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**“The Compatibility of Civilizations: Muhammad
Shahrur and His Modernist Qur’anic Hermeneutics”
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Muammad Shahrur, the engineer from Syria, has garnered much attention, both positive and negative, in recent times due to the publication of his hefty exegetical work, *Al-Kitab wa-l-Qur'an: qira'a mu'asira* (“The Book and the Qur’an: A Contemporary Reading”). In my necessarily selective discussion, I will focus on some of the principal issues related to the main premise of this work: that Islamic principles, properly extrapolated from the Qur’an, are fundamentally compatible with the modern, western understanding of what constitutes civil society and its objectives. The paper goes on to elucidate Shahrur’s views on the Islamic origins of democracy, individual freedoms and human rights. The author invokes a canonical system of ethics and aesthetics based on what he calls “the Ten Commandments” drawn from the Qur’an, within whose purview the Muslim citizen ideally should live his or her public and private life. I will dwell on the significance of these various aspects of Shahrur's exegesis and his methodology for arriving at these conclusions. In this context, I will further briefly analyze how western and westernizing discourses provide the template for Shahrur's thesis of a Qur'anically mandated civil society and the rights of the modern Muslim citizen.