awi's *Harem years*,[81] biographies, e.g. Rashid Rida,[82] and Charlotte Mary Yonge,[83] are investigated. In addition, this study investigates primary

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[79] Ibid. 352

[80] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*,129

[81] Huda Sha'awi, *Harem Years; The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist,* translated by Margot Badran (New York: The Feminist Press, 1986)

[82] Shakib Arsalan, *Al-Sayed Muhammad Rashid Rida aw Ikhaa' arba'in 'am (Rashid Rida or a forty years brotherhood)* ed. Medhat el Seba'y (Cairo, 2006)

[83] Christabe Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters (* London: Macmillan and Co, 1903)

texts written on women's issues by the main figures in this study, e.g. Rida's *Huquq al-Mar'a fi al-Islam* and Emily Davies's *The Higher Education of Women.* In terms of histories, I investigate many key historical texts, e.g. Albert Hourani's *Arabic thought in the liberal age* and Hugh Mcleod's *Religion and irreligion in Victorian England.* Finally, and due to the fact that this is an interdisciplinary research area where history, religion and women are all within the scope of investigation, various academic journals have been searched, e.g. International Journal of Middle East Studies, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, and Feminist Studies.

1.6 Synopsis of Chapters

The introduction presents an outline of the problem that this study intends to investigate. It is divided into certain sections: a general background, key terms definitions, a brief review of the literature, the research questions, objectives and methodology, and finally the methods of research and data collection.

The first part of this study investigates the discourse of English reformers on women's issues throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. In Chapter Two I explore the history of England and the image of women during this time. Chapter Three investigates English feminist thought with particular reference to Emily Davies's feminist thought. Chapter Four investigates the characteristics of the thought of the Oxford Movement. Chapter Four also investigates the reform discourse of two religious figures, Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge. The comparison of Muslim and Christian reformers' discourses is performed in the second main part of this study.

The second part of this thesis investigates the discourse of Egyptian Muslim reformers on women's issues at the turn of the century. Chapter Five explores the modernisation

process in Egypt and women's issues. Chapter Six investigates the thought of first Egyptian feminist with particular focus on Qasim Amin. Chapter Seven investigates the characteristics of religious reform within the thought of the Islamic revival movement. In Chapter Seven, I also investigate the reform discourse of two religious reformers, Rashid Rida and Labiba Ahmed. Throughout these various stages of investigation, I discuss points of similarity and difference between the two comparable parts.

Finally Chapter Eight concludes with the discussion of the significance, results and limitations of this study. It also suggests possible recommendations for future research.

PART ONE: ENGLISH REFORMERS' DISCOURSE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES DURING THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

CHAPTER TWO: ENGLAND AND ENGLISH WOMEN IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter is divided into two sections: Firstly, I briefly introduce the changes that took place in England and the role of religion in response to these changes during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Secondly, I investigate the issues of women's education, work and marital laws in order to examine the correlation between Christian teachings and the endeavours that intended to reform women's status in society during this time. This study proposes that calls for secularisation within the arena of English women's issues were a marginal discourse, largely rejected by most people during the 19th century, although in Egypt, as I discuss in the previous chapter, colonialists and Westernised intellectuals argued that secularisation and liberal thought reformed English women's status in society. This historical survey, similar to the following investigation of first wave feminist discourse, sets the background of this study investigating religious reformers' discourse on women's issues during this time.

2.1 England in the19th and early 20th centuries

By the beginning of the 19th century, England had witnessed substantial changes in all aspects of life due to many factors, for example, industrial and leisure revolutions, the conflict between religion and science, and the emergence of uncertainty and free thinkers, alongside the growing trends of socialism and secularisation of formal institutions.[84] These factors had an impact upon the image of Christian England which can be summarised in the following points. Firstly, a rising tide of political and intellectual liberalism aimed at removing religious constraints in order to offer

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[84] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England,* 169-220

English people better social conditions and wider opportunities, e.g. in work and education.[85] Secondly, many English people reconsidered Victorian Puritanism which imposed moral norms of respectability.[86] Thirdly, new scientific trends rejected religious dogma and authorities[87]. Over the 19th century, many British socialists, e.g. Robert Owen, proclaimed that social vices, e.g. poverty, crime, and drunkenness, largely spread in their urban industrial society because of religion which supported capitalist exploitation. Finally, social work as well as the medical, educational and political institutions were developing secular approaches in order to marginalize the role of the Church of England.

Mcleod indicates that despite all these changes, secularism was a marginal phenomenon in England over the 19th century.[88] Although these factors encouraged scepticism and indifference to religion, they resulted in the development of a number of voluntary societies that provided various religious as well as philanthropic projects and focused on the role of Christian moral teachings in English society.[89] For example, The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) adopted sport and physical activity programs in order to encourage English people to join it.[90] In addition, middle-class reformers provided the new industrial working class with 'rational recreation', e.g. 'temperance pubs', in order to fight social vices, e.g. alcohol consumption and sensuality.[91] Furthermore, many prominent English figures admonished the impacts of material and scientific changes to the Christian faith. For example, Reverend Thomas Romney Robinson (1792-1882), a prominent astronomer,

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[85] Anthony Wood, *Nineteenth Century Britain*: *1815-1914* (London: Longmans, 1960), 255
[86] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 201*
[87] Harold Y. Vanderpool, *Darwin and Darwinism: Revolutionary Insights Concerning Man, Nature, Religion, and Society,* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath , 1973)
[88] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 2*
[89] L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era*, (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1954)
[90] William J. Baker, "The Leisure Revolution in Victorian England: A Review of Recent Literature", *Journal of Sport History*, 6 (3) (1979), 85
[91] Peter Bailey, "Leisure, Culture and the Historian: Reviewing the First Generation of Leisure Historiography in Britain", *Leisure Studies*, 8 -2 (1989), 108

believed that the focus on science and intellect without religious considerations would lower instead of raising human beings in the great scale of existence.[92] Robinson indicated that although science and intellect are important tools for human development and progress, it is religion that would elevate men's status in this life and in the hereafter. This sample of views and endeavours indicates that, although the influence of the Church was directly undermined, e.g. in politics and science, this influence was retained and respected by many English people within social and ethical domains. A further argument is illustrated in the following section, which focuses on the reform of English women's status in society throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

2.2 English women & calls for reform

Changes in English society induced different debates on women's issues. Religious reformers, suffragists and feminists were involved in discussions around the reform of women's education, work and marital issues in order to cope with the changes affecting every aspect of English life.[93] Thus, in this section I investigate the views of the dominant voice within these debates in the history of English women.

2.2.1 English women's education

"The blind leading the blind" [94] was the status of English women's education according to the views of many activist groups and reformers during the 19th century. Although England was regarded as the most powerful industrial and imperial nation, where systematic knowledge and various sciences were taught and sought in the well-known English universities, all that English girls and women learned up to the second half of the 19th century was reading, spelling, writing, religion and some arithmetic.

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[92] Frank M. Turner, "The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension" *ISIS*, 69-248 (1978*)*: 361
[93] Steinbach, 162-177
[94] Constance Rover, *The Punch Book of Women's Rights*, (Hutchinson, 1967), 56

Women's admission to English universities was not attained until degree examinations at London University were opened to women in 1887. Despite being successfully admitted to London degree examinations, graduate women were formally informed whether they had passed or failed, without receiving their class of degree.[95] It was not until 1919 that women were fully admitted to Oxford University, and the same did not happen until 1948 at Cambridge University[96].

The issue of English women's lack of proper education in 19th century industrial England was largely debated by various activist groups and reformers who engaged in the debate on women's issues in their changing society. Three main approaches summarised the discussions and attitudes of women activists within this arena of girls' education.[97] Instrumentalists, e.g. Frances Buss (1827-1894) and Emily Davies (1830-1921), advocated equal education for girls and boys in order to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Secondly, liberal humanists, e.g. Ann Clough (1820-1892) and F. D. Maurice (1805-1872), advocated wider intellectual interest in girls' education. Finally, moralists, e.g. Dorothea Beale (1831-1905), advocated changing women's education for the benefit of raising good Christian women.[98] These three approaches reveal certain points that are worth mentioning. Firstly, women activists did not oppose the popular Christian view that advocated better education for girls in order to prepare them for their traditional roles as mothers and wives.[99] In other words, these approaches attempted to raise the moral and intellectual standard of women within the domestic sphere.[100] Secondly, the instrumentalist approach, which rejected gender inequality in education and employment, only became popular

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[95] Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era,* 186
[96] Steinbach, 177
[97] Pauline Marks, " Femininity in the Classroom: An Account of Changing Attitudes", in *The Rights and Wrongs of Wome*n, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (Penguin Books, 1976), 185
[98] Ibid
[99] Ibid
[100] Johnson, 212

towards the end of the 19th century. Although secular views, which challenged Victorian womanhood, were circulated among people, they were not largely accepted in English society until the 1890s.[101] Consequently, it can be argued that many English people showed a common respect regarding Christian theology and practice. Due to the physical and mental differences it was thought to exist between women and men[102], this religious trend excluded the women's sphere from the public only because her home was thought to be her special supreme place .[103] Despite these views and attempts that aimed to retain the division of roles in the private and public spheres, contemporary studies have mostly focused on liberal and secular feminist thought.[104]

2.2.2 English women's work

During the first half of the 19th century, women's work was restricted to traditionally female fields, such as domestic service, agriculture, and teaching.[105] Women were excluded from other employment that was categorized as unsuitable for women, e.g. factory work, although sometimes poverty forced women to look for these kinds of jobs.[106] By the end of the 19th century, as a result of women's access to further and higher education, other employment opportunities became available for women. Women became clerks (the first female clerks were hired in the 1870s[107]), doctors (the first two female doctors were Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917) in 1865 and Sophia Jex Blake (1840-1912) in 1877), and practised the legal profession in 1919. In addition, the shortage of labour during the First World War (1914-1918) increased

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[101] McLeod, *Religion and Society in England (1850-1914)*, 51
[102] Steinbach, 177
[103] Johnson, 128
[104] Bush, "Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 387
[105] Rover, 76
[106] Sally Alexander, "Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London; A Study of the Years 1820-50" in *The Rights and Wrongs of Women,* ed. Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, (Penguin Books, 1976), 72
[107] Steinbach, 35

English women's participation in the workforce. Women were called upon to fill the jobs that had been undertaken solely by men before the war, such as transport.[108] In addition to personal aspirations, national needs and poverty, the fact that females outnumbered males in birth rates and in total population encouraged many single middle-class women to look for other suitable employment, e.g. as governesses and writers, that could provide them with further support in life.[109]

When many activists and reformers discussed the issue of women's work, they were not concerned with rates of pay or hours of work, but they thought of the consequences of women's increased involvement in the outside sphere. Many views focused on the moral degradation that they thought would result from women mingling with men, apart from women's neglect of domestic duties.[110] Therefore, some argue that many English people indicated the importance of family and raising children as well as the respectability of a working class that maintained a non-wage-earning wife and a breadwinning husband.[111] Moreover, society largely agreed that women's work was respectable when offering women single-sex working settings.[112] It was thought that employment should help women and their society, but women activists did aim to change the roles of men and women in society.[113] In fact many women avoided politics and commerce, and in most cases English society intended to retain separate spheres for men and women.[114]

In this section I indicate that various causes, for example, national obligations, personal aspirations, demographic change and poverty, played a significant role in

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[108] Rover, 88
[109] Johnson, *Women in English Religion,* 193
[110] Alexander, "Women's Work in Nineteenth-Century London'', 61
[111] Steinbach, 11
[112] Ibid, 34
[113] Ibid, 52
[114] Ibid, 41

women's participation in the workforce. English women, in most cases, accepted their traditional roles; in my view this reflects the influence of Christian teachings within the debate on women's employment. In fact, the image of ideal woman in Christianity is essentially connected with traditional roles; this image is thoroughly illustrated in the book of Proverbs 31:10-31,[115] for example: "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." This image coincided with John Angell James's comment on women's work: "Whatever breaks down the modest reserve, the domestic virtues, the persuasive gentleness of women is an injury done to the community."[116] Thus, I would state that many women did not call for equal employment, but rather for sufficient employment opportunities to cope with the changes of their age.

2.2.3 English women's marital issues

In this section, I focus on two issues that had an impact upon the status of English women in society throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries: The Deceased Wife's Sister Bill and divorce. I investigate these issues in order to examine the impact of Christian teachings on the debates intended to reform English women's marital issues.

2.2.3.1 The Deceased Wife's Sister Bill

In 1851, the Marriage Law Reform Association attempted to legalise marriage between a man and his deceased wife's sister for certain reasons. Firstly, this act was legal in almost every other country, which wealthy Englishmen travelled to in order to marry their deceased wives' sisters.[117] However, it was difficult for poor men to follow the same procedure.[118] Secondly, socio-demographic conditions indicated that

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[115] Kenneth T. Aitken, *Proverbs,* (The Saint Andrew Press, 1986), 155-158
[116] Johnson, 130
[117] Nancy F. Anderson, "The "Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Bill" Controversy: Incest Anxiety and the Defense of Family Purity in Victorian England", *The Journal of British Studies*, 21, no. 2, (1982), 68
[118] Ibid, 81

there was an urgent demand for the legislation of this law because, according to the 1851 census, nearly 40% of unmarried unemployed women were moving to their married sisters' houses to help and take care of children, as maternal death rates were high.[119] Proponents of this Bill, e.g. Lord Bramwell (1808-1892), lord of justice of appeal in the Exchequer Court, argued that the prohibition of these marriages created sin because it had resulted in prohibited relations particularly among the working class.[120] Opponents, mainly the bishops of the Church of England, argued that marriage with a wife's sister is incestuous and unlawful, based on Leviticus: 18. The opponents emphasised that marriage laws should comply with Biblical injunctions on marriage, divorce and adultery, and refused state encroachment within this area.[121]. On the other hand, proponents of the Bill, including Alexander M'Caul (1799-1863), a professor of Hebrew and rabbinical literature, pointed out that, based on the same source, Leviticus: 18, prohibition is only due when marriage with the wife's sister is during the wife's lifetime.[122] Proponents argued that the sister-in-law could never be regarded as a blood sister.[123] Finally, by the early 20th century, in 1907, the Wife's Sister Bill was legalised.

These discussions and procedures indicate that the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill was an important issue because it had an impact upon a wide rage of women in English society. It is worth mentioning that by the time this law was issued, women's maternal mortality rates had fallen and women's employment rates had increased.[124] Consequently, the number of cases when wife's sister moved to help in her deceased sister's house was reduced. In addition, in 1908, the Parliament passed a Punishment

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[119] Ibid, 73
[120] Ibid, 81
[121] Maeve E.Doggett, *Marriage, Wife-Beating, and the Law in Victorian England* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson History, 1992), 68
[122] Johnson, 223
[123] Doggett, *Marriage, Wife-Beating* 79
[124] Ibid, 85

of Incest Act that established criminal penalties for incest. Thus, I would argue that the legalisation of this Bill remained in conformity with the Biblical authority that intended to retain the moral indication of the Christian prohibition or permission of these marital issues.

2.2.3.2 Divorce

Divorce, as a means of terminating an existing marriage to allow remarriage within the lifetime of a spouse, was not allowed in England before 1700.[125] Under the Divorce Act of 1857, while adultery was the sole reason that could enable men to divorce their wives, women would obtain a divorce when their husbands were not only adulterous but also physically cruel and bestial.[126] In addition to this complex and expensive procedure, if women abandoned their husbands, they would become guilty of desertion and could not claim any share of their husbands' property or custody of the children.[127] In 1923 English women were able to obtain a divorce for adultery without proving that their husbands were also cruel. In addition, in 1937 adultery ceased to be the sole grounds for divorce, as cruelty and desertion were also considered in women's claims for divorce.[128]

Despite this inequality of divorce laws as well as English women's minority status under marriage laws, the public opinion, including the opinion of feminists and suffragists, e.g. Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904), emphasised women's traditional roles and place. Many historians argue that there were few cases of abuse and hardship reported by wives who rarely made any claims for divorce.[129] In addition,

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[125] Sybil Wolfram, "Divorce in England 1700-1857", *Oxford Journal of legal studies*, 5-2, (1985), 155.
[126] Mary Lyndon Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England (*Princeton University Press, 1989), 9
[127] Ibid
[128] Wolfram, "Divorce in England 1700-1857" , 157-158
[129] Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in the Nineteenth-Century England* (*Routledge*, 1989), 29

the census of 1871 reveals that nearly 90% of English women were married.[130] Although some feminists, e.g. Mary Wollstonecraft, would refer to this census as an indication of women's inability to change their destiny, I argue that these reports and views can also indicate that English society asserted the importance of raising a family in a Christian context. Marriage, within a Christian context, is a contract between one man and one woman that could be terminated only by death.[131] Christians perceived marriage as the ordained moral relationship between men and women for the benefit of 'the procreation of children', 'avoiding sin of fornication' and attainting comfort for a mutual society.[132] Thus I conclude that both the legalisation of certain marital laws and their prohibitions were debated within the context of Church authority, and these debates were accepted by many English people.

2.3 Conclusion

The main point of this historical survey is to investigate the influence of Christian teachings within the debates on women's status in English society throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Throughout this chapter, I track the main changes that had an impact upon English women's issues: education, work and marital issues. My investigation reveals that these issues were discussed by many activists, e.g. feminists, religious reformers, and Biblical scholars. Most of the debates emphasised the importance of women's traditional roles, modesty in dress and appearance, segregation in work settings and Biblical authority on martial issues. Consequently, I would state that most of the calls for the reform of women's issues were not targeted at the secularisation of women, whether in terms of abandoning religion or separating

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[130] Shanley, *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law,* 9
[131] Perkin, *Women and Marriage*, 20
[132] Ibid

it from the rest of life.[133] Rather, these calls aimed to improve the social status of English women and enable them to retain their Christian teachings throughout this changing world.

The historical survey indicates that feminists represented a voice among many who called for and supported the reform of women's status in society within a religious context. However, feminists and suffragists have represented the dominant voices in current studies. In the following chapter, I investigate the thought of first wave feminist with particular focus on Emily Davies in order to delineate its context, views and achievements.

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[133] Tamimi, "The Origins of Arab Secularism" , 14

CHAPTER THREE: FIRST WAVE FEMINISTS & EMILY DAVIES

3.1 First wave feminists

The history of English women during the 19th century reveals that many English people were concerned with the social status of English women because of their lack of proper education, employment and political participation. Voices were raised to reform the inferior status of English women in order to cope with the various changes, e.g. scientific, political, educational and social changes, which took place in England during this time. Current historians have usually focused on feminists and suffragists and their achievements within this scope of women's issues.[134] Thus, first wave feminists are commonly portrayed as the pioneers and heroines who improved English women's status in society.

First wave feminists believed in the equality of men and women.[135] They began to agitate for political, economic and educational equality in order to enable English women to maintain a "full adult status" in their society[136]. At this stage of feminist thought, women activists were concerned with restrictions that, in their views, indicated women's minority status in society. According to some feminists, e.g. Emily Davies, limits of hours and kinds of work, and male guardianship were the main restrictions confining women to the private domestic sphere. These thoughts and claims had been formed in the context of industrial society and liberal politics that emphasised individual rights.[137]

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[134] Bush, " 'Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 388
[135] Maggie Humm (ed), *Feminism: A Reader*, and Sarah Gamble (ed), *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*.
[136] Barbara Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and Nineteenth- Century English Women's Movement", *Women's Int. Forum*, 5, no.6, (1982), 540
[137] Ibid

Feminist thought during the 18th and 19th centuries, e.g. the view of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), developed alongside theories of individualism that prevailed in capitalist England.[138] Individualism emphasised the importance of individual freedom and rights, regardless of any form of external authority.[139] Consequently, first wave feminists argued that women should retain their own identities as separate individuals.[140] They claimed that women should not be perceived just as men's wives, sisters, daughters and mothers but as equal individuals, and should have equal opportunities for education as well as employment and political participation.[141] It can be argued that first wave feminists challenged a view of Victorian womanhood that emphasised the role of women inside their homes in order to morally guide and support their families in the industrial, material and competitive age. Therefore, first wave feminists, either conservative, e.g. Josephine Butler (1828-1906), or radical, e.g. Emily Wilding Davison (1872-1913), although admitting there were natural differences between men and women,[142] had challenged this image of Victorian women in order to indicate the importance of women's participation in society. On the other hand, these feminists were not calling for the secularisation of women. In fact, many feminists, even the militant suffragette Emily Davison, indicated that they were inspired by God.[143]

Women's autonomy was a fundamental point for first wave feminists. They worked towards enabling women to retain equal rights, e.g. economic, political, educational and legal rights, in order to attain independence and emancipation. Although they aimed to increase women's opportunities for education and employment as well as

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[138] Caine, *English Feminism:1780-1980*, 43-130
[139] Wood, *Nineteenth Century Britain*, 258
[140] Humm, *Feminism,* 11
[141] Ibid, 12
[142] Ibid, 42
[143] Carolyn P. Collette, "Faire Emelye": Medievalism and Moral Courage of Emily Wilding Davison", *The Chaucer Review*, 42, no.3 (2008), 234

social and political spheres, they did not call for the change of women's roles as mothers and wives. They organized campaigns and societies in order to improve women's status in their society, for example, suffrage campaign to win the vote for women and Josephine Butler's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act. However, it can be argued that although feminists aimed to improve women's status in society, in most cases they could not be members of one campaign. The following section explains this point.

Josephine Butler (1828-1906), Millicent Fawcett (1847- 1929), and Emily Davies (1830-1921), three pioneers in the history of English first wave feminism, called for women's equality and emancipation. Davies aimed to enable women to have equal education, especially equal opportunities in higher education, so that women could be prepared for equal participation in society. Fawcett was a leading activist in the suffrage campaign and called for women's right to the vote. Josephine Butler's campaign fought against the Contagious Diseases Act because this Act defamed women by putting them under suspicion and exposing them to physical investigation without being criminals.[144] These three feminists were motivated by different interests within their call for equality and autonomy. They believed that individual rights granted to men by liberal politics should be expanded to women so that they could retain their autonomy and live as equal individuals in society with separate social, economic and political roles and rewards. Therefore, I would argue that they did not focus on the image of women having special role and place in this universe; rather this feminist thought reflected how women could become individuals whose place and roles should be equal to those of men.

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[144] Johnson, *Women in English Religion,* 230

In their fight for equality, first wave feminists organised campaigns and societies and protested via petitions and presentations of bills in Parliament.[145] However, they were divided according to the main politics and priorities of their campaigns.[146] Josephine Butler mainly aimed to eliminate the moral, social, and spiritual evils that in her view were more destructive to women's emancipation than any other issues.[147] On the contrary, Emily Davies focused on women's equality and autonomy in order to attain their full rights in society. In fact, Davies and Butler opposed each other's views and were never members of the same campaign. Butler said Davies was a "masculine aiming woman" and believed that Davies's campaign would never reform women's status in society[148]. On the other hand, Davies showed no interest in the Contagious Diseases Act, domestic violence, moral corruption or marital issues.[149] Thus, although first wave feminists had similar aims and means, they opposed and criticised each other because of their different individualistic interests. In other words, I argue that first wave feminists were not united because their self interested goals deconstructed women's central position into various forms in order to make women equal to men. In contrast, as I shall explain in my investigation of the discourse of religious reformers on women's issues, religious reformers usually unite and agree with each other because they preserve this special place and position for women.

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[145] Caine, *English Feminism,* 115-121
[146] Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and nineteenth- century", 546-547
[147] Ibid
[148] Ibid
[149] Ibid, 97

3.2 Emily Davies (1830-1921)

> A man will not be the better husband and father for neglecting
> his obligations as a citizen or as a man of business nor will be
> a woman be the better wife or mother through ignorance or
> disregard of other responsibilities. [150]
>
> <div align="right">Emily Davies</div>

The main point of this investigation of feminist thought in this study which focuses on religious reformers' discourse on women's issues is to better understand feminist views and examine the real benefits that they achieved for English women. In the previous section, I indicate that in current studies feminists have been the main voices working for the benefit of better conditions for women. In this section I investigate Emily Davies's feminist thought.

Emily Davies's words quoted at the beginning of this section reflect her refusal to surrender to the inequality between men and women in English society which, in my view, had its roots in the early years of her life. Davies was born into an Evangelical family. Her father was a strict clergyman and schoolmaster suffering from uncertain conditions of health and wealth.[151] The fact that her father opposed girls' education- her mother was not well educated – combined with her family's insufficient means neither Davies nor her sister had any opportunity for proper education. On the contrary, her brothers were educated at well-known public schools and were encouraged and supported by Davies's parents to pursue further education at Trinity College, Cambridge.[152] The differing attitudes towards the education of boys and girls, in addition to the lack of communication in family relationships, represent what this study suggests to be the roots of Davies's feminist thought, which also reflected the influence of the liberal thought in England during this time. As I discussed in the

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[150] Emily Davies, *The Higher education of Women,* (Alexander Strahan Publisher, London and New York, 1866) 12
[151] Caine, *Victorian Feminist, 62*
[152] Ibid 61-63

previous section, liberal thought inspired many first wave feminists to reconsider their social status within an emphasis on individual rights, liberty and equality. At this point, I would argue that Davies's standpoint can represent what Offen calls the "individualist feminism argument"[153] that analyses women's issues in relation to gender discrimination and inequality.

An investigation of her interests as well as relationships and achievements demonstrates the characteristics of Davies's individualist feminist thought. At an early stage of her life, Davies stated that she was concerned with the financial and social uncertainties in her life that resulted from her father's physical and emotional problems, but she did not sympathise with her father.[154] In addition, in her reactions to and communication with other middle-class individuals, e.g. the shopkeepers and tradesmen, she showed indifference to others' interests and needs. Being a clergymen's daughter, Davies taught in Sunday school but she was not interested in this process of education and she kept herself at a distance form others. At this stage, she had no desire to reform her society either through philanthropy or teaching.[155] She once said:

> All women are not made to be philanthropists. It would be considered unreasonable to expect that all men should take Holy Orders, or enrol themselves as town missionaries, and it is equally unreasonable to expect that all women should engage in similar work.[156]

Thus I would argue that it was not the notion of reform that inspired Davies to think about women's status in society, because the roles she mentions in this quotation; e.g. philanthropy and teachings, were supposed to help women and improve their social

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[153] Offen, "Defining Feminism: Comparative Historical Approach'', 134-135
[154] Caine, *Victorian Feminist,* 62
[155] Ibid, 66
[156] Ibid , 67

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status. However, the notion of gender equality that would change women's status in society was Davies's primary concern.

Later in her life, when Davies became Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, she was more prepared to prioritise certain needs, e.g. the increase of college buildings and the admission of women to board examinations, over the more traditionally feminine virtues of kindness and patience.[157] As a result, her students complained about her teaching system and her indifference to their needs.[158] She also followed this individualistic thought within her active participation in the women's cause. Davies was not concerned with the issues that, in my view, had had an eminent impact upon the reform of English women's life, for example, the Contagious Diseases Act, wives' property laws or scholarships and funds for education. On the contrary, she focused on higher education qualifications, professions and the vote. In this way, she focused on what would change the central role of women as mothers and wives and on what would enable them to be equal to men rather than improving their status within this traditional thought. Thus, I would state that Emily Davies's feminist project represented an individualistic thought that derived its strong focus from her own educational deprivation as well as her personal dislike of family life.[159] This means that it can be argued that she did not intend to reform the social status of women but to achieve individual aspirations.

Emily Davies, like many first feminists during this period, believed there were natural differences between men and women. However, Davies refused "the separatist doctrines and the double moral code" that were commonly adhered to in English

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[157] Ibid, 78
[158] Ibid
[159] Ibid, 65

society.[160] In other words, she refused the division of male and female worlds that in her own words meant "man is intended to the world and women to the home", "men's strength in the head and women's in the heart", and "men's function to protect and women's to soothe and comfort".[161] This division emphasised men's roles in the outside world and it was for this reason that men learned dead languages, politics, mathematics, chemistry and physics. On the contrary, women's should learn modern languages, history, music and drawing because they were confined to the indoor sphere.[162] This gender division was based on what Davies's saw as the old theory of complementary roles which stated that:

> The human ideal is composed of two elements, the male and the female, each requiring the other as its complement: and that the realization of this ideal is to be found in no single human being man or woman but in the union of individuals by marriage.[163]

However, being influenced by the liberal individualistic thought, which spread in capitalist England and coexisted with evangelicalism, that prioritised material needs and rational expectations, Davies challenged these old theories of gender roles. This is because in her view those theories contradicted what she represented to be facts regarding men and women in real life. In order to support her view that this inheritance of old theories contradicted real-life, Davies argued that according to the English Church theory of education:

> The baptized child is signed with the sign of the cross in token that hereafter he or she shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world and devil and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant to his or her end of life.[164]

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[160] Davies, *The Higher Education of Women,* 18, 165
[161] Ibid, 18
[162] Ibid, 133
[163] Ibid, 16-17
[164] Davies, *The Higher Education of Women,* 21

Thus, she argued that the Church indicated the equality between men and women but social prejudice and discrimination against women ignored this equality in order to enforce a certain moral code on women:

> The view which teaches women to think of family claims as embracing their whole duty which bids them choose to serve man rather than God sets before them a standard of obligation which vitiates not their lives only but those of men on whom their influence might be of a far different sort. That such a theory is radically inconsistent with the divine order might easily be shown.[165]

Consequently, she stated that both men and women have the same mind and message, and called for women's access to equal opportunities in education and employment.[166]

In my view Emily Davies's interpretation of the traditional teachings and her rejection of complementary theories indicate her individualistic approach. When she discussed women's status in English society, she wanted to enforce her individual demands with respect to equality and emancipation. Although she intended to contextualise her argument within Christian teachings, her views indicated her support of liberal thought. For example, when she referred to Christians' practice of children baptism, she emphasised that this process indicated the equal role of men and women in the outside world in order to fight against sin. For Davies, and based on her previous views quoted in this section, the outside world becomes these places and occupations which excludes traditional feminine practices. At this point, I would argue that Emily Davies's thought had not considered others' view, e.g. religious figures, that the outside world is not the sole place where people fight against sin. In addition, she did not consider that women do not need equality to achieve this noble end. Thus, I would state that Davies's argument is based on her individual demands and personal aspirations because she did not consider complementary and traditional roles

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[165] Ibid, 37
[166] Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, 83

important in fighting against sin. This challenge of complementary theories was a major point in Davies's feminist thought.

Women's emancipation was the second major point in Davies's thought. She equated the status of English women with that of slaves. Therefore, in her view feminists' campaigns played the same role played by the anti-slavery campaigns towards the emancipation of slaves.[167] She argued that English women were living like slaves due to their lack of proper education and insufficient opportunities for employment. In order to change this inferior status of women, Davies founded Girton College in order to enable girls to have equal access to all levels of education and to have equal opportunities in the workplace upon their graduation. As a result, women would be emancipated and no longer slaves and inferior creatures in society because they would be highly educated and would have various employment opportunities. At this point, I would argue that the demands of women's autonomy, equality and emancipation, or, in other words, the deconstruction of women's special role in the family, had become part and parcel of Davies's feminist thought. Her college and personal life as well as her participation in the woman question focused on the achievement of such demands. She did not teach her students to be wives and mothers but equal members in English society.[168] In addition, when Davies thought of married women, she indicated that marriage was not a barrier to women's autonomy because in her view "marriage is not a modern discovery"[169] and "some of the highest names in literature and art are those of married women; many schoolmistresses are married, clergymen's wives undertake a large share of extra domestic work."[170]

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[167] Ibid, 85
[168] Ibid, 95
[169] Davies, *The Higher Education of Women,* 109
[170] Ibid, 108

Emily Davies became a social activist and an active member in various campaigns and societies, e.g. the Langham Palace Circle, the London Association of headmistresses and the women's suffrage campaign.[171] She became a specialist in writing letters and organising meetings as well as editing journals and conference papers, which focused on the call for equal opportunities in higher education and employment.[172] In fact, this study does not deny that Emily Davies had participated in development of women's higher education during her age. Nor does this study suggest that Davies's individualistic demands and aspirations did not benefit the wider society. Rather, my point is she mainly thought of women as social individuals in the material liberal world who, in her view, should not only have a free access to the public world but also be able to play as many roles as possible. Thus I believe she ignored the human nature as well as the special place and role of this creature who, in her thought, become useless and worthless except within the outside world. Therefore, I would argue that Davies's calls for women's emancipation, equality and autonomy for the benefit of being equal members in society to fight against the world and the devil did not reach their target. This is because her feminist calls assumed that women were mainly looking for worldly success and rewards. At this point, I propose that campaigns, social parties or conferences resulted in the end of women's seclusion, and encouraged free mixing and friendship among men and women,[173] but this can not be the sole way for the reform of women's social status. In addition, Davies's achievements for herself and other women were arguably no more significant than that achieved by women with a less individualistic focus. In fact, Davies was not

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[171] Ann B. Murphy and Deirdre Raftery, (eds), *Emily Davies: Collected Letters, 1861-1875 by Emily Davies,* (University of Virginia Press: 2004), xix
[172] Ibid, xxi
[173] Caine, *Victorian Feminists*,75

interested in the process of university reform in general and she was never perceived as an educational reformer.[174]

Davies's views were not largely welcomed during her age and she was aware of this fact as she attempted to gain the support of prominent religious figures, such as Charlotte Mary Yonge, within her calls for women's equal access to higher education. However, Yonge was against Davies's claims because they aimed to change this Christian image of women, which religious reformers had struggled to retain within their changing world. Yonge indicated that Davies's attempts within this arena of women's issues would transform the social position of women ordained to them by God.[175] Davies began to interpret her views within a religious context in order to gain public approval. She argued that her campaigns aimed to enable women to understand the divine message of their life and to prioritise their divine roles.[176] However, as I argued before regarding her comments on complementary theories, Davies mainly thought of women's individualistic demands. Therefore, she could not perceive that marriage, for example, is a divine role, and education has a divine message whether or not women get an equal education.

Emily Davies is hailed as a prominent feminist in modern studies because of her fight for women's higher education.[177] Her stance indicated her individualist feminist approach which aimed to change the status of women in society and thus achieve her personal and individual aspirations. As I demonstrate in Chapter One, reform, within its English conservative religious context, means to improve conditions while retaining old doctrine and not changing the fundamental construction of society.

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[174] Ibid, 89
[175] Ibid, 87
[176] Ibid, 36-37
[177] Ibid, 54

Within this reform context, women would play complementary and traditional roles while benefiting from modern opportunities for education and employment. However, Emily Davies challenged this reform thought; therefore, she can not be a religious reformer. The following chapters represent the discourse of reform within an English religious context in order to investigate its significance, achievements and impact upon women's issues during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

CHAPTER FOUR: ENGLISH REFORMERS' DISCOURSE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

4.1 English religious reform & the Oxford Movement

> We may not be able to reform the Empire, or the province, or even Halifax: let us reform ourselves, and then all things are possible. What shall we do, am I asked? "Do" I answer in Carlyle's words, "the duty that lies nearest you!"[178]

The significance of reform within a Christian context has been a central point since I decided to investigate women's issues within a religious reform discourse during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the beginning, I traced the roots of religious reform in the 15th century, during the Reformation. At this stage, I thought that Christian reform was Protestantism and a reformer was a Protestant who managed to obtain scholarly knowledge of Christianity. I concluded that the main aim and end of reform during the Reformation was to attain in the Revd. G.M. Grant's words: "supreme rights of individual and the supreme rights of the nation".[179] When I investigated the history of reformers in England during the 19th century, I found that reformers' ethos and attributes during the 15th and 16th centuries were different to the position and thought of English reformers in the 19th century due to certain reasons briefly discussed in the following paragraph.

Firstly, during the 19th century, there were various denominations, e.g. Methodists, Quakers, Baptists and Unitarians, that sought reform within reformed Protestant England. In fact the Evangelical Revival which began in the late 17th century inspired many reform movements to re-emphasis early Reformation ethos regarding the

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[178] REV. G.M. Grant, *Reformers of the Nineteenth Century*, a lecture delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association of Halifax. (1867), 32
[179] Ibid, 4

supremacy of the Gospels and the right of people to read and interpret them.[180] The Revival also encouraged a reformation of morals and manners in the private as well as public spheres.[181] Reformers of different denominations organised various activities, for example, Sunday schools, missionary societies, and religious movements, in order to encourage English people to maintain their Christian teachings in the changing world.[182] Secondly, during the 19th century, reformers became not only priests, clergymen and ministers, but also literary figures who had extensive scholarly knowledge of Christianity.[183] The reformers of the 19th century were not only Protestants and dissenters in the Roman Catholic Church but also protestors against materialism, injustice, unbelief and falsehood.[184] Subsequently, it can be argued that there were various denominations with different thoughts on the reform of English society. This study focuses on one religious movement, the Oxford Movement, as a case study in religious reform in English society in the second half of the 19th century.

In this section, I explain the reasons that underpin the focus on the Oxford Movement. I also investigate the main ethos and attributes of its main leaders. This investigation is a fundamental point in this study because I intend to discuss reformers' discourse on women's issues within a systematic construction. I aim to discuss the thought that shaped religious reformers' discourse within the context of the Oxford Movement. Thus I intend to investigate the reformers' discourse on women's issues within a system of thought rather than simply represent the separate individual contributions of reformers.

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[180] G.M. Ditchfield, "Methodism and Evangelical Revival" in *A Companion to eighteen-century Britain*, ed. H.T.Dickinson, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002) 252-255
[181] Ibid
[182] Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era*, and Baker, "The Leisure Revolution in Victorian England", 85
[183] Grant, *Reformers of the Nineteenth Century*, 31
[184] Ibid, 31

Both Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge, the English reformers considered in this study, were influenced by the Oxford Movement. This movement is sometimes known as the Tractarian Movement because its leaders wrote and circulated Tracts that focussed on the teachings of the Catholic Church.[185] Charlotte Mary Yonge was a "devout High Church author" who aimed to spread the ethos and teachings of the Oxford movement.[186] Elizabeth Wordsworth's parents belonged to "old fashioned" high churchmanship, which was also influenced by John Keble's teachings and views.[187] Wordsworth often referred to the impact of the Tractarian Movement upon her childhood moral and spiritual education.[188] Thus I investigate the characteristics of reform within the teachings and views of John Keble, because he was the teacher of Charlotte Mary Yonge,[189] and an inspiration to Elizabeth Wordsworth's family.[190]

John Keble (1792-1866), Richard Hurrell Froude (1803-1838) and John Henry Newman (1801-1890) were the first main leaders of the Oxford Movement. Their influences and teachings had had an eminent impact upon the English Church.[191] Keble inspired the Movement and his sermon on national apostasy encouraged other members, e.g. Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800-1882), Robert Wilberforce (1802-1857), and Henry Edward Manning (1808-1892), of Oxford University to join and contribute to the Catholic revival movement.[192] Keble was seen by a group of supporters as "the saint, the mystic and the poet" of the movement whereas Froude was "the man of

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[185] Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution 1789 to the Present Day*, 50
[186] Leslee Thorne- Murphy, "The Charity Bazaar and Women's Professionalization in Charlotte Mary Yonge's *the Daisy Chain*", *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* , 47, no. 4, (2007), 833
[187] Georgina Battiscombe, *Reluctant Pioneer: A life of Elizabeth Wordsworth,* (Constable and Company Ltd, 1978) 13, 23
[188] Ibid, 104
[189] Christabel Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1903), 132
[190] Battiscombe, *Reluctant Pioneer,* 13, 23
[191] W. J. Knox Little, *John Keble : The Man and His Work ; As a Parish Priest* (London,1903), 295
[192] Wilfrid Ward, *The Oxford Movement* (New York: Dodge Publishing Co, 1912), 18

action"[193] and the impulse to the movement.[194] Newman was the systematic mind and philosopher of the movement.[195] Both Froude and Newman were not only influenced by Keble's thought, but they also intended to raise and develop his ideas of reform in an organised movement in order to revive the ethos of Catholicism in the Church of England which represented two separate forms of Christianity during this time.[196]

Anglicanism was a major form of Christianity in England and was perceived as a "high and dry" tradition.[197] It was high because of being the tradition of the wise, careful and scholarlike figures, usually the elite or upper class, who supported its reasoned discourses on faith and morals. The Anglicans were also known as "the Church party"[198] because they emphasised the holy position and role of church.[199] It was dry because it lacked spirituality, e.g. liturgical services, and the Anglicans were usually criticised for being formal, pompous, worldly and unspiritual.[200]

Evangelicalism was mainly "a protestant phenomenon" which restored Reformation ethos that emphasised the importance of the gospel in Christian life.[201] It was a main feature of the protestant British world since the 18th century and many denominations were inspired by its call for Biblicism, conversionism, crucicentrism and activism.[202] It was supported by a religious party known for its strict, strong, and enthusiastic mores that resulted in its opposition to the world.[203] Although Evangelicalism encouraged philanthropy and missionary societies, it could not develop and educate

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[193] Ibid

[194] R. W. Church, *The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833-1845* (Macmillan and Co,1891), 28

[195] Ibid

[196] Ward, *The Oxford Movement,* 19

[197] Church, *The Oxford Movement* ,12

[198] Ibid, 10

[199] Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* , 49-50

[200] Church, *The Oxford Movement* , 8

[201] Ditchfield, 252

[202] Ibid

[203] Church, 12

Christians to cope with the new world.[204] In Keble's view, Evangelicalism represented an "aggressive individualism" because its strictness and narrowness produced a group of individualists who prioritised their personal Christian views and interests.[205] In my view, these characteristics of Evangelical thought may help to explain the individualistic and argumentative nature of Emily Davies, who came out of a strict evangelical background.[206] As I discussed in Chapter Three, Davies was a prominent feminist in the history of first wave feminism due to her commitment to gender equality, especially in relation to education. These two forms of Christianity in the Church of England were criticised by Christian thinkers; for example, Keble and Newman.[207] Accordingly, it can be argued that there was a need for a reform that would stress inwardness in the changing world. Keble and his followers in Oxford believed that the Catholic revival they advocated would achieve moral and spiritual benefits that would have an impact upon the reform of English society.[208]

Throughout the early stages of the Anglo-Catholic revival, Keble indicated in his sermons and teachings that religion should be the source of humanity's morals and ethics.[209] He intended to raise the spiritual and ethical standards of his followers at Oxford University, and his faithfulness in religious duty played a significant role in reaching this target. At this point, I would state that Keble's prioritisation of the construction of a religious society, where relations and communications reflected people's spiritual and ethical commitment to Christianity, was the first stage of reform within the thought of the Oxford Movement. Historical studies used to present this

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[204] Ibid, 13
[205] Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: the Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), 93
[206] Caine, Victorian Feminists, 70-71
[207] Own Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 2
[208] Little, *John Keble,* 301
[209] Ibid, 303

early stage in the thought of the Oxford Movement as the spiritual ground of the movement.[210]

In fact, the Oxford Movement began its project of reform with the emphasis on the worship practices in the English Church.[211] Oxford leaders intended to revive the importance of worship practices inside the Church in order to retain its central position within English life. In my view this focus on the position of the Church represented the second stage of reform within this movement thought. Keble, as well as other Oxford Movement leaders, wanted the Church of England to regain its role and position within traditional worship practices. They indicated that the Church should regain its authority within the law of worship and over interpretation of the Bible because, in their view, truth could not be only represented or understood by intellectuals.[212] Keble argued that the truth regarding the position of the English Church indicated its close relation to the Catholic Church. This truth revealed that although Protestantism was against the superstitions, errors and corruptions in the Catholic Church in Rome, it was not against Catholicism.[213] Therefore, the main thought and claim of the Oxford Movement was the return to the Catholic principles, practices, and teachings that had been abandoned by the established Church. On the other hand, Keble indicated his loyalty to the English Church because his call was not to "Popery or Rome" but to the main doctrines of Catholicism. He also indicated that he was looking forward to seeing a living religion within Catholic teachings and practices, e.g. prayer, sacraments, and scriptures.[214].

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[210] Ward, *The Oxford Movement* ,8
[211] Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, 11-12
[212] Ward, *The Oxford Movement,* 69
[213] Church, *The Oxford Movement*, 8
[214] Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion* ,102

Investigation of the Oxford Movement thought indicates that it was a movement of the heart, worship, conscience and morals.[215] The Oxford Movement was mainly concerned with worship practices and moral teachings and thus would strengthen English people's faith in the rapidly changing world. The movement did not interfere in political affairs; Keble, early in his *National Apostasy* stated that since the state dragged into immoral politics, the two powers; the state and the Church should be separated.[216] Consequently, Keble encouraged the bishops and other clergymen to focus on religious duties, e.g. charity, piety, and justice. In fact, the Oxford leaders did not seek to fulfil personal aspirations but rather an elevated and reverend life within a religious context.[217] Based on this discussion regarding the main characteristics and attributes of the Oxford leaders, it can be argued that it was a religious conservative movement.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that although at the beginning few people joined the Oxford Movement, within twelve years there were a wide and rapid increase in the number of its followers and members.[218] The reform project of the Oxford Movement mainly aimed to restore the English Church's role and influence in English society and the teachings of Catholicism; this was Keble's primary goal. In this section, I find that the movement sought a conservative reform within the beliefs and practices of Catholicism.

4.2 Christian reformers' discourse on women's issues

This section investigates the background, aims and achievements of two prominent reformers in the history of English women in order to represent their religious reform

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[215] Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, 1
[216] John R.Griffin, *John Keble: Saint of Anglicanism*, (Mercer University Press, 1987) 83
[217] Ibid, 29
[218] Ward, *The Oxford Movement,* 25

discourse on women's issues throughout the second half of 19th and early 20th centuries. The first reformer is Elizabeth Wordsworth, the first Principal at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University. The second reformer is Charlotte Mary Yonge, a well-known novelist, in the Victorian age.

4.2.1 Elizabeth Wordsworth (1840-1932)

> The only true "higher Education of Woman" is that which trains her to look upward to God.[219]
>
> Christopher Wordsworth

This was Christopher Wordsworth's (1807-1885) advice to his daughter, Elizabeth Wordsworth. The father, a prominent Anglican priest and later a bishop of Lincoln, prayed that "Almighty God" might bless his daughter's keenness to acquire knowledge and thanked Him for enabling her to be of assistance in his multi-commentary on the Bible[220]. In fact this statement, as the discussion of this section will shortly demonstrate, represents the core of Elizabeth's reform discourse on women's issues, which mainly aims to indicate the importance of religion in women's life.

Elizabeth Wordsworth's father encouraged his daughters and sons to become motivated learners and appreciate the importance of education.[221] In fact, Elizabeth Wordsworth believed that her parents and relatives were her true teachers and she was interested in their theological and biblical knowledge.[222] In his commentary on the Bible, Christopher Wordsworth encouraged his daughter, Elizabeth, to participate in the editing and revising processes.[223] She once indicated that it was a family project as

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[219] Bush, "Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 400
[220] Indestrom, " Elizabeth Wordsworth", 184
[221] Ibid, 257
[222] Ibid, 183
[223] Ibid, 184

she, her mother and her aunts advised and helped her father in this project.[224] In my view, Wordsworth's reference to her father's commentary as "a family project" reveals that she was more concerned with the success of the project than her individual interests.

The early memories of Wordsworth's life illustrate the difference between her approach to complementary gender roles and several first feminists' perspectives on gender discrimination. It can be argued that Wordsworth was not concerned with, although in my view Emily Davies would have been, the reasons that made her father entirely responsible for writing the commentary while she played a secondary role. On the contrary, she was pleased with the completion and success of this work regardless of her minor participation because there was a climate of co-operation, love and respect among the members of her family. In this family climate, she was encouraged to think that it was more important to focus on service to God, rather than individual aspirations.[225] This reference to her education indicates that Wordsworth was mainly concerned with gaining knowledge and the pleasure of education. She did not show any interest in the issue of equality which represented a main point in Emily Davies's feminist thought. Thus, it can be argued that during this early stage of her life, Elizabeth Wordsworth demonstrated an understanding of reform that, in Carlyle's words, means to do at least "the duty that lies nearest you!"[226]

In the first section of this chapter, I demonstrate that the Oxford Movement aimed to revive Catholic practices, morals and duties in order to enable English people to retain their religion in a rapidly changing society. John Keble believed that there was a crisis facing religion in English society and Wordsworth's family was deeply influenced by

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[224] Ibid
[225] Battiscombe, *Reluctant Pioneer,* 13-14
[226] Grant, *Reformers of the Nineteenth Century* , 32

such thoughts. She and her siblings were brought up "with a rather uneasy sense of some sort of crisis hanging over our heads."[227] This crisis was due to the challenge facing the role of religion and the position of the English Church in society during the 19th century. John Keble began his project of reform emphasising the importance of a religious personality as seen in his advice to preachers:

> Your business in not to please or be admired, but to do good, to make men think not of your abilities, attainments or eloquence, but of the state of their own souls, and to fix them in the belief and practice of what will render them happy now and in eternity.[228]

Wordsworth's reform discourse was influenced by this emphasis on the importance of religion and Keble's thoughts of Christian revival.[229] Accordingly, it can be argued that the construction of a conservative religious personality, the first aim of the Oxford Movement, also represents the first main stage in Wordsworth's reform discourse. She adopted this religious reform discourse at an early stage of her life and later intended to extend her reform thoughts to the outside society; namely to Lady Margaret Hall, which she described as her "wider family circle".[230]

In Chapter Two, I indicate that there was a common view regarding the backward condition of women's education although English men had an access to various branches of systematic knowledge. In Davies's view, as I demonstrate in Chapter Three, this backward condition indicated that women faced gender discrimination. Consequently, Davies called for equal education in order to enable women to have equal opportunities in employment. Wordsworth also participated in this debate on better education for women, however, she did not think of this issue for the benefit of

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[227] Battiscombe, *Reluctant Pioneer,* 20
[228] Griffin,19
[229] Battiscombe,13
[230] Bush, "Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 399

equality. Wordsworth wanted to improve women's status within the limits of their

traditional roles and she thought of their Christian position in the world:

> God must have meant them for something. How are we to find out what he
> meant them for? Clearly by educating them and thus giving them a chance to
> develop their natural gifts whether to be used in their own homes or
> elsewhere.[231]

In my view, although Wordsworth was interested in improving the condition of

women's education, she was more concerned with the impacts of the changes to the

religious role and image of women that were taking place in England during this time.

Within the thought of the Oxford Movement, Wordsworth was aware that the inner

changes that might result from the outer material and scientific changes would have

an impact upon women.[232] In other words, she wanted education to improve women's

status in society within their private domestic sphere and to strengthen women's faith

to face the rapid changes in the outside world, "the modern girl needed protection

from 'the high pressure system of education which left her heart and imagination

dormant while facts are being ruthlessly and unremittingly shovelled into her

brain."[233]

Elizabeth Wordsworth contextualised her discourse on women's issues within the

thought of the Oxford Movement, which aimed to maintain former Catholic teachings

in the liberal material world. Although Wordsworth's reform discourse encouraged

the growth of women's educational institutions, she supported the call for a different

curriculum for women[234]. At this point, I would argue that she was thinking about

women as special creatures with a special place and role. Wordsworth believed that

the condition of women's education would change because everything was changing

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[231] Elizabeth Wordsworth, "Colleges for Women'', in *Ladies at Work,* papers on paid employment for ladies by experts in different branches with an introductory by lady Jeune, (London A. D. Innes & Co: 1893), 27
[232] Elizabeth Wordsworth, "Dante and Goethe" in *Essays: Old and New*, (Oxford University Press: 1919), 2
[233] Bush, " Special Strengths for their Own Special Duties", 401
[234] Ibid, 400

in her age. Therefore, she wanted to focus on the importance of religion in women's new life[235]. She said: "…in religion and religion only women can find balance and self control… ".[236] In fact, she believed that religion was the main source of women's morals, values and honourable life, "after religion goes what at least in ordinary cases would be called morality."[237] She also said, "My pattern of women is religious but not at all controversial"[238]. Therefore, I would argue that although individualist feminists wanted to reform women's education within liberal thought and called for women's equality, autonomy and emancipation, Wordsworth's thought constructed a different significance of reform. Wordsworth introduced reform within the conservative thought of the Oxford Movement which aimed to raise the religious standards of morality. In fact, she admitted the importance of education as the main tool to enable women to obey God and this, in her view, is the higher end of life.[239] Thus, it can be argued that Wordsworth's discourse aimed to elevate women's status in society both spiritually and intellectually.

Due to the fact that Wordsworth's views mainly focused on the higher end of life, some argued that because she was financially and socially secure, her project of reform could not appreciate that women wanted better education in order to earn their living and improve their social status. [240] Therefore, being of "high and dry" Anglican descent, it was thought that Wordsworth ignored others' needs. However, I would argue that when Wordsworth's discourse is interpreted within the Oxford Movement understanding of reform, her focus on the spiritual and intellectual needs explains her priorities. The Oxford Movement was a university movement led and followed by

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[235] Wordsworth, "The Venture of Faith" in *Essays: old and New*, 100
[236] Wordsworth, " Colleges for Women'', 24
[237] Battiscombe, *Reluctant Pioneer*, 51
[238] Wordsworth, "Colleges for Women'', 14
[239] Indestrom, "Elizabeth Wordsworth", 28
[240] Ibid, 18

highly educated people who thought of reform in an academic, conservative and clerical context.[241] However, the Movement did not oppose individuals of less education or lower ranks and its leaders respected all human cultures.[242] In fact, as I demonstrate in the first section of this chapter, the leaders of this movement did not seek fame or personal-demands but they, at least in their view, were looking for higher aims. Elizabeth Wordsworth followed the same course of the Oxford Movement project of reform. She was influenced by highly educated figures, including her father, who pursued self-reform and the reform of their society within a conservative context. She once said:

> Self-improvement for self's sake is foredoomed to disappointment. On the other hand, the cultivation of talents, involving in some cases the pursuit of study as a means to a higher end, is surely not a matter of choice- a thing to be done or left alone as we please, but obedience to an imperative call from our Maker...[243]

In fact, Wordsworth aimed to help and educate the poor and she believed that better education would enable women to have better occupations in order to be good wives and mothers as well. She said, "I do honestly think Ladies' Colleges may not unfairly be reckoned as holding an important place, not only as finding occupation for married women, but as affording… excellent training for future mothers and wives."[244]

Wordsworth's reform discourse was contextualised within her Christian beliefs regarding the image of women, which also coincided with the ethos of the Oxford Movement. In fact, the Oxford Movement focused not only on religious morals and values but also aimed to maintain Catholic beliefs with due respect to old doctrine and discipline.[245] Therefore, when Wordsworth called for the reform of women's status in society, she based her views on the image of Eve in Christianity, who, in her view,

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[241] Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 52
[242] Ibid
[243] Wordsworth, "Colleges for Women", 17.
[244] Ibid, 17
[245] Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution*, 53

was "considered worth a very special, indeed unique, action on the part of God". Wordsworth indicated that Eve was created to be "more closely related to Adam than any other creature is to the male."[246] She perceived women's image within the Christian story of creation and indicated that women should be proud of this image.[247] She trained her students to retain these teachings in order to conduct themselves well, not simply as members of a particular class but as good Christians.[248] In my view, Wordsworth was deeply influenced by Tractarian leaders who did not wish to appoint themselves as models for others but whose real ethical and moral personalities made a lasting impression on their followers. She said, "Let us remember that educated men and women have souls and minds and spiritual needs, as well as their poorer brethren".[249]

The revival of the Church's position in English society was another significant point in Wordsworth's reform discourse which also reflected the influence of the Oxford Movement ethos upon her views regarding women. The Church for the Oxford leaders was an institution of God that had a divine origin, mission and authority. Therefore they intended to revive its position and role in English society.[250] Consequently, Wordsworth argued that since the Church represented a feminine element, the status of English women in society should equal the status of the English Church. In addition, she wanted women to play an equal role to that of the Church and teach dignity, reverence, truth and charity.[251] She also thought that since the Church was the main authority in Christianity, English women represented the

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[246] Bush, "Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 401
[247] Ibid
[248] Indestrom, "Elizabeth Wordsworth" , 191
[249] Elizabeth Wordsworth, "English Character", *Essays: old and new*, (Oxford university press: 1919) 154
[250] Vidler, *The church in an age of revolution*, 49, 50
[251] Elizabeth Wordsworth, "English Character", 153

authority of religion. Accordingly, she claimed that women were more devout than men and that truly religious men are brought up by devout women[252]:

> It is a truism to say that English women are much more instinctively devout than their husbands and fathers. They have a stronger sense of the unseen world, though it is perhaps too much to say that when nine men out of ten become religious, or preserve the religion of their childhood, it is due to their mothers or their wives.[253]

Finally, within this conservative context, Elizabeth Wordsworth became a prominent educational reformer at Oxford University. She was awarded higher degrees, an MA degree in 1920 and a PhD degree in 1928, which many English feminists and suffragists were struggling to obtain. According to Georgina Battiscombe, Wordsworth obtained her higher degrees because of her wide knowledge and fine personality.[254] Her position as the first Principal at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University lasted for thirty years; throughout this period she proved herself to be a sensible teacher, and the number of female students continued to increase.[255] In addition, Wordsworth was a well-known writer in *The Guardian*, *Aunt Judy's Magazine* for children and *The Monthly Packet*.[256.] She also published her own work, for example, theological reflections on the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms.[257] Thus, I would state that Wordsworth was a conservative reformer who constructed her understanding of religious reform within the terms of thought familiar to the Oxford Movement. However, she has been a neglected figure throughout the English history of women,[258] as historians mainly focus on suffragists' calls and endeavours to improve women's status in society.[259]

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[252] Ibid, 153
[253] Ibid, 154
[254] Indestrom, "Elizabeth Wordsworth" ,187
[255] Ibid
[256] Battiscombe, *Reluctant pioneer*, 101
[257] Indestrom, "Elizabeth Wordsworth", 181
[258] Bush, ''Special strengths for their own special duties'', 387
[259] Ibid, 392

Throughout this section I demonstrate that Elizabeth Wordsworth's early glimpses of reform began with the reform of her own life within family education and relationships. Then she participated in the reform of other women's issues from her conservative, pragmatic and anti-suffragist approach.[260] Wordsworth's literary products and teaching illustrate her approach to religious reform project. I also discuss how Wordsworth's discourse on women's issues was contextualised within the Oxford Movement thought of reform. Subsequently, I would state that Elizabeth did not represent an individual phenomenon but was a part of a bigger system of religious reform discourse. This system had its own teachings, aims and language, which, in my view, can demonstrate a coherent reform discourse within the history of English women. Elizabeth Wordsworth's reform discourse on women's issues had its roots in the changing world of England, its context in the thought of the Oxford Movement and its achievements in English society.

4.2.2 Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901)

> Mamma, I could not understand that clergyman's sermon, it was too difficult, so I employed myself in thinking how very wrong Abraham was to say that Sarah was his sister. Was I naughty to think about that instead of the sermon?[261]
>
> Charlotte Mary Yonge

When I decided to investigate Charlotte Mary Yonge's views on women's status in society, I knew that she was a very committed Christian and, in my view, more conservative than Elizabeth Wordsworth because she had been Wordsworth's mentor and guide.[262] In fact, I wanted to investigate this conservative figure's views on women's issues during the 19th century in order to compare her reform discourse with conservative Muslim figures discourse on women's issues.

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[260] Ibid, 400

[261] Christabel Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1903), 143

[262] Bush, "Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 400

Yonge's words, quoted at the beginning of this section, do not only refer to her religious background but also to her inward religious inclination, which this study proposes to have had an impact on the reform discourse of "the first story-teller"[263] and "the novelist of the Oxford Movement".[264] Yonge's parents encouraged her to learn and acquire useful knowledge in order to do what is right within a Christian context. She was raised in a family that appreciated her talents and encouraged her to develop them. Her father advised her: "Be not ignorant of anything in a great matter or small, and whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, think on these things."[265] Yonge indicated that her parents were "her practical religion and conscience".[266] She believed that religion created a bond between parent and child, she said, "The old question is still true, 'What is your religion worth if it does not teach you to honour your parents?"[267] She willingly accepted the role of the father as the head of the family and emphasised the cornerstone role of the mother in the family.[268]

At this stage of her life, I would argue that Yonge's childhood formed the first phase of her reform thought that would later develop into a systematic discourse on women's issues. I find that Yonge, as well as Wordsworth, did not appreciate knowledge and education for the benefit of gender equality or women's autonomy. Knowledge for Yonge, and Elizabeth Wordsworth, was a route that would enable women to attain the "higher end": "What ought I to do? What is it God requires of me?"[269] Yonge did not seek education as a mean to challenge or change women's

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[263] Ethel Romanes, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: An Appreciation* (London, 1908), 4

[264] Leslee Thorne- Murphy, "The Charity Bazaar and Women's Professionalization in Charlotte Mary Yonge's *the Daisy Chain*", *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* , 47, no. 4, (2007), 894

[265] Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters,* 51

[266] Romanes, *Charlotte Mary Yonge: An Appreciation,* 18

[267] Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Womankind* (New York, Macmillan and Co: 1890), 130

[268] Yonge, *Womankind* , 129-130

[269] Romanes, *Charlotte Mary Yonge,*3

traditional roles because, in her view, if a person is religious, s/he must follow the teachings of his/her religion: "What is a religious person? The original meaning of the word Religion is 'rule'. Therefore the religious are those who order their lives by the rule of God's law, and live as in His sight."[270] In my view, Yonge's reform discourse began with her self-reform within a religious conservative context, exactly like John Keble and Elizabeth Wordsworth. Subsequently, Yonge aimed to extend her reform project to outside society because she felt inspired by God to help others. Although many feminists and suffragists proclaimed that they were inspired by God, Yonge indicated that being fully committed to her religion was the main route to obeying God.

Charlotte Mary Yonge was influenced by John Keble, who taught her the ethos of the Oxford Movement and Tractarianism and had an impact upon her participation within the social reform process. [271] Historians indicate that Yonge remained committed to the ethos of Tractarianism and over her life she aimed to participate in the Anglo-Catholic revival.[272]Consequently, I would argue that the aims of the Oxford Movement to retain old doctrines and oppose innovations that had no roots in early phases of Catholicism underlined Yonge's attitude to reject any change in Christian teachings for women. For example, in her response to first wave feminist debate on social and traditional obstacles, such as women's inability to vote, Yonge argued that these obstacles were safeguards ordained by religion and should not be changed.[273] Although she refused to join Emily Davies's campaign that called for women's higher education, Yonge encouraged women to pursue further education within a religious

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[270] Yonge, *Womankind*, 73
[271] Coleridge, *Charlotte Mary Yonge,*132
[272] Ibid, 130
[273] Ibid, 131

context. Thus, I would state that Yonge interpreted reform within the thought of an Anglo-Catholic revival.

The vast collection of Yonge's writings, for example, historical books, novels, and textbooks, indicate her genuine concern for the reform of women's status in society within a religious context.[274] She aimed to make religion the source of women's strength as well as honour and welfare:

> Be strong-minded enough to stand up for the right, to bear pain and danger in a good cause, to aid others in time of suffering, to venture on what is called mean or degrading, to withstand a foolish fashion, to use your own judgment, to weigh the value of compliments. In all these things be strong. Be the valiant woman...[275]

It can be argued that the focus on what was useful, moral and important within a religious conservative context represented a main point in Yonge's reform discourse on women's issues.[276] She was aware of the rapid changes that had taken place in England and had had an impact upon English people's faith.[277] When Yonge published her first novel, *Abby Church,* she had mostly aimed to teach young girls some moral lessons that could enable them to retain faith and religious teachings in the changing world.[278] Yonge said, "I really hoped I had written with the purpose of being useful to young girls like myself."[279] Both Wordsworth and Yonge aimed to provide clear guidance on the role of religion within the process of education. Yonge said:

> In the present day, will children learn thus to consider God's service their first object, and to set aside the lesser objections about weather, comfort, cold, and the like, which make the body foremost? ... the worship of our Maker above our own pleasure?[280]

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[274] Susan Walton, "Charlotte M. Yonge and the 'Historic Harem' of Edward Augustus Freeman", *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 11, no. 2, (2006), 234
[275] Yonge*, Womankind,* 240
[276] Walton, "Charlotte M. Yonge, 234
[277] Ibid, 234
[278] Murphy, "The Charity Bazaar ", 882
[279] Ibid, 882
[280] Yonge, *Womankind,* 15

The importance of women's education represented a significant theme in many of Yonge's novels, e.g. *Womankind, The Clever Woman of the Family* and *The Heir of Redclyffe*. She argued that women need better education: "as to paths in life and education, womanhood is no obstacle to our being as highly educated as our brains will allow."[281] In addition, Yonge indicated that she was not against women being doctors, nurses, or teachers, as she once stated at Oxford University:

> If it were in any way possible … an institution dedicated to Heavenly Wisdom, training the daughters of the Church … whether as educators or as mothers of families, then I think there would be … a real blessing in raising the whole ideal and standard of women.[282]

However, Yonge did not change her belief in women's inferiority. In other words, although Yonge thought that women could be well educated, she believed that men were superior and abler:

> An exceptional woman here and there may be so absorbed in science, so devoted to humanity, as not to be hurt by it, but promiscuous teaching could not be possible to the majority, without harm to both parties. Nor have I much faith in the effect of creating a race of lady doctors.[283]

Consequently, it can be argued that although Yonge aimed to offer better opportunities for women in education, she insisted that higher education should not be pursued in order to challenge gender role expectations or change Christian conventions regarding women's roles. Yonge emphasised that women need higher education in order to better serve and obey their religious teachings.

Yonge's endeavours to reform women's status in society indicated her commitment to her Christian teachings without any attempt to add to or remove former interpretations regarding the image of women's in Christianity: "whatever is not of faith is sin."[284] Similarly, Oxford leaders insisted on conservative teachings within their attempts to

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[281] Ibid, 263
[282] Bush, "Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties", 400
[283] Yonge, *Womankind* , 236
[284] Ibid, 122

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reform English society. Yonge retained this conservative rhetoric within her views on the reform of women's issues. She did not argue against the difference between men and women or the inferiority of women because these thoughts have their origin in her Christian teachings, she said, "I have no hesitation in declaring my full belief in the inferiority of woman, nor that she brought it upon herself."[285] She believed in the inferior status of women because Christians believed in Eve's responsibility for the Fall of Man: "When the test came, whether the two human beings would pay allegiance to God or to the Tempter, it was the woman who was the first to fail, and to draw her husband into the same transgression."[286] Yonge's attitude towards doctrines differs completely from Davies's rejection of complementarity and insistence on gender equality. Thus, I would state that Charlotte's discourse of reform was contextualised within the thought of the Oxford Movement that reflected her support of the reform of women's status in society and her commitment to her religious teachings.

Yonge's reform discourse focused on two main points: complementary roles and women's responsibility for the welfare of society. Firstly, in her emphasis of complementary roles, Yonge said, "woman is the helpmeet, and it is impossible to predict in what line her aid and sympathy may be needed; therefore it is well to give her the germs of many varieties of acquirement in readiness to be developed on occasion".[287] Consequently, it can be argued that Yonge believed in different gender roles and in her view both women's and men's roles were important, e.g. the role of a mother is as important as the role of the father: "Both are meant to aim at perfection, and to help one another to attain it, and the man, if he chooses and seeks for grace,

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[285] Ibid, 1
[286] Ibid, 1-2
[287] Ibid, 39

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will attain the higher, nobler type."[288] Yonge argued that any endeavours to reform women's status in society should better support women's traditional roles. On the other hand, Yonge focused on women's responsibility towards their self-transcendent and cultural refinement through the idealisation of the role of proper male guardianship. At this point, I argue that proper male guardianship represents an essential issue within Yonge's thought of reform. She indicated in her writings, e.g. *The Clever Women in the Family*, that women's success needs proper masculine and divine guidance.[289] She said: "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price, and woe be to the nation if we women throw it away, on the plea that we can guard ourselves."[290]

First wave feminists called for gender equality and autonomy within a liberal thought and were committed to enabling women to attain their sociocultural and political liberty. Yonge argued that feminist calls aimed to challenge the institutionalised and dogmatic structure of society because they wanted women to be equal to men, superior to men and to take the lead of men.[291] However, Yonge believed that feminist project would lower instead of raising women's position because feminists could not appreciate the importance of womanhood and their prejudices would not offer women real benefits.[292] She said:

> A man will never respect an inferior copy of himself, in boldness, skill, and loudness … All she will be, is an unsexed creature, lowering the whole standard of womanhood, and therewith of human nature. Where woman is not refined, man will not be chivalrous.[293]

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[288] Ibid, 234
[289] Kim Wheatley, "Death and Domestication in Charlotte M. Yonge's The Clever Woman of the Family", Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 36, no. 4, (1996), 295
[290] Yonge, *Womankind*, 105
[291] Ibid, 236
[292] Ibid, 232
[293] Ibid, 107

Yonge argued that women need to reclaim their feminine genius, she said, "our position entirely depends on what we are in ourselves, not what we claim."[294] Similarly, Wordsworth argued: "Why should it be considered a compliment to any woman to be told she writes, paints, sings, talks, or even thinks, like a man? Surely it would be better for the world were she to try and be in all these things her own best self."[295]

Within her emphasis on femininity, Yonge argued that women's true happiness could be attained when they practised complementary roles within proper religious male guidance: "Real refinement loves the shelter of home, the protection of parent, brother, or husband; yet it will pass over ordinary bounds when the call comes, not of pleasure, but duty."[296], and added, "no one ought to marry a man whom she does not know to be religious and sound in faith and doctrine".[297] Thus, in her view, women would have a happy life which was the end of calls for the reform of women's social status throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, Yonge indicated the importance of women not only for themselves but also for others, e.g. husband, children and the whole society, and not for the present but also for the future:

> Her husband has married her to make a home for him, and looks to her as the brightness and joy of his house, and her children are one by one born into it, and look to her with a natural loving instinct which can only be thrown away by her own fault, in either neglecting or overdoing her duties.[298]

Finally, within this conservative context, Yonge became one of the most prominent English novelists; her novels and books were mostly popular throughout her time.[299]

Although Yonge had not obtained a degree, she was a knowledgeable writer who had

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[294] Ibid, 236
[295] Bush, 'Special Strengths for Their Own Special Duties'', 401
[296] Yonge, *Womankind*, 106
[297] Ibid, 185
[298] Ibid, 266
[299] Gavin Budge, "Realism and Typology in Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe*", *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 27, no. 02 (1999),194

taken full advantage of her access to Winchester College and Hursley Park libraries.[300] She also became the first editor of *The Monthly Packet* (1851-1899) a magazine that aimed to instruct, entertain and improve the young generation of women.[301] Yonge gave several lectures on Church history at the Girls' Friendly Society and the Society for Higher Religious Education.[302] In addition, she had founded a scholarship at Winchester High School and thus supported girls to pursue further education at Oxford and Cambridge universities.[303] Although her reform discourse was popular and her texts were approved by many English people, Yonge, as well as Elizabeth Wordsworth, is now a marginal figure in contemporary studies on English women in the 19th century that primarily focus on feminist thought. Thus, this study investigates her views and indicates that she constructed a coherent conservative discourse of reform within this arena of women's issues. To sum up, I would state that both Charlotte Mary Yonge and Elizabeth Wordsworth made a considerable impact upon the reform of English women's status in society, particularly in higher education, although they followed conservative thought of reform. Their views and language as well as stable message and achievements had constructed a genuine reform discourse on women's issues at the turn of the century.

4.3 Conclusion

Historical data indicates that Christian teachings played a significant role in English life in response to the rapid changes that took place in England during the 19th century. The thought of first wave feminist was not popular during this period although it has been the main focus of contemporary studies on women's issues. The data presented in this study also indicates that Emily Davies was an individualist

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[300] Walton, "Charlotte M. Yonge and the 'Historic Harem' of Edward Augustus Freeman", 230
[301] Romanes, *Charlotte Mary Yonge,* 45-56
[302] Coleridge , *Charlotte Mary Yonge,* 293
[303] Elisabeth Jay, " Charlotte Mary Yonge and Tractarian Aesthetics'', *Victorian Poetry*, 44, no.1, (2006), 50

feminist who had different motivations and understanding of social development from that of religious reformers

The Oxford Movement aimed to reform English society within a conservative Christian context. In this study, English reformers were influenced by its ethos and thus represent the context of their reform thought. The Oxford Movement project for reform aimed to revive the history and practices of Catholicism. The reform thought within this movement emphasised the importance of worship, spirituality, and ethics in order to fight the wide-spread phenomena of materialism and individualism in England.

Because this study delineates its argument within a religious context, I have been determined to focus on committed reformers. It is worth mentioning that the investigation of English history reveals that many religious reformers participated in the debate on women's issues over the 19th, for example, John Relly Beard (1800-1876) and W. Burgon (1818-1901). Although at the beginning of this study, I thought that reformers could only be ministers and priests, I find that in the 19th century England reformers fought social vices and unbelief retained various positions and backgrounds. Thus, novelists and educationalists were also reformers during this time.

Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge were known for their conservative anti-feminist approach towards women's issues. These two reformers contextualised their reform discourse within the thought of the Oxford Movement. Both of them glorified the position of the Church and the importance of Christian Catholic teachings within their endeavours to reform the status of women in English society. This study also indicates that their project of reform began with their self- reform and acceptance of religious teachings. In addition, they aimed to extend their reform

thought to other women. Wordsworth's and Yonge's reform discourses constructed another significance of reform that differed from the thought of first wave feminists. These religious reformers contextualised their reform discourse within their emphasis on womanhood, complementary roles and proper male guardianship according to their religious understanding of women's roles and place. Their reform discourse aimed to reform, but not change, women's status in society because they believed that women should always retain a special role and place. They indicated that women do not have to practice men's roles in order to be significant members of society. On the contrary, these religious reformers encouraged women to be proud of their gender because behind every good man is a good woman and vice versa.

The discourse of religious reformers was not an accidental phenomenon, and they did not represent separate or individual interests. This is because religious reformers represented a system of thought that had its roots in the changes that had taken place in England during the 19th century. This system had its own context within the conservative thought of Tractarianism. These reformers' views, language and achievements supported the construction of this system; they also intended to extend its ethos to the arena of women's issues. Thus, I would state that reform thought represented a coherent and organised system that both Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge supported within their discourse on women's issues. However, the focus on first wave feminists has resulted in the marginalisation of this genuine reform thought within the arena of women's issues.

Throughout the second main part of this study I investigate Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues and compare it with English reformers' discourse on the same issue.

PART TWO: EGYPTIAN MUSLIM REFORMERS' DISCOURSE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

CHAPTER FIVE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: EGYPT AND MUSLIM WOMEN'S STATUS IN SOCIETY IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

In the second part of the study, I investigate Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues. I follow similar investigations to those done in the first part, but I investigate women's issues within an Egyptian Muslim context in order to represent a coherent discussion of Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues at the turn of the century. In this chapter, I also discuss points of similarity and difference between English and Muslim women's social status during this time.

5.1 Modernisation & colonialism in Egypt

The investigation of women's status in English society during the 19th century indicates that although various changes, e.g. industrial and leisure revolutions and scientific progress, had had an impact upon faith, many English figures adopted social conservative stances against the complete secularisation of society and thus retain the role of religion in society. In this section I also focus on the main changes that took place in Egypt in order to trace their impact upon Muslim women during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Throughout the 19th century, Egyptian society witnessed major changes for the benefit of development and modernisation.[304] Muhammad 'Ali (1769-1849) had a strategic modernisation program which began with his decision to end Ottoman domination over Egypt in order to seize full control of the country.[305] Muhammad 'Ali and his successors wanted to establish a modern state with strong military and economic

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[304] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation,* 6
[305] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 51, 53

forces and thus maintain power over the region.[306] They adopted new policies in economic, as well as political and educational spheres which had had an impact upon social and intellectual life, for example, the export of cotton becoming a cash crop, the development of health and education systems, the opening of the Suez-Canal, the encouragement of the student government missions to Europe and government contribution to the development of translation.[307] At this point, it can be argued that the major policies of the modernisation process in Egypt did not only develop and strengthen Egypt's leading role in Arab region but also introduced the project of Westernisation, including secularization, technological innovation, and urbanization.[308] In fact Rashid Rida and Muhammad 'Abduh indicated that Muhammad 'Ali's policy paved the way for the British occupation of Egypt because he was not concerned with an Islamic unity but a separate powerful regime under his control with the assistance of Europeans.[309]

With the advent of modernisation, and upon the return of Egyptian students from Europe, the new socio-economic conditions encouraged an increasing number of Egyptians, especially among the elite, e.g. the ruling elite and intellectuals, to embrace liberal Western thought and a lifestyle that had had an impact upon the Egyptian calls and endeavours for the reform of education as well as social and legal systems.[310] In education, the government aimed to establish specialized schools funded by the state with enhanced coverage of various subjects, e.g. medicine,

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[306] Ibid, 53

[307] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation, 6*

[308] Ibid

[309] Anwar al-Jindi, *Tarikh al-Sihafa al-Isamiyah (The history of Islamic Journalism)*, Vol 1 (Egypt: Dar al-Ansaar Publisher, 1985), 38

[310] Margot Badran, "The Feminist Vision in the Writings of Three Turn-of-the-Century Egyptian Women", *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies),* 15, no.1/2, (1988),11

engineering, agriculture, and veterinary medicine[311] which supplanted the traditional centres of learning.[312] In the legal system, the government passed a uniform law based on the French model for cases involving Egyptians and foreigners. The modernisation of law entailed the implementation of civil codes, mainly French codes, and gradually this process began to limit the application of shari'a based system to certain realms, such as personal status and family relationships.[313] It is worth mentioning that many Muslim scholars warned against the Westernisation of the legal system. Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905), a prominent scholar at the turn of the century, argued that the society would become chaotic because Western laws would not be understood by Muslims, whose lives has been based on Islamic Law.[314] On a social and cultural level, the opera house and the social and literary salons became a resort for many intellectuals, politicians, as well as members of ruling elites and foreigners in society.[315] In my view, these changes had had an impact upon Muslim women's social status because the two processes of modernisation and Westernisation introduced a new liberal thought and lifestyle into Egyptian society.

Colonialism is the second main factor that affected Muslim women's issues. Jamal Badawi indicated that the policy of Muhammad 'Ali and his successors encouraged the wide spread of Europeans and granted them unlimited rights and protections and thus accompanied by the huge debts to European powers resulted in the British occupation of the country.[316] At this point, I would argue that colonialism did not only encourage and support the process of Westernisation in Muslim society but also

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[311]Muhammad Sabri, *Tarikh Misr al-Hadith: Min Muhammad Ali ila al-Youm (Egypt Modern History: From Muhammad Ali up to Date)* (Egypt: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyah, 1926), 56
[312] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation, 10*
[313] N. J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, (Edinburgh University Press, 1964), 152, 154
[314] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 137
[315] Badran, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation,* 7
[316] Jamal Badawi, *Kan wa Akhawtaha: Mashahed Haya min Tarikh Misr al-Hadith (Kan wa Akhawataha; Live Scenes from Egypt Modern History,* Part 1(Egypt, 1986), 65-68.

affected the development of the country due to the unsettled economic and political conditions that resulted from the British occupation of Egypt. Under the power of colonialism, some Muslim intellectuals, e.g. ʿAli Abd al-Raziq (1888-1966), adopted the same colonialist and Orientalist discourse on Muslims and Arabs and proclaimed that Islamic thought and law would no longer fit modern scientific thought and politics.[317] In other words, during the late 19th century some Egyptian intellectuals reinforced Orientalist stereotypes about the backwardness of Arabs being caused by Islam. Subsequently, they adopted the liberal Western thought that intended to separate religion from state affairs and limit its role within spiritual edifices.[318] Qasim Amin, a Western-educated Muslim intellectual, drew a deficient image of Muslims, in particular Muslim women, in order to indicate that Western liberal thought is the main path to progress and prosperity.[319] In fact Amin's discourse on Muslim women's issues at the turn of the century reflected the same thought of colonisers, e.g. Lord Cromer, who intended to construct a Western liberal society in Egypt.[320] However, the discourse of Qasim Amin, Lord Cromer, and their allies, attacking Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular, was not the sole discourse discussing women's issues because the majority believed that Islam provided guidance for all aspects of life, including women's rights.[321]

Throughout the 19th century, al-Azhar ʿulama' and Sufism were the main influential groups in Islamic thought.[322] Al-Azhar, the chief centre for Arabic and Islamic studies in the Arabic world, was limited to traditional religious studies and resources and many scholars of al-Azhar were technically classified as *Muqallidun* (Muslim jurists

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[317] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 245
[318] Ibid
[319] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 161
[320] Ibid, 152
[321] Hourani, *Arabic Thought, 245*
[322] P. M. Holt, *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt: Historical Studies from the Ottoman Conquest to the United Arab Republic*, (Oxford University Press, 1968), 125

imitated their predecessors without using their own *ijtihad*).[323] In addition, al-Azhar 'ulama' rarely practised *ijtihad* (the utmost intellectual effort of Muslim scholars to find solutions to new phenomena that faced their communities, according to the teachings of Islam).[324] According to Hourani, most of these 'ulama' refrained from any attempt to reform their teaching and learning methods because they were apprehensive of being involved in the process of Westernisation.[325] Subsequently, Hourani argued that al-Azhar mosque and university were suffering on account of the stagnation of their traditional educational system.[326] Consequently, I would argue that this image of 'ulama' can illustrate the ways that women's issues were perceived by many Muslims during this time.

Sufism was the second main group that influenced Muslims' thought and practice of Islam. Sufi mystic circles spread among Muslims because of the common conditions of ignorance and poverty.[327] At these circles Muslims attached themselves to certain teachings and practices, for example, submission to shaykh, spiritual liturgies, and festivals. However, according to majority of Sunni Muslims, these practises are not sanctioned by Islamic shari'a.[328] At one of Sufi festivals, Rashid Rida (1863-1935) indicated that Islam rejected this image of Sufism that was spread in Egypt during this time:

> "O people, or can I call you Muslims! These are forbidden acts which one has no right either to look at or to pass over in silence, for to do so is to accept them. To those who commit them God's word applies; they have made their religion a joke and a plaything."[329]

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[323] Ibid, 118
[324] Ibid
[325] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 138
[326] Ibid
[327] Holt, *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt,* 125
[328] Hourani, *Arabic thought,* 232
[329] Ibid, 225

Colonisers and Western-educated intellectuals intended to focus on the views of these two Muslim groups: al-Azhar 'ulama' and Sufism, and thus indicated that religion negatively affected the development of Muslims' scientific and intellectual thought. However, both modernisation and colonialism affected the thought of many Muslims, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashid Rida, who argued the applicability of Islam for all times and places. Despite the different approaches within their project of reform, these three reformers, and others influenced by Islamic revival thought, wanted to reform society according to Islamic teachings. This means that although these Muslim revivalists admired the development of the West and urged Muslims to learn modern technologies, they opposed secular thought that intended to limit Islam to acts of worship, such as prayers and fasting. In other words, modern revivalists at the turn of the century argued that if many Westerners abandoned Christianity because of the conflict between science and religion, Muslims should not follow the same course because the teachings of Islam are spiritually true and eternally practical. The thought of the Islamic revival school is investigated in Chapter Seven.

In this outline of Egyptian modern history, I would refer to English society during the same period. Many changes, for example, industrialisation and the leisure revolutions, as well as the development of new scientific theories, and the secularisation of formal institutions, resulted in new trends that developed indifferent and sceptical thoughts about religion among English people. However, as I indicate, many religious reformers and organisations aimed to enable English people to retain their faith in the changing world. Subsequently, I would state that certain crucial changes encouraged religious reformers to respond to the rising tide of liberal and secular thought during this time in Egypt and England. Thus, it can be argued that religious reformers wanted

to retain the moral and spiritual role of religion in each region. In addition, since Muslims believe that Islam encompasses all aspects of life, reformers were determined to revive Muslims' belief in the applicability of Islam to both spiritual and worldly life.

5.2 Muslim women & calls for reform

In the first part of this study, I investigate certain issues in the history of English women: education, work and marital issues. I indicate that religion played a significant role in the calls for the reform of women's issues. I also indicate that although some English feminists called for women's emancipation and equality within liberal thought, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Emily Davies, many English people respected Christian teachings in relation to women's issues.

In this section I explore Muslim women's issues: education and harem as well as polygamy and divorce. Reformers, feminists, and colonialists mainly focused on these issues at the turn of the century.[330] I review the views that contemporary studies focus on when investigating Muslim women's issues at the turn of century. I also compare women's issues in Egypt and England in order to demonstrate points of similarity and difference.

5.2.1 Education

Before and during the reign of Muhammad 'Ali, *kuttab* (small simple classes for both boys and girls) was the main form of education for poor families. In these classes, girls and boys learned basic skills of reading, writing and memorising the holy Qur'an.[331] However, in practice, poor parents often sent their children, either boys or

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[330] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, part 3
[331] Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (Zed Books , 1986)

girls, to work instead of sending them to these classes.[332] Consequently, it can be

argued that Muslim girls lacked education not mainly because of gender

discrimination but rather household poverty that reduced their educational opportunity

at this early simple stage. Muhammad 'Ali's concern for improving the quality of

Egypt's health care system encouraged him to establish a nursing school in 1832. The

spread of various diseases was the main reason encouraging Muhammad 'Ali to think

about proper medical services to be practiced by women. This resulted in a good

number of Egyptian qualified nurses who could offer appropriate medical advice and

treatment to women and children in hospitals and medical clinics.[333] In addition,

during the second half of the 19th century, other schools became available for middle

and lower classes girls, e.g. Christian missionary schools, and state primary and

secondary schools.[334] Upper class families used to educate their girls at home where

they had private classes to memorise the holy Qur'an and to learn other things, for

example, Arabic, Turkish, European languages, Math and some arts and crafts.[335]

Furthermore, by the late 1920s, Muslim women had access to Cairo University where

they were awarded degrees when they finished their studies.[336] Thus, both private and

state authorities supported women's education during this time.[337] However, the

gradual steps of reform towards girls' education were delayed by colonialism due to

the unsettled economic and political conditions. Lord Cromer restricted the

establishment of government schools and raised education fees in order to reduce the

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[332] Baron, *The Women's Awaking in Egypt,*124

[333] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 134

[334] Ibid, 135, 137

[335] Baron,*, The Women's Awaking in Egypt,* 124

[336] Ahmed, *Women and gender in Islam*, 177

[337]Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam, 140 and* Mervat Hatem, "The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt", *Feminist Studies,* 12, no. 2 (1986), 271

number of educated people in the country so that, from a colonialist view, they would remain inferior to Westerners.[338]

In fact, the history of Egyptian women illustrated that many Muslim women, such as Huda Sha'rawi and Malak Hifni Nassif, managed to obtain proper education within the possible means of acquiring education during their age. Huda Sha'rawi (1879-1924), an Egyptian activist and leader of feminist thought in Egypt,[339] attained what was considered the proper education for an upper class girl. She memorised the whole chapters of the holy Qur'an and learned Arabic, Turkish, French and music.[340] Malak Hifni Nassif (1886-1918), another pioneer of feminist thought at the turn of the century, had obtained the possible education for an upper-middle class girl. Nasif had a proper Arabic education and was able to join the *Sanniyya* Teacher Training College, where she obtained a teacher's training diploma.[341] Other women, for example, 'A'isha Taymour (1840-1906), Nabawiya Musa (1886-1951), Safiya Zaghlul (1887-1946) and Labiba Ahmed (1875-1942) were educated within the limited educational means that were developing throughout this time. These women and others not only participated in social work and philanthropic activities but also wrote and published their own prose, poetry, biographies and journal articles.[342] This image of women's education indicates that although women were veiled and secluded, many of them were not illiterate or backward.

According to this historical data, I would argue that the main difference between English and Muslim women's education is based on the different historical contexts. The debate about English women's education was raised by women's rights activists

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[338] Ibid, 137
[339] Rula B. Quawas. "A Sea Captain in her Own Right: Navigating the Feminist Thought of Huda Shaarawi", *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol 8, (2006), 219
[340] Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist,* 40-41
[341] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,*182
[342] Fadwa El Guindi, *"*Gendered Resistance, Feminist Veiling, Islamic Feminism", *The Ahfad Journal*. 22(1), 2005

within the means of education available in England during this time. England was known for its progressive education system. However, English women did not have equal access to all forms and sources of education until the late 19th century. Some English feminists argued that this lack of proper education for women was due to gender discrimination and religious bias, although English reformers believed that religion was not against women's education, but against a change in women's traditional roles and change in the moral construction of society. On the other hand, women's education in Egypt at the turn of the century was developing within the gradual modernisation process, which was delayed by colonialism. In this Egyptian historical context, such developed branches of knowledge were unavailable, as in England. Therefore, it can be argued that Muslim women were not deprived of a developed education because it was not available in Egypt even for boys whose future roles, from an Islamic perspective, implied their responsibility to provide their families' living expenses. Thus, I would state that feminist views, e.g. Huda Sha'rawi, regarding women's lack of proper education being due to gender and religious bias[343] discussed Muslim women's education within an English context, which is inaccurate to apply to education systems that existed in Egypt during her time.

Although Egyptian and English historical contexts were different, I find that the comparison of women's education in these two regions reveals certain points of similarity. Firstly, although various activists were concerned with the issue of women's education, the religious approach was largely accepted in both regions. In Egypt, three different approaches supported the development of education in general including women's education. The advocates of secularly oriented education, e.g. Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayed (1872-1963), called for a modern education system in the

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[343] Sha'rawi, *Harem years,* 21, 22, 40

service of science.[344]   The advocates of religiously oriented education, e.g. Rashid

Rida (1865-1935), called for a proper religious education that would stress Islamic

teachings, Arabic language and Islamic history. In Rida's view this education would

encourage Muslims to be qualified in other scientific branches.[345] The third group,

supported by Qasim Amin, favoured a secular form of education with some religious

knowledge, such as a proper understanding and practice of the acts of worship.[346]

Hence, it can be argued that although these three approaches had different aims for

education, they agreed on the importance of an educational reform within the

modernisation process in Egypt. The approaches of al-Sayed and Amin supported the

westernisation of society and encouraged the growing of liberal feminist thought,

which aimed to change women's social status within an Egyptian national context.[347]

On the other hand, the conservative approach aimed to reform the status of women in

society within a wider Islamic context.[348] In fact, many Egyptians supported the

religious approach within the debates on women's education. This point is thoroughly

investigated in my discussion of the first feminist thought in Egypt at the turn of the

century in the following chapter.

In England, three approaches also discussed the issue of women's education. The

instrumentalist approach called for equal education for the benefit of equal

employment opportunities. The liberal humanist approach called for education that

would provide women with wider intellectual interests. The moralist approach did

not oppose the call for better education for girls, but it insisted on women's traditional

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[344] Hourani, *Arabic Thought ,*182
[345] Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Huquq al-Nesaa' fi al-Islam* (*Women's rights in Islam*), ed. Muhammad Nasir al-Albani, (Damascus, 1984), 201
[346] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,*165
[347] Ibid, 182
[348] Ibid, 229

roles[349]. Many English people supported the moralist approach; the other approaches calling for equal education were not popular until the 1890s. Thus, I would state that many people in Egypt and England agreed on the importance of enabling women to attain better education within a religious context. In fact, when many English and Egyptian reformers opposed liberal feminist views, which called for women's emancipation and gender equality, they aimed to emphasis the religious message and goal of women's education.

5.2.2 Harem life

In the first part of this thesis, I investigate the issue of English women's employment during the 19th and early 20th centuries. I find that certain national, social and economic reasons had underlined English women calls for better opportunities in employment during this time. I also conclude that modesty, respectability and women's traditional roles, which based on Christian teachings, were respected within women activists' claims for the reform of women's issues. In this section, I investigate women's harem because it is a crucial issue in the history of Muslim women.[350]

Throughout the 19th century, harem referred to the practices of veiling, seclusion, segregation and polygamy in the Muslim community. In her memoir, Huda Sha'rawi stated that she was brought up in the world of harem. In her view harem reflected a strict system of gender segregation because women were usually confined in the home and not allowed to venture into the public sphere; if they did, women had to be veiled and guarded by men.[351] Leila Ahmed argued that Westerners had added to Sha'rawi's

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[349] Pauline Marks, "Femininity in the classroom'', 185
[350] Leila Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of the Harem", *Feminists Studies*, 8, no.3, (1982), 524 and Baron, *The Women's Awakening*, 118
[351] Sha'rawi, *Harem Years*, 68

image of harem their Western thoughts of sexual connotations regarding male access to more than one woman.[352] In other words, Ahmed indicated that under Western eyes, harem was an oppressive system that exploited and enslaved women.[353] Consequently, when Sha'rawi rejected women's veiling and decided to participate in social and political spheres, she was challenging this traditional gender system constructed by her and other Westerners.[354] In fact, Sha'rawi's view can not be the sole image because two opponent groups, the outsiders and the insiders, discussed women's status in this world of harem.[355]

Nikki R. Keddie stated that the outsiders understood harem as a religious system that exploited and oppressed women. The paintings and tales of Western male travellers, e.g. Eugène Delacroix and Ingres, reflected this outside view because they constructed an image of harem which was based on what they imagined and did not see. In my view, this outside view reflected the same Orientalist stereotype regarding European views of the Islamic Arab world that according to Said created an inferior Eastern world.[356] On the other hand, the insiders stated that the world of harem represented an autonomous system that ensured women being independent as well as knowledgeable and powerful entities.[357] Lady Mary Montague, the English ambassador's wife to Turkey in 1716, indicated that harem represented an independent moral image of Muslim women.[358] Because of her ability to enter the Ottoman harem, Lady Montague stated that Muslim women, either married or single, could legally retain and profit from their properties. Therefore, it can be argued that harem was not the

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[352] Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism", 524
[353] El-Guindi, "Gendered Resistance''
[354] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 176
[355] Nikki R.Keddie, "Deciphering Middle Eastern Women's History" in Women *in the Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, (Yale University Press, 1991),12
[356] Said, *Orientalism,* 34-40
[357] Keddie, "Deciphering Middle Eastern Women's History"12
[358] Ahmed, "Western Ethnocentrism", 525

idle and sensual world that Orientalist paintings and tales represented but rather a busy and systematic system where women practised their roles and maintained their rights. Reina Lewis quotes this comment of an Ottoman woman on harem:

> In their abysmal ignorance these foreigners did not realise that many of veiled ladies of the harems were better born, better read, spoke several languages and dressed with a greater chic than some of their own most famous society women.[359]

Although Huda Sha'rawi repeated the same Orientalist stereotypes and colonialist rhetoric regarding the oppression of Muslim women, her memoir indicates the insiders' view of harem. In her memoir, Sha'rawi indicates that her co-mother and her mother took full responsibility for managing house affairs and participated in social philanthropic activities.[360] In addition, Badawi states that Egyptian princesses used to support and participate in Egyptian revolutions, e.g. The Orabi's Revolution, against the Khedive and European influence in the country. They formed social societies which intended to donate money as well as equipments and provided medical care for injured Egyptians.[361] Badran also states that the modernisation process increased women's access to the public sphere, e.g. the opera house, seaside resorts, and commercial stores.[362] Thus, it can be argued that harem did not confine women inside their houses. Also I would state that this insider view reflects a genuine image because it was not based on imagined and imposed views by Orientalists and colonialists but direct experience by Westerners and Egyptians. Hence, in the comparison between the issue of English women's work and Muslim women's harem, I focus on the insider view of harem.

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[359] Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism; Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem,* (I.B. Tauris, 2004), 16
[360] Sha'rawi, *Harem years,* 33-61
[361] Badawi, *Kan wa Akhawtaha ,* 86-87
[362] Margot Badran, "The Feminist Vision in the Writings of Three Turn - of - the-Century Egyptian. Women", *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, 15, no. 1/2, (1988),11

It is worth mentioning that this issue of harem mainly reflected the life of elite and upper-class women[363] because poor Muslim women were joining the workforce, for example, factories, markets and hospitals in order to earn their living[364]. However, poor women's wider access to the public sphere did not imply that they did not follow Islamic teachings regarding veiling because this rule applies to all Muslim women: elite, middle-class and poor. In other words, I would state that Islamic teachings both in the world of harem and among the poor are the same and these teachings do not oppress or exploit women but rather regulate their participation in society.

In the first part of this study, I indicate that home and children were the main concern for all social classes in English society: elite, upper, middle and working classes. English society respected these families that ensured the role of husbands was to earn the living expenses and the roles of mothers was to look after children and homes. On the other hand, when English women began to largely participate in the workforce, many English people also respected these jobs that offered single sex-settings, such as, teaching, secretarial and clerical jobs. Consequently, I would argue that this image of English women's work was not so different from Muslim women's harem. In Muslim world, upper and middle class women were also concerned with their children, homes and philanthropic activities. This rule was also the same for poor women. Although they had wider access to the public sphere, poor women retained their religious teachings regarding veiling and segregation. In fact, Lewis referred to this similarity when she states that harem was interpreted by some Western women within the context of Victorian mores, e.g. respectability and domestication.[365] Thus, I

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[363] Judith Tucker, "Egyptian Women in the Work Force: An Historical Survey", *MERIP Reports* , no 50 (1976):7
[364] Tucker, "Egyptian Women in the Work Force", 8

[365] Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism,* 14, 15

would state that the status of Muslim women in harem was not different from what English women respected and practised within a religious context in their country.

5.2.3 Islamic law

In my investigation of the issues of divorce and the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill in English society, I indicate that the debate over marital issues was discussed with respect for the authority of the English Church. In this section, I investigate the issues of polygamy and divorce, which are the most debated issues in many studies focusing on Muslim women. I investigate Muslims' views regarding these issues within an Islamic context. I also investigate the reform trends that Muslims pursued in order to improve the social status of Muslim women. Finally, I compare the claims of the reform for women's status under the law in both Egypt and England.

5.2.3.1 Polygamy

In Islamic law, permission of polygamy signifies the right of men to have up to four wives. This is based on this verse of the holy Qur'an:

> And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that ye will not do injustice. (4:3)[366]

Based on this verse, Muslim scholars, e.g. Rashid Rida, state that monogamy is the rule while polygamy is an exception that can offer lawful solutions in certain circumstances.[367] These conditions can be due to demographic problems, e.g. wars, and individual cases, e.g. barren wives.[368] Justice and equality among wives in the matters of expenses, housing and kind treatment are required by Islamic law. However, what Allah (glorious and exalted is He) forgives is the inability to share

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366 *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*
[367] Rida, *Women's Rights in Islam*, 65, 70
[368] Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an : Traditions, and Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 122

equal affection among wives, because affection cannot be enforced the way tangible needs can, and "Allah tasketh not a soul beyond its scope" (1: 286).[369] This is briefly the main significance of polygamy within an Islamic context.

Due to ignorance of religious teachings and the spread of social vices, e.g. drugs and drunkenness,[370] some cases of abuse and maltreatment were reported in polygamous relationships.[371] Consequently, some Muslim reformers, e.g. Muhammad 'Abduh, indicated that when the true significance and requirements of the practice of polygamy under Islamic law were misused by Muslims, the Muslim ruler was permitted by law to issue certain restrictions on this practice.[372] Women's rights activists, e.g. Amin and Shar'awi, focused on this image within their discussions of polygamy in Muslim society during the 19th century. Amin, for example, argued that polygamy generated marital relationships full of violence, hatred and distrust.[373] Sha'rawi also, being a second wife, wrote and voted against the practice of polygamy because in her view it humiliated women.[374] Subsequently, Egyptian advocates of feminist thought went further than 'Abduh and demanded the abolition of the practice of polygamy.[375] However, there could be another view regarding the practice of polygamy in Egypt which I discuss in the following paragraph.

In Sha'rawi's memoirs, she describes how affectionate and respected her co-mother was, and how respectful and peaceful was her married life was.[376] In other words, I find that although Sha'rawi's feminist thought mainly focuses on the oppressive image of polygamy, her memoirs do not show this climate of enmity and humiliation

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[369] *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*
[370] Hourani, *Arabic Thought, 232*
[371] Rida, *Women's Rights in Islam,* 67
[372] Ibid
[373] Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman,* 85
[374] Badran, *Feminism, Islam and Nation,* 128
[375] Ibid, 129-130
[376] Sha'rawi, *Harem Years,*33-37, 83-137

either in her life or in that of her mother. In addition, Badran indicates that the practice of polygamy became "a dying custom" from the last decades of the 19th century onwards, due to the educational, social and economic changes in Egyptian society.[377] Furthermore, Baron states that, according to certain censuses during the 1830s, there were few cases of polygamy, and those were usually practised among the lower classes,[378] though Badran states that, because of hardship and difficulties, poor or lower class Muslims could be less expected to practice polygamy.[379] This discussion regarding polygamy indicates that the practice of polygamy was not a controversial issue either within the legal sphere or in real life. Nevertheless, within an Islamic context, the call to abolish a divine permission is inconsistent with Muslims' submission to the main Islamic resources, since, for Muslims, what is permitted in the Qur'an and Sunnah can never be prohibited by humans or vice versa.[380] Thus, I would state that two approaches discussed polygamy in Egypt: the religious approach supported by Muslim scholars, e.g. Abduh and Rida, called for a proper understanding and practice of polygamy within an Islamic context. Secondly, the secular approach supported by advocates of liberal feminist thought in Egypt, e.g. Amin and Sha'rawi, called for the prohibition of this practice, which means changing the law. In Egypt, during this period and up to the current time, the first approach was widely acceptable.[381]

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[377] Badran, *Feminism, Islam and Nation,*130

[378] Beth Baron, "The Making and Breaking of Marital Bonds in Modern Egypt" in *Women in the Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, (Yale University Press, 1991), 277

[379] Badran, *Feminism, Islam and Nation,*130

[380] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 233

[381] Baron, "The Making and Breaking of Marital Bonds", 227

5.2.3.2 Divorce

In Islam, marriage, or *nikah*, is a righteous act that indicates complete devotion and commitment to God's word;[382] in fact, it is perceived as the strongest bond. This is based on this verse: "How can ye take it (back) after one of you hath gone in unto the other, and they have taken a strong pledge from you?" (4:21)[383] In Islam, as well as in Christianity, marriage is highly recommended for the benefit of the procreation of children, avoiding fornication and adultery, and bringing tranquillity, peace and intimacy.[384] One of the main requirements of marriage under Islamic law is the two parties' intention of having a permanent marital relationship; according to all Muslim jurisprudents, if marriage is pursued for temporary purposes, it is considered void.[385] At this point I would refer to how, under Islamic law, marriage, though it should be based on the honest intention to have a permanent relationship, is not indissoluble.[386] This means that divorce is permissible in Islam.

According to many verses in the holy Qur'an, as well as the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, divorce is the most hateful yet lawful thing in the sight of God.[387] Divorce under Islamic law is hateful because it destroys the family that Muslims have to maintain and support, and it is lawful because sometimes reconciliation between spouses becomes impossible.[388] Therefore, divorce becomes a last resort when there is no other means for a marriage to fulfil its goals.[389] According to Muslim jurisprudence, a Muslim man can divorce his wife verbally or in a written document. Most Muslim scholars agree that intention is a main stipulation for the validity of

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[382] Haifaa A. Jawad, *The Rights of Women in Islam; An Authentic Approach* (Macmillan Press, 1998), 30
[383] *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*
[384] Jawad, 31
[385] Ibid, 33
[386] Ibid
[387] John L. Esposito *Women In Muslim Family Law,* (Syracuse University Press, 2001), 29
[388] Esposito, *Women In Muslim Family Law,* 28
[389] Jawad, 71

divorce. In this case, the man has to provide his divorced wife with sufficient maintenance (*nafaqa* is an obligation of the husband and includes food, clothing and lodging) during her '*idda* (a waiting period for three menstrual cycles or if pregnant until she gave birth).[390] During this waiting period, the husband can take back his wife, but after this waiting period, he must ask her consent and pay her a new dowry.[391] On the other hand, if a Muslim woman wants to obtain a divorce for certain reasons, e.g. maltreatment, desertion, lack of support or hatred, she can initiate a divorce known in this case as *khul'*, that enables her to be divorced in return for giving back part or all of her dowry.[392] In this case, her husband cannot remarry her without her consent.[393]

During the 19th century, due to the same reasons that resulted in the abuse of the practice of polygamy, divorce also became frequently misused.[394] Divorces for trivial or major reasons, and women's ignorance of their ability to initiate divorce, were the main reasons that directed women's rights activists and their advocates to call for expanding the grounds for divorce for women, while limiting men's misuse of it.[395] In this context, Muhammad 'Abduh intended to implement the opinions of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence on divorce in order to reform the status of Muslim women who might suffer either because they could not initiate divorce or because they were divorced.[396] It was not until 1929 that the personal status code followed this recommendation of Muslim scholars and stipulated certain reforms, e.g. the invalidation of divorce in the cases of compulsion, intoxication, no real intention and

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[390] Esposito, *Women In Muslim Family Law* ,26,36
[391] Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, (C. Hurst & Co.,1992), 127
[392] Esposito, *Women In Muslim Family Law*, 33, 34
[393] Ibid
[394] Beth Baron, "The Making and Breaking of Marital Bonds in Modern Egypt", 284
[395] Ibid
[396] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,,* 152-153

making one utterance of triple divorce to count one.[397] Thus, I would state that during this time Muslims' debate on the issue of divorce conformed to the teachings of Islamic law.

In comparing the trends that called for the reform of women's status under English law and those of Muslims regarding the status of Muslim women under Islamic law, I find that religious views represented a main authority within the debate on marital issues. When I investigate the issues of the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill and divorce within an English context, I find that these issues were debated by both proponents and opponents within a religious context that implied reference to the scriptures and submission to the authority of the Church. On the other hand, Muslims' calls and claims for the reform of marital laws were debated according to the main Islamic resources, the Qur'an and Sunnah, that are the main authority for Muslims, and which implied proper understanding and implementation. This means that in each region, the reform of marital issues was debated within its religious context and implied the acceptance of religious authority. However, I find that the difference between these two trends was how reform of the law could be pursed. In Islam, divine laws cannot be changed or prohibited, as I discuss regarding the issues of divorce and polygamy, because Muslims believe that these laws are applicable to all time and places. However, in England, under the authority of the Church, marital laws were changed in order to cope with the requirements of the changing world.

5.3 Conclusion

In discussing women's issues, I indicate that secular and liberal views tended to represent an oppressed image of Muslim women in society, though I find that historical data and other discussions on the same issues represent an image of

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[397] Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 165

independent, educated and determined Muslim women. Thus, I would state that Islam has not been against the development of women's social status, and religious figures were as active as liberal figures in their claims for the reform of women's social status.

Secondly, the comparison between women's issues in Egypt and England reveals certain points of similarity and difference. There were calls for the reform of women's social status in each region, and in most cases religion supported these calls. What was different was the historical and religious context of these issues. When I discuss, for example, the issue of Muslim women's education, I refer to the difference between the educational and political conditions in Egypt and these conditions in England; therefore, I indicate that Muslim women were not deprived of better opportunities for systematic education because it did not exist. I also find that when religion is involved in the discussion of women's issues, certain points of similarity can be traced. For example, in each region there was an emphasis on the importance of marriage and the restriction of divorce. Hence, this historical background indicates the role of religion regarding the reform of Muslim women's status in society and also indicates the role of religion regarding understanding the Other. This means that women's issues within a religious context would enable Muslims and English people to understand the thought and behaviour of each other which would encourage their communication.

CHAPTER SIX: EGYPTIAN FEMINISTS & QASIM AMIN'S DISCOURSE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

In this chapter I investigate feminist thought in Egypt at the turn of the century in order to outline its main characteristics and achievements. I investigate the same point within its English context in the first part of this thesis. I examine the popularity of feminist thought in Egypt at the turn of the century. The focus on Egyptian feminists has marginalised the role of Muslim reformers within this arena of women studies, though some studies indicate that conservative figures, e.g. Labiba Ahmed, were as active as feminists in their claims and endeavours for the reform of Muslim women's social status.[398] This study does not intend to minimise the contribution of feminists during this period; it mainly intends to ensure the participation of religious reformers in this phase of women's history.

6.1 Feminist thought in Egypt at the turn of the century

Most contemporary studies of women in Muslim societies represent feminists as the sole pioneers in the history of Egyptian women who improved women's social status and consequently saved them from the backwardness and oppression inflicted upon them by male dominated society. Leila Ahmed mainly investigates the discourse of prominent feminists in the history of Muslim women e.g. Qasim Amin, Huda Sha'rawi, and Malak Nassif.[399] Margot Badran also focuses on women's rights activists, classifying them as the first Egyptian feminists, e.g. Huda Sha'rawi and Nabawiya Musa.[400] I illustrate the same trend in English studies which focused on English feminists when investigating women's issues in English society during the 19th century.

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[398] Baron, *Egypt As A Woman; Nationalism, Gender and Politics* 189 and Baron, *The Women's Awakening*, 5
[399] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 169-188
[400] Badran, *Feminism, Islam and Nation*, 31-47

Contemporary studies of Muslim women's issues demonstrate that there were two approaches of feminist thought in Egypt at the turn of the century.[401] Some studies argue that feminism in Egypt, in particular the thought of the upper class, e.g. Huda Sha'rawi, was influenced by Western feminist movements that intended to enforce Western feminist agenda upon Egyptian women.[402] Within this Western thought, Egyptian feminists stated that Muslim women were suffering from discrimination, oppression, and social and religious restrictions. Sha'rawi, for example, asserted that there was a lack of proper opportunities in education and employment for women, and also indicates that women suffered from marital abuse and maltreatment because of gender and religious bias against women. She also called for real political and social participation for Muslim women.[403] These were the same demands of some first wave feminists who conceived of women's status within an English context.[404] However, Sha'rawi did not state that what was taking place in Egypt was different to what was found in England during this time. Educational methods and sources, the political situation and marital laws all had different contexts in these two regions which I would argue should be considered when discussing women's issues in a certain society. In my view this Western thought was adopted by some Muslim figures because they were mainly influenced by the power of colonialism, which indicated that Easterners had to follow the thought of the developed world in order to combat their inferiority. Although, as I indicate in the first part of this study, there were various religious attempts to enable English people to retain their faith against the tide of secular and liberal thought in English society, colonialists intended to promote liberal thought in the West in order to ensure the gap between the two regions.

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[401] Juan Ricardo Cole, "Feminism, Class, and Islam in Turn of the Century Egypt". *Int. J. Middle East stud*, 13, no.4 (1981), 387
[402] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 179
[403] Ibid, 176
[404] Ibid, 177

Colonialists, e.g. Lord Cromer, reintroduced Orientalist stereotypes regarding the inferiority of the East that, in their view, might be improved when Orientals followed the superior West.[405] Both Shar'awi and Amin were influenced by this colonial and Orientalist discourse on the East[406] that, according to Edward Said, intended to construct and circulate knowledge that would support Western hegemony and superiority over the East.[407] These Egyptian pioneers insisted on drawing an image of ignorant, oppressed and inferior women in Muslim society because this was the image portrayed by colonialists, [408] though, as I indicate in the previous chapter, this was neither the sole nor the popular image of Muslim women during this time. In my view, Sha'rawi's life supports this view regarding the difference between what colonial discourse stated about Muslim societies and what was actually found and practiced there. When reading Sha'rawi's memoirs, I find that she was not an oppressed, exploited and suffering woman but a strong one who benefited from all possible means of education, entertainment and social activities that women of her class could have.[409] Thus, it can be argued that it was the influence of colonialism that directed Sha'rawi to contextualise the incidents of her life within this Orientalist thought that intended to represent Muslim women as inferior and socially oppressed. Subsequently, I would state that, whether this inferior image of Muslim women was real or not, Sha'rawi constructed her feminist thought within this Orientalist discourse on Muslims that insisted on the impossibility of the reform of Arabs without the adoption of Western liberal thought and project.

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[405] Robert L. Tignor, "Lord Cromer on Islam", *Muslim World,* 52, no. 3 (1962), 232
[406] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 154
[407] Said, *Orientalism*, 34-40
[408] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 129
[409] Sha'rawi, *Harem Years*

Alternatively, some argue that early feminists in Egypt, e.g. Nasif, Sha'rawi and Musa, represent an indigenous viewpoint that resulted from their awareness of gender discrimination against women due to the social changes in Egyptian society at the turn of the century.[410] Badran is of the opinion that by the advent and development of modernisation in Egypt, early feminists, including Sha'rawi, realised that there was discrimination against women in their society before they had been in contact with Western feminists. According to Badran, Sha'rawi's memoirs indicate that she realised very early that she was not on equal footing with her brother in every aspect of life, e.g. education and marriage.[411] Badran also holds the same view regarding Nabawiya Musa, who fought to be formally educated and have an access to a high school education before she joined Sha'rawi's feminist campaign.[412] Moreover, Baron indicates that women were active in publishing and editing their own literary products that discussed many women's issues in this changing society.[413] However, in my view this approach did not differ from Western feminist thought in Egypt. At this point, I would argue that authentic feminist thought did not exist because there was no earlier experience of discrimination and inferiority; early feminists produced these views later in their lives when they, as I state before, contextualised the incidents of their life within this colonialist thought that insisted on the inferiority of Eastern women and superiority of Western women. Again, my point in this discussion is not to deny what these feminists achieved for women, or to suggest that they were unable to reform women's social status according to an authentic position. Rather, I argue that when Huda Sha'rawi, for example, followed liberal Western model and thought in order to reform the social status of Muslim women, she indicated the inferiority of Eastern

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[410] Badran, "The Feminist Vision", 12
[411] Badran, *Feminism, Islam and Nation*, 33-34
[412] Ibid, 40
[413] Baron, *The Women's Awakening*, 22

women. Therefore, I would state that she did not form an authentic viewpoint not because Muslims could not have a proper agenda for this but because she mainly depended on and followed Western liberal thought. In fact, this was the same course followed by Qasim Amin as I will demonstrate in the following section. Before being influenced by colonialism, Amin had a different thought and strategy for the reform of women's social status in Egypt. However Amin reversed his views and adopted Orientalist thought regarding eastern societies. Based on this investigation, I would state that feminist thought in Egypt at the turn of the century was influenced by colonialist thought that encouraged the adoption of Western liberal feminist thought, not to reform the status of women but to ensure the gap between the two worlds. Within this context, Western liberal thought became the sole solution to improve the status of Muslim women in Egypt.

In the first part of this study I discuss that the position of first wave feminists in England was based on liberal thought that ensured the rights of men to enjoy freedom and equal opportunities in society regardless of any restrictions, e.g. social and religious restrictions. English liberal feminists wanted to expand these rights to women in order to empower women's position in society. Under colonialism, Egyptian feminists followed this Western feminist thought and stated that there were certain constraints hampering the development of women's status in their Egyptian society,[414] e.g. the practice of polygamy, harem, veiling and lack of proper education. Subsequently, early Egyptian feminists intended to remove these restrictions in order to form what in their view would be a moderate gender system in Muslim society.[415]

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[414] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 152
[415] Badran, "The Feminist Vision", 18

In my view, this feminist project centred on Western liberal thought and tended to ignore, or was perhaps unaware, that the reform of women's status in society could be attained within a religious context both in England and Egypt. At this point I would argue that there is a difference between the adoption and implementation of Western technology and modern sciences and the adoption of Western intellectual thought. The first trend, which religious figures, e.g. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abdu and Rashid Rida, encouraged in Egypt during this time, would result in fruitful communication between these two regions. However the second trend, which encouraged the adoption of intellectual thought, would result in the domination of the Other, if not its extinction. In fact, not only in Egypt (as I will demonstrate in the following chapter) but also in England, religious figures were aware of this conflict; how to benefit from modern sciences and technology and retain religious teachings within the growing tide of Western secular thought. I indicate that English reformers reacted against secular thought within their discussion of women's issues. Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge believed that women's status should be reformed but they also thought that it could be reformed within a religious context. Therefore, they did not join the club of liberal feminists but retained their own thought and gained real benefits for themselves and other women.

6.2 Qasim Amin (1863-1908)

> Look at the European countries; the governments are based on freedom and respect for personal rights, and the status of women has been raised to a high degree of respect and freedom of thought and action.
>
> Qasim Amin[416]

When I investigate the thought of first wave English feminists, I focus on the views of Emily Davies because she is a prominent feminist in contemporary studies of English

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[416] Hourani., *Arabic Thought, 168*

women. In this section I investigate Qasim Amin's views on Muslim women because, similarly, many contemporary studies focus on his discourse on Muslim women.

Qasim Amin, an Egyptian French-educated lawyer, was one of the Egyptian pioneers in the history of Muslim women's rights.[417] He was a student and close friend of Mohammad 'Abduh, but Amin's reform project was based on liberal Western thought.[418] In my view, being a student of 'Abduh he believed that the reform of Muslim society should be based on freedom of intellect because this approach resulted in the development of the West. Amin learned from his teacher that the relationship between Islam and reason is compatible. However, most of 'Abduh's students, e.g. Ahemd Lutfi al-Sayed, who followed this rule became more concerned with the superiority of reason than their teacher and, instead of rejecting secularism as 'Abduh aspired to do, they accepted and supported it in Muslim society.[419] Amin was one of these students; he was interested in social reform, particularly the issue of the reform of Muslim women's social status.[420] He demonstrated his views and recommendations regarding women's issues primarily in three texts: *Les Egyptiens* (1894), *The Liberation of Women* (1899) and *New Woman* (1900).

The statement by Amin quoted at the beginning of this section represents his view of the higher status of Western women which was a major point in his discourse on Muslim women. In other words, I would state that the major point in Amin's thought is the gap between what he saw as the superior status of Western women and the inferior status of Muslim women. He admitted the reliability of this Orientalist view, though his view did not coincide with the situations of English women and Muslim

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[417] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 145
[418] Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt,*113
[419] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,*144-145
[420] Ibid, 164

women in his time. In order to explain this point, I firstly refer to what Emily Davies demonstrated regarding the inferior status of women in English society during her time. Secondly, I focus on Amin's argument regarding the issue of harem in his texts.

In the first part of this thesis, I state that in Davies's view there was inequality between men and women, and women were inferior in English society, particularly in the arena of education. She believed that women could not obtain an equal education and consequently could not have equal opportunities in employment; she referred to her own experience, as she was deprived of a proper education in comparison to her brothers. Elizabeth Wordsworth and Yonge also believed in and called for the reform of the educational status of women. However, Wordsworth and Yonge were not looking for equality but for obedience to God. Subsequently, in my view all three figures were concerned with the reform of women's education, though within different trends and aims. However, this was not the image of Western women that Amin represented in his discourse; he represented an image of highly educated women in English society, which had not yet been achieved according to these English claims and efforts.

In his discussion of the world of harem, Amin shows a change of mind regarding this issue. In his first text, *Les Egyptiens*, he defended the world of harem and indicated that it did not signify any form of oppression towards Muslim women: "It is not true that women in Egypt are confined in their houses. On the contrary, they can go out at day or night to visit their friends, to go shopping and sometimes to travel on their own."[421] Actually, this view coincided with insiders' view of harem as an independent, busy and knowledgeable world of Muslim women that some post-

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[421]Qasim Amin, *Les Egyptiens, in Al-a'mal al-kamila li Qasim Amin (The Complete Works* of Qasim Amin) ed. Mohammad 'Imara (Dar al-Shuruq, 1976), 246 (my translation)

colonial views have indicated more recently.[422] However, his second text, *The Liberation of Women,* represented a different image of this world, as he indicated that Muslim women were completely ignorant, inactive and inferior because they were enslaved in their homes, denied education and wrapped in a veil.[423] At this stage, Amin intended to frame his argument within an Islamic viewpoint, as he argued that the practice of veiling and seclusion were not part of Islamic shari'a; therefore, he called for proper understanding and practice of Islam.[424] In his third text, Amin's argument no longer defended Islamic teachings and law but was largely based on Western thought, approving the secular trends of science, freedom and enlightenment.[425]

When Amin started writing about social issues, including women's issues, his views indicated that he was influenced by Western liberal thought, mainly that of Western pioneers in science and social thought, e.g. Rousseau, Mill, Darwin, Marx and Spencer.[426] Within this context he appreciated the individualistic ideology of Western society that insisted on men's rights to independence, freedom and equality.[427] In my view, Amin intended to apply these Western thoughts in his discussion of women's issues in Muslim society. However, while in his first text he demonstrated how Muslim women were equal and free members in society, in the following texts he reversed his views and indicated that Muslim women were backward because Muslim society did not know how to adopt these Western concepts.[428] Similarly, as I discuss in Chapter Three, this focus on individualism and the representation of inferior and subordinate women was the main concern of Emily Davies and other first wave

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[422] Keddie, "Deciphering Middle Eastern Women's History",12

[423] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 157-158

[424] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 165-166

[425] Ibid, 167

[426] Amin, *The Liberation of Women* and *The New Woman,* xii

[427] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 167

[428] Juan Ricardo Cole, "Feminism, class, and Islam in turn of the century Egypt", 393

English feminists who called for women's full equal rights as separate individuals. Accordingly, I would argue that secular thought founded feminism in both countries. As I indicate in the investigation of English women's history, this trend was opposed by many English reformers who intended to revive their religious ethics and practices. However, this point is not represented in Amin's discourse on women's issues because it was not within the colonialist project which was accepted by Amin. Robert L. Tignor stated that, for Lord Cromer, Muslims needed centuries to adopt these concepts in their society.[429] Consequently, Amin indicated that the status of Muslim women in Egypt was equal to the status of slaves and prisoners who were ignorant, inferior and exploited in their societies.[430] According to Amin, the first step that would elevate and liberate Muslim women was to tear away their veil and end their seclusion and segregation.[431] Amin also stated that Egypt would become a civilised nation under what he called free government, though Egypt was under British occupation[432].

Amin's view regarding the inferiority of Muslim women indicated his replication of Orientalist discourse on Muslims. Orientalists and colonialists formed their views of Muslims according to what they imagined and aspired to implement in order to keep the distance between the West and the East.[433] Colonialists, e.g. Lord Cromer, intended to remove themselves from the real world of Easterners because they saw no reason to exert any effort towards integration; in their view, Easterners were inferior and lower subjects.[434] Amin followed the same course of colonialist thought in adopting this external view of Muslim women, indicating their inferiority in

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[429] Tignor, "Lord Cromer on Islam",
[430] Amin, *The new woman*,131-132
[431] Ibid, 134
[432] Amin, *The liberation of women*, 64
[433] Said, *Orientalism*, 32-40
[434] Tignor, "Lord Cromer on Islam", 226

comparison to Western women. However, though colonialists intended to keep the distance between the two worlds in order to ensure their hegemony over the East, in my view Amin and other Western-educated Muslims thought that in following the Western project they would reform their society and decrease the gap between the two worlds. At this point I would argue that Amin and others like him could not realise that they were widening the gap between the two worlds because they followed the colonial project, which would never admit that the East could be reformed within its own context.[435] Therefore, within this first Egyptian feminist thought, there would always be a superior world and an inferior one. Amin realized this view later in his life, after the departure of Lord Cromer from Egypt, when he regretted his support of the colonial project, which in his view had not reformed Muslim society or diminished the gap between these two parts of the world but rather desired to change it into an inferior Westernised construction[436].

In addition to his three texts on women's issues, Amin's feminist project did not offer for women other benefits, e.g. building schools, colleges or hospitals, or raising funds for education. In fact, many Egyptian thinkers rejected his claims, e.g. Tal'at Harb, Rashid Rida, 'A'isha Taymour and Muhammad Farid Wadji, and defended women's status in Islam. Amin's opponents also supported women's education and social participation, but within an Islamic context.[437] Ahmed stated that Amin, like Cromer, was not calling for the reform of women's status in society but for the transformation of the social, political and intellectual thought of Muslim society.[438] Also liberal feminists in England were supporting the transformation of women's status in English society. However, as I indicate before, the benefits that liberal thought offered women

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[435] Ibid, 232
[436] 'Imarah. *Al-a'mal al-kamila li Qasim Amin,* 111
[437] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 148
[438] Ibid,161

in these two parts of the world were less than those achieved by religious reformers. Within this feminist context, a comparison between what religious figures represented in each region regarding the reform of women's social status is not performed in contemporary studies because they mainly focus on feminist thought.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MUSLIM REFORMER'S DISCOURSE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

In the first part of this study, I investigate the significance of religious reform within an English context in order to demonstrate its impact upon the social status of women during this time. In this chapter I investigate the significance of reform and Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues within Islamic revival thought or the *Salafiyya* School in late 19th century Egypt.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Firstly, I investigate Muslims' reform project within Islamic revival thought during the late 19th century. Secondly, I investigate the views and achievements of two Muslim reformers, Rashid Rida and Labiba Ahmed, in order to represent their reform discourse on Muslim women's issues at the turn of the century. I also compare Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues with its counterpart in England during this time.

7.1 Islamic revival movement (the *Salafiyyia* School)

> He (Shu'eyb) said: O my people! Bethink you: if I am (acting) on a clear proof from my Lord and He sustaineth me with fair sustenance from Him (how can I concede aught to you)? I desire not to do behind your backs that which I ask you not to do. I desire naught save reform so far as I am able. My welfare is only in Allah. In Him I trust and unto Him I turn (repentant).
>
> (11: 88)[439]

Being a Sunni Muslim, I understand that reform is the message of all Prophets, to be followed and revived by believers. This is based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah; I can state that there are many verses of the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad that illustrate the significance of reform: the verse quoted at the beginning of this section is an example. Within this Islamic context, I understand that

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[439]*The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*

the main rule of reform, or *Islah*, is to worship one God, Allah, to surrender to His commands and to believe in the divine message of His messengers and Prophets. In Islam, this submission grants true believers blessings and peace in this life and in the hereafter, which is the ultimate goal of reform. It is popular among Muslim scholars to state that the reform of all aspects of Muslims' lives implies their adherence to the teachings of Islam as they were understood and practiced by the first Muslim generations.[440] Muslims believe that during the first decades of Islam, their predecessors followed the true path of Islam and this resulted in the construction of a strong, stable and flourishing Muslim community.[441] Hence, I would demonstrate the close relation between the concept of reform and the renewal and revival of Islamic teachings and history.

In Islamic history, prominent scholars, e.g. Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), a Muslim scholar and follower of the Hanbali School of theology and jurisprudence, play significant roles in the revival of Islamic sciences, particularly Islamic jurisprudence, in order to reform all aspects of Muslim life.[442] Ibn Taymiyya's project of reform was based on the elimination of *bid'a* (innovations that have no basis in Islamic teachings). Having an informed knowledge of the main practices of Islamic law, *qiyas* (analogy), *ijtihad* (an informed independent analysis) and *ijma'* (consensus), Ibn Taymiyya intended to enable Muslims to maintain the social and moral construction of a Muslim community according to the main teachings of Islam.[443] Therefore, it can be argued that in order to construct an Islamic reform and revival discourse on Islamic sciences, Muslim reformers and revivalists have to attain proper and sufficient knowledge of Islam. Rida argued that the practice of *ijtihad* as well as the other

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[440] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 230
[441] Ibid, 7
[442] Ibid, 18
[443] David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8, 230

practices of Islamic law cannot be exercised by every Muslim. This is not because they are not allowed to, but they should firstly have qualified religious knowledge and secondly be aware of the changing circumstances around them.[444] Subsequently, I would state that though every Muslim has to participate in the project of reform, at least to reform oneself, not all of them can be reformers and revivalists within the arena of Islamic sciences.

As I demonstrate in Chapter Five, the stagnation of '*ulama*' thought, Sufism, modernisation and colonialism had had an impact upon Muslim society. Muslims thought that they had become the weakest in science and power because they had deviated from their true religion.[445] Rida explained this view and said: "Had you not reflected upon the state of these people (Europeans), you like others like you, would not have considered this to be part of Islam."[446] Rida referred to the developed status of the West in comparison to the status of Muslims, although, as he attempted to indicate, Islam calls for and encourages development and progress. The Islamic revival movement aimed to reform all aspects of Muslim life. Modern Muslim reformers at the turn of the century urged Muslims to return to the true teachings of Islam and revive its early decades.[447] They also urged Muslims to learn modern sciences because seeking knowledge is integral to the Islamic message.[448]

'Imara argues that for some researchers and thinkers *Salafiyyia* represents an orthodox approach which encourages Muslims to primarily depend on the Qur'an, Sunnah and the interpretations of the Prophet's companions regarding any issue facing Muslims in

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[444] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 234
[445] Ibid*,* 113
[446] Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam 1840- 1940: A Source Book*, (Oxford University Press, 2002), 7
[447] Waines, *An Introduction to Islam,* 228
[448] Ibid, 226

life.[449] This might mean that *Salafi* thought do not approve the supremacy of intellect over these resources. However, I would argue that even within this orthodox approach, *Salafi* thought does not abandon intellect because it intends to liberate intellect and encourage Muslims to fight against innovations, superstitions and blind imitation as well as stagnation. The thought and endeavours of Ibn Taymiyya and Muhammad ibn 'Abd el-Wahab indicated their use of intellect and thus enabled them to realise the defects in their communities. In fact, *Salafi* thought encourages Muslims to revive Islamic heritage, use *ijtihad* and abandon sectarianism. Hence, *Salafiyyia* has never formed a *madhhab* or a party but an approach towards an Islamic revival.[450] Others believe that *Salafi* thought, in the last quarter of the 19th century, represented a rational *Salafiyyia* which focused on two main principles: firstly, the supremacy of the main resources of Islamic thought. Secondly it insists on the importance of intellectual and scientific development in Muslim lands.[451] The compatibility between science and Islam is the main focus of modern *Salafi* thought within their struggle against inner decay as well as colonial power.[452] At this point, I would argue that though *Salafi* thought has retained Islamic teachings and history, *Salafi* Muslims have had various endeavours representing their reactions over different historical epochs. In other words, throughout different ages, *Salafi* thought has maintained certain criterion which insists on Muslims' adherence to Islamic faith as well as unity and struggle against external invasion. On the other side, it has not condemned or prevented difference among Muslims especially within jurisprudent issues. In

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[449] Muhammad 'Imara, *Al-Salafiyyia* (Dar al-Ma'rif Publisher, 1994), 5

[450] Salah al-Sawi, *Madkhal ila Tarshid al 'Almal al-Islami (An Introduction to Guide Islamic Pursuits) (Al-Afaq al-Dawlya Publisher, 1998), 159*

[451] Hanan Muhammad Abd el-Majid Ibrahim, *Al-Taghir al-Ijtima'I fi al-Fikr al-Islami al-Hadith (The Social Change in the Modern Islamic Thought) (The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011), 129-130*

[452] Ibid, 130-149

addition, *Salafi* thought has always encouraged tolerance regarding non-Muslims.[453] This explains why this study considers Afghani, 'Abduh and Rida representatives of modern *Salafi* thought though having different approaches.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani inspired the movement that gathered and directed many Muslims towards an Islamic revival.[454] He was a political agitator without a settled home or position[455] but was the impulse of this reform movement at the turn of the century.[456] There is controversy over his origin, and it has been argued that he was not calling for an Islamic revival because he was a Shi'i who intended to conceal his Iranian background within the Sunni community.[457] In Keddie's thesis on Afghani, one concludes that he was a hypocritical, reckless, and insignificant figure.[458] This is because Keddie intends to present his thought within a series of contradictions, though his Islamic approach, e.g. the revival of the early decades of Islam, the end of Muslim's underdevelopment and the call for *ijtihad* as well as the fight against oppression and colonialism, did not change throughout his life.[459] One of these contradictions, which Keddie records, is based on his answer to Renan's lecture on Islam. She indicates that though Afghani intends to appear as a defender of Islam in Muslim communities, in the West he supported secular thought and indicated that all religions are hostile to science.[460] However, Rida wrote in *al-Manar* and indicated that in this answer Afghani referred to Islam practised by Muslims not Islam

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[453] Al-Qaradawi, *Fi Fiqh al-Awlawiayat: Derasa Jadida fi Daw' al-Qur'an and Sunnah (In the Jurisprudence of Priorities: A New Study in the light of al-Qur'an and Sunnah)*, (Cairo: Wahba Publisher, 1996), 223
[454] Antonie Wessels, "The So-Called Renaissance of Islam", *Journal of Asian and African Studies,* XIX, 3-4 (1984), 193
[455] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 116, 130
[456] Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, (Russell & Russell, 1968), 1
[457] Nikki R.Keddie, "Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani' in Pioneers of Islamic Revival", ed. Ali Rahnema (Zed Books, 1994), 11, 12
[458] Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani*, (University of California Press, 1968), 37, 44,45
[459] Ali Shalash, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani bayn Darisih (Jamal al-Din al-Afghani among those studying him)*, (Egypt: Dar al-Shuruq, 1987), 93 (my translation)
[460] Keddie, *An Islamic Response,* 24

according to the teachings of the Qur'an.[461] In fact, I detect this point when he said, "

… if these obstacles come uniquely from the Muslim religion itself or from the

manner it was propagated…"[462] Hence, it can be argued that when Afghani's views

are contextualised within modern *Salafi* thought, his approach would be obvious to

those studied him; this attempt was fulfilled by many scholars.

Muhammad 'Abduh[463] and Charles Admas,[464] indicated that Jamal al-Din was

Afghani and therefore Sunni. Rida indicated that al-*Manar* followed the same *Salafi*

thought of *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* which was influenced by ibn Taymiyya's struggle

against external invasion and ibn Abd el-Wahab's endeavours for Islamic unity in the

Arabia.[465] In addition, Afghani declared that the first place he knew was Afghanistan,

then India, then Iran, and later the Arabic world.[466] He also was known for his

revolutionary, dauntless, fearless nature, which led him to exile.[467] E. G. Brown states

in his biography on Afghani that "he was at once philosopher, writer, orator, and

journalist but above all politician and was regarded by his admirers as a great patriot

and by his antagonists as a dangerous agitator."[468] In fact, he explicitly expressed his

Sunni stance in his writings and speeches, and said, for example, "the Qur'an is alive

and will not die… Allah's Book did not change; return to it and make it judge your

conditions and behaviours…"[469] He also said:

> The Rashidun Caliphs of the shortest age had undertaken caliphate before those
> who lived longer… if 'Ali ruled after the Prophet, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and
> 'Uthman would have died before they were able to serve Islam and Muslims as
> much as they could, may Allah bless them all,… this is Allah's wisdom in His

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[461] Shalash, 38

[462] Keddie, ''Lecture on teaching and learning and Answer to Renan'' in *Modernist Islam*, ed. Kurzman, 107

[463] Muhammad 'Imara, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani al-Muftara 'alih (Jamal al-Din al-Afghani who has been maligned),* (Cairo, 1984), 43

[464] Adams, 4

[465] Al-Jindi, *Tarikh al Sahafa*, 18 (my translation)

[466]'Imara, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani,* 130, 131, 132

[467] Adams, 17

[468] Adams, 17

[469] Ibrahim, 129 (my translation)

creation and the most honourable of you in the sight of God are the most pious.[470]

Thus, it can be argued that Afghani did not conceal his background or thought. Therefore, and based on these views, I would state that there can always be a space where Afghani can be perceived as Sunni who followed modern *Salafi* thought.

Afghani's reform project focused mainly on political restoration, which in his view could be achieved under the reign of a qualified Muslim ruler who should seek the unity of Muslim communities.[471] He believed that reform should start from the government and thus would result in the reform of all Muslims.[472] He said: "Egypt will not rise and the East, with all its countries and states, will not rise unless Allah grants them a strong and fair man who does not have an absolute power and rule…"[473] This was Afghani's project of reform which mainly tended to secure an Islamic unity under the reign of a convenient Muslim ruler.

There is not a controversy over Abduh's background which indicates that he was Sunni; however the main problem about his thought is his attempt to gather between rationality and *Salafiyyia*. In fact, he intended to form a rational *Salafi* trend in order to fight against Muslim stagnation and Westernisation.[474] Within this trend, he indicated the supremacy of shari'a and encouraged the practice of *ijtihad* by well informed Muslim scholars.[475] He said:

> All people should return to the Qur'an. If they can not because of their lack of education, they have to ask a well informed scholar and they should ask him for an evidence form the Qur'an. People should be eager to learn the foundations of

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[470] 'Imara, *Jamal al-Din al-Afghani; Muqiz al-Sharq wa Faylasuf al-Islam (Jamal al-Din al-Afghani; The Awakener of the East and the Philosopher of Islam)*, (Egypt: Dar al-Shuruq, 1988), 42 (my translation)
[471] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 117
[472] Adams, 12
[473] 'Imara, *Muslimun Thuwar (Revolutionary Muslims),* (Egypt: Dar-al-Shuruq, 1988), 407 (my translation)
[474] Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Al-Imam Muhammad Abduh wa al-Qadaya al-Isalamya (Imam Muhammad Abduh and Islamic Issues)*, (Egypt, 2005),7-8
[475] Muhammad Salih Muhammad al-Sayed*, 'I'adat Bina' 'ilm al-Tawhid 'ind al-Ustaz al-Imam Muhammad 'Abduh (The Reconstruction of Tawhid Science in Imam Muahmmad Adbu's thought),* (Egypt: Dar Quba' Publisher, 1998), 36 (my translation)

their belief and practices. If they do not do this, there would be different opinions and *madhahib* would block out Allah's Book…[476]

Thus, 'Abduh's project of reform was based on the religious restoration. He adopted Afghani's philosophical view of Islam and formed his revolutionist religious thought because he rejected orthodox interpretations of the main resources of Islam and insisted on the right of every generation to practice *ijtihad* according to the new requirements of every age.[477] He did not have these revolutionary thoughts and plans within a political context.[478] He aimed to reform the education of al-Azhar and develop Islamic legislation within a broad understanding of Islamic shari'a.[479] He also founded Islamic philanthropic societies to improve education and teach former *salafi* scholars' books.[480] In addition, when he attempted to give certain rational interpretations, regarding some verses in the Qur'an, he did not oppose former interpretations. In fact he was trying to gather between Islam and science in order to defeat materialists' claims against Islam.[481] He indicated that these rational interpretations should not be followed as model.[482] Thus it can be argued that 'Abduh's project of reform was not outside the *salafi* line but an attempt to unite and encourage Muslims to retain and revive their religion.

'Abduh's disciple and biographer, Rashid Rida was inspired by the thoughts of the *Salafiyya* School and sought both religious and political restoration, but within a conservative context because he aimed to retain the conservative Islamic thought of ibn Taymiyyah.[483] Although Rida was inspired by Afghani's and 'Abduh's Islamic revival views that indicated the compatibility of Islam and modern life demands, he

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[476] Ibid, 36
[477] Nadav Safran, 64
[478] Muhammad 'Imara, *Al-Islah bil Islam; Ma'lim al-Mashru' al-Hadhari lil Imam Muhammad Abduh (Reform in Islam; The characteristics of Imam Muhammad Abduh's civilization project)*, (Cairo, 2006), 7
[479] 'Imara, *Muslimun Thuwaar,* 443
[480] Faruq al-Qadi, *Fursan al-Amal (The knights of hope),* (Arabic Research Centre, 2000),76
[481] Al-Sayed, 44-45
[482] Ibid, 45
[483] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 231

did not follow their philosophical thought and its implication in issues concerning religion. Hourani indicated that Rida was a modern educated Muslim who maintained Islamic identity and thought.[484] His thought is thoroughly discussed in the following section.

The reform thought of the *Salafiyya* School was circulated throughout Muslim and Western regions through press releases, e.g. *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* and *al-Manar*, interfaith dialogues, e.g. Afghani's controversy with Renan on Islam and science in Paris (1880)[485], and the establishment of Islamic organisations, e.g. Rida's establishment of an Islamic college for Muslim missionaries and spiritual directors in Egypt (1912).[486] Subsequently, it can be argued that the reformers of the *Salafiyya* School were aware of the importance of knowledge circulation because colonialists not only impose military power but also circulated Orientalist views on Islam among educated Muslims. Thus, I would state that the modern *Salafiyya* School aimed to be an organised movement and its main members agreed on a return to the true teachings of Islam and the revival of Islamic history and sciences. This Islamic revival had an impact upon the reform of women's social status because the *Salafiyya* reformers wanted to reform all aspects of Muslim life. Women's social status was a crucial issue during this time and 'Abduh and Rida, participated in this debate over woman's issues.

When I investigate the issue of reform within an Islamic context, I consider that in England during the 19th century English reformers also sought a revival of their Catholic teachings and practises in order to avoid what they saw as the corruption of state politics and material life. I find that there are similar incidents, e.g. an English

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[484] Ibid, 235
[485] Ibid, 120
[486] Ibid, 227

Anglo-Catholic revival and an Egyptian Islamic revival, and similar attributes of reformers on both sides, e.g. both Froude and Afghani were active figures in these two reform movements due to their energetic nature. I also find that there are similar claims of each movement, e.g. both called for a return to the past and for the revival of their early religious history. However, I do not suggest that the Islamic revival movement is the same as the Oxford Movement, or that Keble and Rida had the same reform ethos. This is because comparison signifies the existence of distinct entities that cannot be perceived as identical because if they are, they cannot be compared.

On the other side, I find that what motivated the message of reform in each country is similar, as they both intended to form a moral community within a religious context. However, the message itself was different because it is based on religious foundations in each region. Reform within the Oxford Movement was based on the revival of the Catholic Church's authority and teachings. However, the Islamic revival movement sought reform within a return to the teachings of Islam and the revival of Islamic history and sciences. Hence, it can be argued that the teachings and thought of each movement were different. Nevertheless, this comparison reveals that organised religious thought had had an impact on social reform in the two regions.

7.2 Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues

To follow up the investigation and comparison of religious reformers' discourse on women's issues in Egypt and England during the 19th and early 20th centuries, this section focuses on two Muslim figures: Rashid Rida and Labiba Ahmed.

7.2.1 Rashid Rida (1865-1935)

> All we need to acquire from Europe is its scientific achievements, technical skills, and advanced industries. The acquisition of these aspects does not require all this amount of westernization.[487]
>
> Rashid Rida

Rashid Rida, a well-informed scholar of Islamic science and Arabic language, was inspired by Islamic revival thought; however, Rida was aware of the philosophical approach of his teachers: Afghani and 'Abduh. Consequently, he followed a conservative theological approach.[488] He was respected by his friends and opponents not merely because of his knowledge and intelligence but also because of his humble and honest nature.[489] According to one of his friends, "Rida had the childlike nature of those great historical people who used to believe what others say and trust them."[490] At one of his meetings with Rida, Alfred Mitchell-Innes, the under-secretary of state for finance, said: "It seems that your father had paid unusual concern regarding your upbringing and education, the thing that had not been popularly known and practised among Orientals."[491] At this point, I would argue that when some Orientalists, e.g. Brown, Mitchell, Renan and Blunt, had had direct knowledge of Orientals, their reported actual experience could refer to a different image of the Other than that of inferior subjects. The discussion of harem also supports this view, as in my investigation of this issue in Chapter Seven, I refer to the difference between the image of harem from an insider and outsider view. I indicate that real experience, which represented an image of active and knowledgeable women inside harem, replaced Orientalist representation of sensual and enslaved women in the same world.

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[487] Kurzman, *Modernist Islam,* 8

[488] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 224

[489] Arsalan, *Al-Sayed Muhammad Rashid Rida,* 128 (my translation)

[490] Ibid, 128

[491] Ibid, 105

In comparison to this image of Rida, Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge were also known as devout Christians in their practice of Christianity and were respected by many English people. Again, my point is not to represent Muslim and Christian reformers as identical, but I refer to how conservative reformers were perceived as reverent and influential characters due to their religious integrity and standing within their communities. This is a fundamental point in this study because I attempt to represent a positive representation of religious figures within this arena of women's studies, which has been marginalised in contemporary studies of women in both Muslim and English societies.

In my investigation of Egyptian history, I indicate that many factors, e.g. the processes of modernisation and colonialism, can be considered when Muslim women's issues are investigated. I refer to the unsettled economic and political conditions of Egypt that affected the reform of women's social status, for example in the arena of education. The focus of Rida and other reformers on political and religious restoration more than women's issues indicates that it was not bias against women that was responsible for their lack of proper education. Rather the unsettled conditions in the country played a significant role in the delay of women's development and thus united reformers to exert efforts in order to raise the moral and intellectual standards of Muslims. Rida's reform project was mainly discussed within his political and theological views.[492] He wrote extensively about the restoration of Muslim unity as well as Islamic faith and teachings.[493] In my view, he focused on these issues because they were more important to Muslim societies, which were under occupation and Orientalist attacks against Arabs and Muslims, than the issue of

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[492] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 239-244
[493] Ibid, 239-244

women's admission to universities or women's civil and political participation. However, this does not signify that he did not call for the reform of Muslim women's status in society.

At an early stage in his life as a Muslim scholar, Rida indicated that he was concerned with the education of both men and women in his village in Syria.[494] He offered Muslim women and Muslim men separate classes where he taught them about Islamic teachings.[495] He also indicated that women in his family were well informed in religion and used to share as a family their knowledge regarding Islamic history, literature and ethics.[496] Later, when Rida moved to Cairo and joined the *Salafiyya* School, he founded *al-Manar* review, which discussed many social issues, including women's issues. 'Abduh and Rida were interested in the reform of education in order to encourage Muslims to benefit from modern sciences while maintaining their Islamic identity.[497] Rida indicated in the first edition of *al-Manar*:

> The first aim of this magazine is to encourage the education of boys and girls and urge them to learn different sciences and arts. It aims to improve scientific books and educational methods. It also wants Muslims to learn how to adopt and match the useful achievements of the developed countries.[498]

Rida indicated that Islam encourages Muslims to seek knowledge because true knowledge strengthens faith.[499] He always insisted on the importance of knowledge as a true requirement of Islam, and he referred to many verses and sayings of the Prophet that indicate this view, e.g. "And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge." (20:114)[500]

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[494] Arsalan, 81
[495] Ibid, 81
[496] Ibid, 81
[497] Albert Hourani, "Near Eastern Nationalism Yesterday and Today", *Foreign Affairs*, 42, no.1 (1963), 128
[498] Al-Jindi, 31
[499] Shakib Arsalan, 109
[500] *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*

Rida's *salafi* stance is apparent in his discussion of women's issues, e.g. education, polygamy and inheritance, which was based on authentic Islamic teachings.[501] Regarding the issue of women's education, Rida pointed out that women need proper religious education at state schools because other options for women's religious classes were not available. He cited in *al-Manar* the view of Mrs Griffes, the first headmistress at al-Saniyya School, regarding Egyptian girls' state education which, according to *al-Manar,* directed Dunlop, the British consultant to the Egyptian ministry of education, to terminate her service. Mrs Griffes said:

> Our education is useless without refinement and this can not be fulfilled without religion… The most proper religion to be taught at state schools in Islamic countries is Islam because it is the religion of the country. Therefore, the ministry of education should make Islamic education compulsory in girls' schools and thus would have an impact upon their guidance …[502]

Rida always raised this issue of religious education in *al-Manar* in order to urge Muslims to establish Islamic schools for girls. This indicates that he fully and actively participated in the reform of Muslim women's social status, not only in response to secular or Westernised views, as for example in the case of Amin, but because this was part of his project regarding the reform of Muslim community.

Qasim Amin wrote about Muslim women between 1894 and 1900; throughout these years he produced three texts that reflected his changing thought regarding women's issues. However, Rida began his attempts to reform the status of women before moving to Egypt in 1897. When he founded *al-Manar* in 1898, he intended to present a series of discussions about women's issues. In these attempts, Rida had had stable views and claims for the reform of Muslim society. He always discussed women's issues within Islamic revival thought and supported his views with evidences from the

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[501] Adams, 230
[502] Al-Jindi, 267

teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as Islamic history. On the other hand, English reformers also actively endeavoured to reform the social status of English women. Wordsworth aimed to reform the educational status of women through her teaching career and writings, and Yonge participated in this issue through teaching Sunday school and writing novels. These English reformers not only responded to secular and liberal English feminist thought but also attempted to revive Christian beliefs and teachings. Thus, it can be argued that conservative reformers in both regions were active participants in the debate on the woman question.

In the first section of this chapter, I demonstrate that reform within Islamic revival thought should be based on a return to Islamic teachings and the revival of Islamic history and sciences. In addition, modern *salafi* reformers at the turn of the century encouraged Muslims to adopt Western scientific techniques, subjects and skills. However, Rida warned against slavish adulation of the West: [503] "We do not blame him (Dunlop) because he is serving his nation but blame and shame are due to those used by him in order to demolish their religious and linguistic unity…"[504] Rida wanted Muslims to learn science as well as modern techniques and skills in order to build and strengthen Muslim community, but other views regarding Western civilisation, freedom, national solidarity and social virtues were not included in Rida's project of reform, which was thoroughly focused on the restoration of Islamic heritage.[505] He said: "Islamic shari'a indicates that learning any industries that people need in life is compulsory for all Muslims."[506]

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[503] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 235

[504] Al-Jindi, 267

[505] Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 235

[506] Al-Jindi, 613

Rida believed that Muslim women should have proper knowledge about their religion, but this does not imply that they can not learn other literary and scientific subjects.[507] He argued that Muslim women must call and work for the increase of girls' schools, which would provide them with proper religious education, e.g. teach them about the Islamic faith, law, ethics and history, as well as other scientific and literary subjects.[508] In his message for women in 1930, Rida urged women to do their best to have proper education:

> Ask your nation and government and before this oblige yourselves to have proper education according to the teachings of this straight religion and great Muhammadan reform. Ask them to allow you perform prayers as well as fasting and to increase the lessons of Islamic religion, history and ethics…[509]

Rida stated that there are many verses in the Qur'an as well as sayings of the Prophet that indicate the duty of Muslims, males and females, to seek knowledge; for example, this hadith: *"Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim."* [510] In order to explain the rule behind these teachings, Rida said, "Muslim scholars agreed that men and women are equal regarding everything Allah makes compulsory or required, except these rules regarding feminine issues, e.g. menstruation, childbirth...and bloodshed from which they are exempted."[511]

Rida also indicated that in Islamic history many Muslim women were renowned for their Islamic knowledge; for example, the Prophet's wives, e.g. 'A'isha, who were the main sources for hadith narrations and whose knowledge represented an authority on the interpretation of the Qur'an and for Islamic jurisprudence. He said: "Women were hadith narrators…, poetesses, and experts in different sciences and arts. They taught

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[507] Rida, 18

[508] Ibid, 201

[509] Ibid, 201

[510] Ibid, 18

[511] Ibid, 18

their slaves in the same way they used to teach their own daughters."[512] However, Rida argued that women's education should not direct them to abandon family life. He declared that in Islam the role of women as good mothers and wives equals the role of men in a battle, as both have the same rewards.[513] In my view, Rida was not against women's calls for better education because he always indicated that seeking useful knowledge and proper education means that Muslims are obeying God. However, he warned women against these calls that intended to change their traditional roles and threaten their Islamic identity:

> They (Westernised figures), calling for the renewal and guidance of civilization, directed their calls towards women and young people… and while persuading them that they were living an old deformed life, … e.g. women's veiling and domestic life…, they polished every new claim… e.g. free mixing, belly dancing, and drinking alcohol… then those and those left their houses…, and no virtues, known as religion, honour, modesty,… would remain in this society[514]

He also said:

> The real advantage and worth of things are in their authenticity and importance not their antiquity or modernity. Ancient things were once new and modern things will soon be outdated and those who do not retain their old things will have nothing new besides they will have no existence.[515]

As I demonstrate before, when Rashid Rida discussed women's issues he supported his views with evidences from the Qur'an and Sunnah. I focus on two of these issues that summarise the whole issue of women's image in Islam which Rida intended to revive within the Muslim community. Firstly, this verse: "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware." (49:13)[516] Rida explained that this verse refers to the

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[512] Ibid

[513] Ibid, 42-43

[514] Al-Jindi, 275

[515] Rida, 147

[516] *The Meaning of the ?Glorious Qur'an*

equality between Muslim women and men before God; they have the same religious commitments, rights and duties and will be rewarded or punished according to their own deeds.[517] Secondly, this verse: "And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in kindness, and men are a degree above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise." (2:228)[518] In his explanation of this verse, Rida stated that being equal before God does not evade the fact that God created men and women differently, not to be regarded as superior and inferior but to be suitable for their duties in life. Hence men are granted a degree over women because in Islam men must play the roles of providers and protectors. In this regard, he indicated that this degree is due to male sex over females, not for every man and woman, because there are many women who are better than their husbands in education and work as well as in physical strength and ability to earn living.[519] Rida contextualised his views regarding women's issues within this Islamic thought, indicating the importance of the reform of women's status in society.

Rida's views and attempts to reform women's issues, e.g. religious classes, journal articles, texts and formal speeches, shaped his reform discourse on women's issues. This discourse was contextualised within Islamic revival thought. Thus Rida's participation in the debate over the woman question was not an individual phenomenon but represented the Islamic revival thought that had produced many reformers who intended to reform the status of Muslim women in society within an authentic Islamic context. Christian reformers also formed their reform discourse on women's issues within the reform thought of the Oxford Movement.

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[517] Rida, *Huquq al-Nisa' fi el-Islam*, 9
[518] *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*
[519] Rida, 48

English reformers as well as Muslim reformers were not concerned with the issue of equality or the image of the new woman but were concerned with the religious image of women. In England, Elizabeth Wordsworth indicated that English women had to attain proper religious knowledge, and Charlotte Mary Yonge indicated in her novels, e.g. *The Clever Woman of The Family*, the role of proper male guardianship in women's lives and how this would impact the reform of women's social status. As I state before, Rida referred to the same issues but within its Islamic context. At the end of his message for women (1930), Rida firstly indicated the importance of providing women with proper Islamic education. Secondly, he argued that guardianship in Islam grants women a respected status in society.[520] Thus, it can be argued that both Muslim and English reformers can understand each other's views on women's issues within a religious context.

7.2.2 Labiba Ahmed (1870-1951)

> I swear that modesty will be my crown, and virtue my light, and I shall live purely: a useful and devout wife, whose hand in child- raising is superior. I shall fulfil my rightful and correct duty, toward God, the homeland, the family.[521]
>
> Egyptian Ladies Awakening Society

Labiba Ahmed was a Muslim activist in Egypt at the turn of the century. She was born into an educated family known for their knowledge of science, religion and national issues.[522] She was not a well-informed scholar as she had not attained any higher or specialised degrees in Islamic sciences, but she learned Arabic language and memorised the Qur'an. She was inspired by Islamic revival thought and was

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[520] Rida, 199

[521] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman,* 196

[522] Muhammad Rajab al-Bayumi, *AL-Nahda al-Islamyyia fi Siayr 'Alamiha al-Mu'asirin (Islamic Renaissance within the Biographies of its Contemporary Distinguished Figures)*, Vol 5, (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 1999), 256 (my translation)

determined to participate in the reform of Muslim women's social status.[523] Although Ahmed was not at the same level as Rida in terms of religious education and knowledge, she was known for her social reform endeavours within an Islamic *salafi* stance. Rida indicated in his message for women (1930) that Muslim women can be reformers and revivalists when they learn and retain their Islamic teachings and identity.[524] Subsequently, Ahmed played the role of the Muslim reformer who did not raise any Islamic theological debates about Muslim women's issues, e.g. veiling and marriage. However, she maintained the Islamic code of women's proper conduct and focused on what she could offer in order to support other women and girls in society. Thus, it can be argued that Ahmed was a devout Muslim reformer.

Ahmed was of the opinion that the reform of Muslim women's social status would be achieved when they followed their Islamic teachings, not European thought and lifestyle.[525] This was the Islamic revival thought that Modern *Salafiyya* School strictly adhered to at the turn of the century. The oath quoted at the beginning of this section was given by Ahmed's Awakening Society, which she founded and directed until her death. This oath refers to the revival of the Islamic code of women's proper conduct.[526] In fact, Ahmed intended to found this Society in order to revive Islamic teachings not only theoretically but also practically.[527] Ahmed was an active participant in the social and political life and her activities reflected her Islamic thought. She was completely veiled, did not oppose segregation and insisted on women's traditional roles. She said: "When will the people understand that the duty of

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[523] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 190

[524] Rida, 201

[525] Beth Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 212

[526] Ibid, 196

[527] Isma'il Ibrahim, *Suhifiyat Tha'irat (Revolutionary Journalists),* (Cairo: Al-Dar al-Libnanya al-Misriyya, 1997), 95 (my translation)

a girl is to be a mother?"[528] In addition, she fought against "innovation, immorality and corruption"[529]; she said in her first meeting with Muslim Sisters Brotherhood Society: "The nation is witnessing an apparent moral decline and social disorder in every aspect of life… We want to reform ourselves and I think that if we learn and follow our Islamic teachings, this reform… will be attained." [530] In the *Awakening,* Labiba also focused on the importance of reform and demarcated her aims and plans:

> We have to fight against those calling for corruption under the name of guidance, darkness under the name of light, false enlightenment under the name of a straight path… we have to seek either a near victory… or a far fearless battle… I will sacrifice my poor soul for the benefit of amending what are wrong and prioritising national and religious obligations…[531]

Ahmed was supported by other women and founded the Society of Egyptian Women's Awakening, which held various activities, e.g. women's journal, institute and workshop, and girls' orphanage.[532] Ahmed's Society and its activities aimed to offer for Egyptian women education, employment and social care within a proper religious environment, "Let your daughters learn their religion at an early age, teach them to hate vices, and prevent them from evils…"[533] Labiba also said: "Let them learn medicine, education, knitting and any other occupation that would enable them to earn their living and raise their children…[534] In fact Ahmed's Society offered real benefits for Egyptian women.[535] They raised funds and gathered donations in order to supply women and girls in need with food as well clothes, and to teach them life

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[528] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman,* 201

[529] Ibid, 199

[530] Shu'ayb Ghubashi, *Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: Dirasa fi al-Nash'a wa al-Madmun 1933-1954 (Islamic Brotherhood Journalism; A Study of its Establishment and Content)* , (Dar al-Tauzi' wa al-Nashr al-Islamyyia, 2000), 203 (my translation)

[531] Al-Bayumi, *AL-Nahda al-Islamyyia,* 262

[532] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 198

[533] Ibrahim, *Suhifiyat Tha'irat, 99*

[534] Ibid

[535] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 196

skills.[536] The Awakening Society taught orphan girls knitting, embroidery, as well as cooking and also the marketing of their products. [537] Ahmed's Society approved the ministry of education decision to open a night commerce school for girls but they urged the government to open national organisations and companies in order to increase girls' opportunities for employment. Kawthar Sadiq, a journalist in the *Awakening,* wrote:

> Where will graduated girls form this commerce school work? Will they work in foreign stores… which offer jobs merely for foreigners? Will they work in Egyptian stores which are very few? Or will they work in government organisations which can barely satisfy the needs of its huge numbers of male staff?[538]

These views and endeavours indicate that Ahmed was aware of the problems facing women in her society and with the need of practical steps towards the reform of their social status.

As an indication of Ahmed's practical participation in raising the cultural and educational standard of women, the *Awakening* discussed moral as well as social and political issues from an Islamic viewpoint. It also dedicated a section of each volume to commentary on the Qur'an and hadith. One of the issues that this journal focused on was the opening of girls' acting institute. The *Awakening* discussed the vices resulting from teaching girls dancing and acting in the Egyptian society. It called Muslims to refuse the establishment of these schools, "no one who loves this religion would ever accept this!"[539] On the other side, Ahmed's society encouraged Egyptian women to use available media resources, e.g. radio and press, in order to educate

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[536] Ibid, 197-198

[537] Al-Bayumi,258

[538] Ibid 263

[539] Ibid, 263

people virtues and morality.[540] Ahmed gave weekly radio talks on moral, social and Islamic themes.[541] She also encouraged young talented women, e.g. 'A'isha Abd al-Rahman known Bint al-Shat'i, to express their views and write in her journal.[542] The *Awakening* was widely distributed and welcomed by various categories of readers, e.g. teachers, parents, students and Muslim leaders, in Egypt as well as other Arabic and Islamic regions.[543] In all of her endeavours, Ahmed encouraged the establishment of more schools for girls, with equal fees to those for boys. However, she believed girls' education should be convenient to their nature in order to prepare them for their traditional roles in life.[544] She did not oppose women's higher education, but thought it would be better to remain within the fields of education and medicine, because Muslims usually prefer to have female teachers and doctors for women and girls.[545] She called for the establishment of a higher teacher training college for women, where they could be well informed of the Arabic language.[546] In addition, the Awakening Society organised regular assemblies where elite women gathered for Islamic and scientific lectures.[547]

Many Egyptians praised the Women's Awakening Society and were of the opinion that "she [Ahmed] does not limit herself to literary activity alone but she also endeavours to promote social welfare in the country."[548] Ahmed became a well-known Muslim figure at the turn of the century and until her death in the mid-20th century. She was a respected figure in Egyptian society and her fame expanded

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[540] Ibid

[541] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 208

[542] Ibrahim, *Suhifiyat Tha'irat,* 98

[543] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 204-205

[544] Ibid, 201

[545] Ibid, 201

[546] Ibid, 201

[547] Ibid, 198

[548] Ibid, 198

beyond Egypt to other Islamic regions.[549] She also became the head of the Muslim

Sisters Brotherhood Society in Cairo.[550] As discussed earlier, Rida was a well-known

scholar in the Islamic World and Wordsworth and Yonge were respected and

successful women within their English communities. Wordsworth became the first

Lady Principle at Oxford University and Yonge became a popular novelist during the

19th century. However, these active reformers have been marginalised in

contemporary studies which focus on secular trends when investigating women's

issues either in Western or Muslim societies.[551] Al-Bayumi indicates that there are

many distinguished figures worked for women's welfare within a moral context in

Western and Eastern societies. However, they have been neglected because others

calling for women's political participation have been under focus in many studies.[552]

Ahmed's views and the real achievements of the Awakening Society formed her

reform discourse on women's issues, which was contextualised within Islamic revival

thought. This was the same line of reform followed by Rida, whose views and

achievements indicate his active participation in the reform of women's social status.

Therefore, the reform discourse of both Rida and Ahmed on women's issues

represented the same thought, achieved similar goals and had had the same aims. This

is what Foucault indicates within his discussion on discourse. In the introduction of

this thesis I demonstrate that this study aims to represent reformers' views on

women's issues within a coherent construction that can make the issue of reform a

subject having its own origin, context, thought and figures, and which had an impact

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[549] Ibid, 204, 206

[550] Ghubashi, *Sihafat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun,* 203

[551] Baron, *Egypt As a Woman*, 189

[552] Al-Bayumi, *AL-Nahda al-Islamyyia,* 260

upon society.[553] This is the same procedure that I follow when investigating English reformers' discourse on women's issues.

7.3 Conclusion

Rashid Rida and Labiba Ahmed retained a *salafi* line within their views on Muslim women's issues. They formed a coherent discourse on women's issues that was contextualised within the Islamic revival thought. In comparing the discourse of Muslim reformers on women's issues with English reformers' discourse, certain results can be depicted. Firstly, incidental similarities can not be overlooked despite the different beliefs and histories of Muslims and Christians. Secondly, the construction of good Muslim and Christian communities underpinned the message of reform in each country. This similar goal can bring together English and Muslim women in every age to communicate, respect and understand each other. Thirdly, Muslim reformers' discourse on women's issues did not oppose the aims of the reform discourse of Wordsworth and Yonge. This is due to the fact that these English reformers were interested in every endeavour that would enable English women to be good Christians. In fact when Rida criticised Western women's lives,[554] he did not criticise these calls by religious reformers nor did he criticise Western women's calls for better education and economic or legal rights.[555] He criticised Western calls for sexual freedom, equality and independence, which were also criticised by Christian reformers. Rida discussed in *al-Manar* the relationship between Muslims and Christians:

> Our belief is based on tolerance towards those having different religions, especially Christians. We try our best to remove hatred and to work together

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[553] Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault primer: Discourse, power and the subject* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 31

[554] Rida, *Huquq al-Nisa' fi el-Islam,*199-200

[555] Ibid, 74-76

towards the development of our nation. We do not wish that anyone would offend the other either in word or deed…[556]

This echoes Ahmed's view, as she was against Western liberal and secular thought, but she was not against national unity. In the *Awakening,* she used to indicate this point:

> Today we will continue to fulfil our duty towards Egyptian women in particular and the Arabic women in general… Today the *Awakening*, as it has been before, will be a centre for male and female reformers and guides as well as defenders of truth and virtues…[557]

Thus, it can be stated that when religion is practised, different beliefs can be respected and this will encourage the process of social reform within a religious context.

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[556] Al-Jindi, 178
[557] Al-Bayumi, 262

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In the present day, women participate in nearly all aspects of social life in many Eastern and Western regions. They have had access to various forms of education, employment, entertainment and other social benefits. According to historians, the present is the outcome of the past, which means that the past explains how and why the present has been moulded.[558] Therefore, it can be argued that the current status of women is the product of a historical journey that has witnessed many stages of discussion, reform and change. Looking back explains this procedure and its various stages. This study investigates one of these stages in the history of women, which took place in Egypt and England during the 19th and early 20th centuries, as this time represents a significant stage in women's endeavours to improve their status in society in these two regions. This study investigates this stage in women's history within a religious context. In other words, although this study discusses feminist thought during this time, it mainly focuses on the contributions and views of religious reformers. Thus, this study represents the voices of religious reformers, both Christian and Muslim, in relation to women's issues throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries in these two parts of the world, Egypt and England.

In the introductory chapter I explain that this study was motivated by a question that I, as a Muslim Egyptian woman in a Western society, have long thought about: what do Christians in the West think about women's social status in this developing and changing world? Because this study returns to the past in order to trace the beginnings of the woman question, I investigate the views of English religious figures towards women's issues during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Moreover, the focus on

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[558] Deirdre Beddoe, *Discovering a Practical Guide to the Sources of Women's History 1800-1945* (Pandora, 1993), 6

religious reformers is based on their marginalisation within the debate on women's issues in contemporary studies.[559] Beth Baron indicates that most studies on Egyptian women focus on Qasim Amin and Huda Sha'rawi, who represent the thought of the first liberal feminists in Egypt, while other conservative figures, e.g. Labiba Ahmed, have been marginalised figures.[560] Similarly, Julia Bush argues that feminists and suffragists were not the sole voices or heroines within the history of English women because conservative reformers, e.g. Elizabeth Wordsworth, were also concerned with the progress of women's education. Thus, there have been insufficient data about religious reformers' discourses in relation to women's issues and hence feminists in each region become the heroes and saviours who have challenged what in feminists' views were biased traditional systems.

First wave feminists, both Egyptian and English, have come under focus, or, in other words, have been worth investigating, because they challenged and resisted the power of traditional thought and former institutions; thereby becoming significant figures in history. This interpretation is based on Foucault's vision of power. Foucault argues that power should not be merely perceived as a destructive relation that oppresses and constrains individuals. According to Foucault, power is productive because it encourages individuals to resist and challenge what is popular, and thus form significant reactions.[561] This might be one way to explain the difference between Huda Sha'rawi's symbolic act of removing her veil in the public and Labiba Ahmed's insistence on keeping the veil, or Emily Davies's call for equal opportunities in education and employment, and Charlotte Mary Yonge's insistence on proper male guardianship. In these two examples, although Sha'rawi and Davies were unpopular

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[559] Baron, *Women's Awakening*, 22 and Bush, "Special Strength for Their Special Duties", 105
[560] Baron, *Women's Awakening*, 5
[561] Mills, 35

figures in their societies, they have become significant heroines in the history of women because their views and achievements challenged powerful systems. On the other hand, although Ahmed and Yonge, were popular figures, they have become marginalised because they were insignificant or passive figures within women's challenging of powerful systems, or, in other words, because they were working within the system and not against it. Thus, unpopular figures become significant while popular ones are seen as passive; this can explain why religious figures have been marginalised in contemporary studies. However, this story may provide another interpretation.

I would argue that religious figures have been 'left out of the story'[562], because a powerful tide of secularisation has aimed to suggest and circulate the passive role of religion within the arena of women's issues. The whole idea of power and resistance is based on delineating this power, which each campaign (feminists and reformers) wanted to challenge in their debates on women's issues. Many feminists intended to challenge male-dominated societies, which, in their view, represented the power and authority constraining and oppressing women. They agitated to change the causes underpinning this male authority, e.g. religion and customs.[563] Consequently, they produced a new agenda for the development of women's social status. However, I would argue that though their pursuits aimed at relieving women, from what they thought to be the burdens of traditional thought and former institutions, they enslaved women to the growing power of Western secular thought. Thus, they acted like tools used to produce knowledge in support of this power.[564] In fact, as I state in Chapters Three and Six, Emily Davies and Qasim Amin were aware that they were supporting

[562] Baron, *Women's Awakening in Egypt*, 5
[563] Caine, "Feminism, Suffrage and Nineteenth-Century English", 540
[564] Mills, 70

liberal and secular thought, and they believed that this new powerful thinking would emancipate women. Therefore, I would state that these unpopular figures during their age were not significant but passive because they worked for the secular thought and systems; in other words, they replaced one power with another.

On the other hand, I would argue that Muslim and English reformers did not see traditional institutions or thought intending to impose certain criteria on women. In fact, they believed that women were free and worthy if they were religious because they become responsible towards what they believed to be ordained for them by divine will. Elizabeth Wordsworth stated "we must not only cherish virtue, but hate sin with our whole hearts; we must recognize the responsibility of the human will, and the worth of every human soul."[565] Similarly, in Egypt, Labiba Ahmed set a guiding aim for her Society, which was to fight against "innovation, immorality, and corruption in the service of religion and morality."[566] Consequently, it can be argued that religious reformers were free, responsible humans and their achievements in relation to women's issues, support this view. However, they believed that the growing power of secular thought would change and reshape society. In England, John Keble declared that because politics was corrupted as it was no longer committed to Christian ethics, there should be two separate powers: the State and the Church.[567] Muslim reformers also believed that the growing secular power, as being introduced and supported by colonialism and Orientalism, would Westernise their society.[568] Therefore, while Wordsworth and Yonge as well as Rida and Ahmed maintained the popular thought regarding women's traditional roles and place, they believed that women's social status should be reformed, and felt a certain

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[565] Wordsworth, *Essays Old and New*, 25
[566] Baron, *Women's Awakening*, 199
[567] Griffin, *John Keble: Saint of Anglicanism*, 83
[568] Hourani, *Arabic Thought,* 227, 120

responsibility in this regard. They offered women in both regions real benefits. Thus, Muslim and English reformers were significant because they reacted against the power of secular thought that intended to change women's social status.

At this point I would demarcate the significance of reform and the attributes of reformers that this study finally concludes. Although I investigate religious reform discourses within two different contexts, I would conclude that reform, in its Islamic and Christian contexts, does not imply a change in women's traditional roles and place. Religious reform discourse also encouraged and participated in the social development of women within a moral religious construction. In other words, this study concludes that while 'religious reform' aimed to enable women to retain their central role and place in society, it encouraged them to benefit from new facilities in the developed world. Therefore, women in each region would not be living, acting or thinking like others, e.g. men, Westerners or Easterners, but rather being themselves according to their Islamic and Christian teachings, in order to understand and fulfil the message of their life.

In England, the Oxford Movement leaders wanted English people to retain their religion and believed that Catholic teachings and spirituality would help in this regard. In Egypt, the Islamic revival movement wanted to awaken Muslims in order to realise that despite the growing tide of western secular thought, religion would reform their status in the world only when they understand and practise Islam according to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Thus, 'reform' does not deconstruct or change former teachings and thought but return to, revive and respect them. Consequently, religious reformers become those figures who adhere to and extend this discourse of reform to others in their society. Wordsworth and Yonge believed in the

reform ethos of the Oxford Movement and intended to teach them to others. Rida and Ahmed were influenced by Islamic revival thought that urged them to participate in the reform of their society within an Islamic context. According to the various stages of investigation in this historical comparative study, the more people understand reform within this religious thought, the more they can communicate and understand each other, because they represent what is popular and significant in history.

This study represents the views and achievements of Muslim and English reformers regarding women's issues within a systematic construction of religious reform discourse and also compares them. I adopt an abstract use of discourse that represents the ideas and philosophies of certain phenomena in their contexts.[569] I have followed what Said did when he used Foucault's analysis of discourse to represent Orientalism as a construction of thought.[570] Foucault thought of discourse as a body of knowledge that is connected and ruled in certain specific ways within its historical context and limits.[571] Following this thought of discourse, this study represents reformers' views and achievements within the context of religious movements that took place in Egypt and England during this period. Thus, this study represents the ideas and achievements of reformers as a construction of thought with its own background, context and aims during this historical period.

The ideas and achievements of English reformers are contextualised within the thought of the Oxford Movement. Both Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge were influenced by the Oxford Movement thought of reform and intended to adopt it within their focus on women's issues. This thought had its own background in

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[569] Teun A.Van Dijik '' The Study of Discourse'' in *Discourse as Structure and Process, ed.* Teun A.Van Dijik (SAGE: London, 1997), 1-3

[570] Said, *Orientalism*, 3

[571] McHoul et al., *A Foucault Primer*, 31

the English history that resulted in the change of English people's ideas about religion. It also had its own aims, which focused on the revival of Catholicism in English society. In Egypt, I follow the same course and represent the views and achievements of Rashid Rida and Labiba Ahmed regarding women's issues within Islamic revival thought formed in Egypt due to certain historical factors, e.g. colonialism and modernisation. Within this historical context, the Islamic revival school produced its vision of reform that had its aims regarding the restoration of the Islamic community. This is how this study represents reformers' discourse on women's issues as part of a bigger system that had an impact on society in these two regions. Finally, I compare these religious reformers' discourses on women's issues.

The importance of this study is due to its investigation of the voices of religious reformers within a construction of thought; a reform discourse with its own historical background, context and aims. In addition, the comparison between Muslim and Christian reformers' discourses on women's issues represents the second main contribution of this study because no study has performed such comparison before. The comparison reveals that when religion is practiced, points of similarity can be highlighted, thus enabling women in each region to understand and communicate with each other. Therefore, an inter-faith dialogue can be encouraged between Christian and Muslim women according to what they can agree with in the real world. As I indicate in this study, feminist thought did not achieve this target because much feminist thought at this time was based on colonial and Orientalist views regarding the inferior East and the superior West. Within this thought, there was no dialogue between women in these two regions but rather an imposed Western criterion that Muslim women had to adopt in order to improve their social status in the developing world.

The method of comparison enables this study to discuss points of similarity and difference regarding religious reformers' discourses on women's issues. On the one hand, this comparison indicates that there are major differences in these reform discourses that cannot be compared, e.g. beliefs, history and practices. The context and thought of the Oxford Movement, which called for a Catholic revival, and Charlotte Mary Yonge's view regarding the parallel of the image of women to the image of the Church, is different from Muslims' thought of the Islamic revival and their belief in the image of women as an elevated creature as well as men, according to the main teachings in the Qur'an and Sunnah.[572] On the other hand, this comparison reveals certain similarities between the two discourses. The historical investigations of women's issues, e.g. education, work and marital laws, do not reflect this dichotomy regarding the image of English and Egyptian women that was represented by colonialists and Westernized figures. On the contrary, I find that women in these two regions wanted to improve their status in society within a religious national context. For example in the case of education, women, in each region, wanted to improve their education in order to practice their roles properly, help others and obey God. This was the primary goal of women's calls for better education whether they sought it at home or in schools and universities, Secular and liberal notions regarding women's education to be for the benefit of free life and gender equality were widely criticised during this period in these two countries. Emily Davies's calls regarding gender equality and women's participation in social life did not gain much support, and she was aware of this fact. Also Qasim Amin's texts were widely criticised in Egypt and he was aware of this fact. In addition, historical investigations indicate that both Christian and Muslim women, influenced by an understanding of religious

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[572] Jawad, 5

reform, believed that unlawful relationships were sinful, marriage was a sacred relationship, modesty was required, segregation was respected and religious education was one of the main fields that women were encouraged to learn and teach.

The comparison also reveals that religious reform was not an accidental phenomenon in either England or Egypt. The Oxford Movement, Elizabeth Wordsworth and Charlotte Mary Yonge were all linked and focused on the Anglo-Catholic revival. Therefore, it can be stated that there was a coherent thought regarding the reform of English women's social status during this time. On the other hand, the Islamic revival movement, Rashid Rida and Labiba Ahmed followed the *Salafi* line of Islamic revival thought, which also represented a coherent discourse that impacted the reform of Muslim women's social status during this time. Finally, the comparison indicates that what underpins the message of both reform discourses was similar because they sought the construction of a religious moral community.

Due to the time and space requirements of this thesis, this study focuses merely on four religious reformers, though there could have been a larger group of reformers during this time. Also, empirical work could have been performed through the use of interviews and questionnaires in order to examine women's knowledge regarding the participation of religious reformers in the development of women's social status. However I would state that the main questions of this study, which intend to represent the voices of religious figures within the arena of women's issues in Egypt and England, are investigated. Also, the main objectives which intend to build up dialogue between Muslim and Christian women and to represent another image of what has been studied and discussed regarding women in these two regions, are fulfilled in this study.

For future research, this study can be developed through the investigation of religious reformers' discourses on women's issues in Egypt and England during the period between the 1940s and the 1980s. This investigation can represent the second wave of reform within this arena of women's issues. Future research can follow the same stages of investigations: historical background, feminist thought and religious movements and their impact upon women's issues. The second series of religious reformers' discourse on women's issues in the mid-20th century would trace the development of early religious reform thought and examine its achievements for women during this second phase in women's history.

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