ISLAMIC HERITAGE

LEADS THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE UMMAH

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Editors

Hasan Bahrom
S. Salahudin Suyurno
Abdul Qayuum Abdul Razak

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Prakata

Sejarah warisan Islam telah memberikan impak yang cukup besar kepada perkembangan dunia hari ini. Ia bukan sahaja memberi sumbangan kepada aspek kerohanian malah turut menyumbang kepada aspek ekonomi, politik, pendidikan, sosial, kesenian, kebudayaan. sains dan teknologi. Perkembangan ini memperlihatkan bahawa pentingnya ketamadunan ilmu kepada ketamadunan dunia. Perkara ini selaras dengan tuntutan al-Quran yang menyatakan dengan jelas bahawa Allah SWT memuji sesiapa yang berusaha menuntut ilmu dan juga bertaqwa kepadaNya. Namun sejak akhir-akhir ini, sumbangan hasil pensejarahan Islam sering dipandang sepi oleh generasi muda. Sejarah warisan Islam tidak lagi dijadikan panduan dan iktibar dalam melebarkan ketamadunan ilmu Islam. Mereka lebih tertumpu kepada ketamadunan Barat yang dikatakan 'kaya' dengan khazanah ilmu. Sedangkan kemajuan hari ini seharusnya berlandaskan kepada ketamadunan Islam.

Penelitian atau pengkajian mengenai warisan Islam perlu direncanakan sebagai ketamadunan dunia. Idea-idea baru mengenai sejarah warisan Islam perlu diketengahkan, Oleh yang demikian, menerusi *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference* (IsHeC 2015) dilihat akan dapat membantu kepada perkembangan produksi seterusnya menjana idea-idea baru khususnya untuk memperkayakan kajian dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam kepada masyarakat. Dengan penganjuran seminar ini secara tidak langsung membantu untuk menjalinkan hubungan antara para sarjana dalam bidang sejarah warisan Islam. Ini adalah satu cabaran dan membuka peluang baru untuk membina satu perpaduan intelektual merentas sempadan dunia.

Buku ini merupakan kompilasi diskusi ilmu antara para ilmuan yang terlibat secara langsung dalam pembentangan kertas kerja mereka dalam *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference* (IsHeC 2015) daripada pelbagai platform ilmu Islam antaranya Kesenian, Ketamadunan, Komunikasi, Pendidikan, Kewangan, Sains dan Teknologi dan lain-lain lagi. Semoga curahan ilmu melalui penulisan ini mampu memberi sumbangan dalam menambah khazanah ilmu Islam kepada masyarakat.

Editor,
1st International Islamic Heritage Conference (IsHeC 2015),
Akademi Pengajian Islam Kontemporari,
UiTM Melaka.

Kata Aluan Rektor UiTM Melaka

Dengan Nama Allah Yang Maha Pemurah Lagi Maha Pengasih
Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh
Segala puji bagi Allah, Tuhan seru sekalian alam, dengan limpah kurniaNya serta keizinanNya, kejayaan penganjuran *1st International Islamic Heritage Conference* 2015 yang berlangsung di Hotel Mahkota Melaka pada 11-12 November 2015, telah menghasilkan banyak kertas kerja yang amat bermutu. Justeru, buku ini mengumpulkan puluhan penulisan para ilmuan dan cendekiawan dari dalam dan luar negara untuk bacaan semua.
Pelbagai isu telah dikupas termasuklah perihal seni Islam, budaya, politik, gendar, pendidikan, sejarah, kemasyarakatan, sains dan teknologi, ekonomi, kewangan, falsafah, bahasa dan komunikasi, kedermawanan dan pengurusan. Pembaca juga akan mendapati buku ini memuatkan kajian-kajian yang komited melaksanakan usaha mengintegrasikan antara ilmu duniawi dan ukhrawi. Ini membuktikan kesegaran keilmuan tamadun Islam itu sendiri.
Semoga perkongsian ilmu ini dapat meningkatkan komitmen umat dalam memartabatkan perintah Ilahi dalam kehidupan duniawi sebagai jambatan ukhrawi. Sekaligus ia bakal memberi manfaat pada alam sejagat.
Pihak UiTM Melaka merakamkan setinggi-tinggi tahniah dan ucapan terima kasih atas segala sokongan dalam bentuk material, tenaga dan sebagainya dalam merialisasikan seminar ini. Buat semua penaja yang telah memberikan sumbangan kepada wacana ini, sekalung penghargaan diucapkan. Semoga seminar dwi tahunan ini akan terus diperkasakan demi mengangkat martabat umat melalui kecemerlangan tamadun Islam yang diakui telah terbukti diseluruh jagat.

Sekian, terima kasih. Wassalam

PROF. MADYA DR MOHD ADNAN BIN HASHIM
Rektor ,
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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RELIGIOUS KEY TERMS AND THEIR NEW MEANINGS IN AL-FARUQI'S *AL-TAWHID: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THOUGHT AND LIFE*

Fadzilah Din[578]

ABSTRACT:
One of the most brilliant contributions of Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986) is in the realm of Islamic Thought. His masterpiece *Al-Tawhid: It's Implications for Thought and Life* is indeed a great and refreshing contribution in the realm of modern Islamic Worldview. In view of the title above, this paper will discuss the religious terminologies that have been given new meanings and thus have new implications in Al-Faruqi's *Al-Tawhid*. While there are many religious terms that can be studied in *Al-Tawhid*, the terms which will be analysed in this paper are *ilah, tawhid, iman, ibadah* and *ummah*. The old meanings of these terms will be compared and contrasted with the new ones and the implications to Islamic practice will be discerned from them. The result of the analysis is one that can be said to be a contextualization of Islamic terminologies to modern time.

Keywords: *Islamic Thought, Islamic Worldview, Islamic religious terms, Al-Faruqi, Al-Tawhid.*

INTRODUCTION

Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life was published by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi in 1982.[579] This book is considered a masterpiece in modern Islamic theology for many Muslims. In it the writer elaborates the significance of *al-Tawhid* (absolute monotheism) and its implications in a new and distinctive way. The author relates the concept of *Tawhid* to the principles of History, Knowledge, Metaphysics, Ethics, Social Order, the *Ummah*, Family, Political Order, the Economic Order, and Aesthetics which is remarkable and has never been done before. He emphasizes that T*awhid* as a foundation of Islam, Islamic culture and Islamic civilization in essence is knowledge based. It is also important to note that according to al-Faruqi Muslims developed the science of *'ilm al-tawhid* under which the disciplines of logic, epistemology, metaphysics and ethics are part of (Al-Faruqi, p. 17). In another place, he mentions that even Aesthetic subsumes under *'ilm al-tawhid* (al-Faruqi, 1986). This article analyses the new meanings and explanations to ordinary Islamic religious terminologies in the book mentioned above. Perhaps a more correct way of stating it is that al-Faruqi gives a correct meaning to religious terminologies which has been distorted over many centuries, thus making them properly understood again. There is a special need for Muslims to understand these religious terminologies properly because the deviation among Muslims from the truth in Islamic epistemology has caused "widespread deviations among Muslims in their thinking modes from established norms rooted in traditional Islamic intellectual culture" (Osman Bakar, 2014, p 41). Agreeing with that statement, in this paper, I will try to elucidate a few common religious terminologies such as *ilah*, *tawhid*, *iman*, *`ibadah*, *amanah* and *ummah,* which al-Faruqi has mentioned and given a new breath of understanding than they were previously [and still] understood in its religious usage. This misunderstanding has become hurdles for Muslims young and old with regard to the correct understanding of Islam and thus resulted in a substandard practice of their religion.

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[579] The one referred in this article is IsmÉÑÊl RÉjÈ al-FÉrÈqÈ. (1992). *Al-TawÍÊd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* Herndon, Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought. henceforth referred to as *Al-TawÍÊd.*

Ilah

The common meaning for the term *ilah* is god with a small "g". It can also mean idol. In Malay, *ilah* is usually translated as "*tuhan*". Therefore, in the first part of the confession of faith, *La ilaha illa 'llah* is usually translated as *Tiada tuhan melainkan Allah*. In English, this would be "There is no god but Allah" or "There is no god but God". Both the Malay and the English translation refers to the message that there is only one God, the latter English translation "There is no god but God" can be rather confusing for some and whenever mentioned in a classroom that uses English as a medium of instruction, it has to be pointed out verbally for example, "There is no god [in small g] but God [capital G]". When we look at the book *Al-Tawhid*, we find that al-Faruqi translates *ilah* as "an object of desire" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 2). The significance of this shift, i.e., translating "*ilah*" as "an object of desire", is very helpful and clarifies a number of misunderstandings and confusion about the concept of God in Islam. Thus, the meaning of "*la ilaha illa `llah*" now becomes, "there is no object of desire but Allah (God)" or to be more literal, "there is no object of desire other than The Object of Desire, i.e., God" because Allah comes from *al-ilah*. Hence, when someone says, *la ilaha illa `llah* he means, there is no other object of desire (for him) other than God. For those who understood, *la ilaha illa `llah* is an ethical statement.

The implication of that statement is, his object of desire will be God alone, not other object of desires such as personal interest in money, power, fame, family, career, national interest, or any other interest which is not ethical. This is because God is ethical in Islam. Among his 99 beautiful names (*al-Asma' al-Husna*), Justice (*al-`Adl*) and Truth (*al-Haqq*) [580] are included. God commands only what is good. His names depict the ethical principles. That is not to say that we should not desire money, power, fame, family, career, national interest and other interests, but it should be remembered they are only tools to be used to do good for oneself and further the progress of humanity. They are not the ultimate goals in themselves. This is also important because more often than not, many Muslims think as long as they are not worshipping other gods, i.e., Jesus, any Hindu god, a carved object or sculpture, they are doing the right thing and still tawhidic. Thus, many do not see that committing acts of corruption, injustice, lying, untruth, harming others etc., as taking other gods as an object of desire other than God. In such as case, they do not realize that they have taken the ethics out of their declaration of faith.

Tawhid

Tawhid which is the foundation of Islam has also suffered distortion of meaning and implications among Muslims. *Tawhid* means unity of God. Conceptually it is supposed to promote an uncompromising monotheism.[581] It is not merely about believing or worshipping only one God.

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[580] See Qur'Én 4:58 "God commands you to render the Trusts to those they are due and when you judge between men, judge with Justice. Excellent indeed is the teaching He has given you. For God hears and sees all things". See also Qur'Én 4: 135, "O Believers! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to God even if it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against the rich or poor: for God is Highest. Do not follow your lusts lest you swerve. If you distort or decline to do justice, God knows everything that you do". Qur'Én 22:62, "That is because God is the Truthwhile those other than Him that they invoked are Falsehood. God is He who is Most High, Most Great. See also Robert Stade, (1970). *Ninety–nine Names of God*, Ibadan: Daystar Press.

[581] This is in opposition to the Christian concept of trinity which although recognized as monotheism by Christians, is considered as tritheism in Islam. Quran 4:48 can be used to justify this claim. The verse reads, "Allah does not forgive any ascription of associates to Him, but He forgives all other offenses to whomsoever He wills. Whoever, ascribe partners to Allah has committed sin most heinous". However, an article by C. John Block, 2011mentions that there was a misconception that trinity is the same as tritheism among Muslims due to their early exposure to monophysitism trend in Najran.

The concept of *Tawhid* is derived from understanding the implication of "*la ilaha illa `llah*" i.e., that there is no other God but the One who is the Creator of everyone and everything. The most important implication of the One God and Creator should be the Oneness or Unity of creation, and therefore Oneness or Unity of humanity. The realization of this concept is very much related to ethical behaviour. If God is the only Creator and He is Good, then all are equal in the sight of God. Equality of man means justice for all and that one would give others the same dignity as one expects to receive. We may use an example of ethnocentrism to clarify. According to al-Faruqi, "ethnocentrism is *kufr* [apostasy]" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 106). This statement is rarely heard and almost unknown until recently. That ethnocentrism or racism has no a part in Islamic theology is based on the concept of One God is still surprising for many. This is largely due to a misunderstanding or non-understanding of the implication of the unity of God as mentioned earlier that One God means One humanity. Being racist or ethnocentric denies the One Creator who created the other, and therefore denying the same dignity and humanity of the other. In other words, being ethnocentric or racist is *kufr* by virtue of making one's ethnicity or race a superior entity next to God. Thus, in Islam, thinking about God results in ethical ideas and should transform into ethical behaviours because part of understanding *Tawhid* is to understand the beautiful names and attributes of God or Tawhid al-Asma' wa al-Sifat which include Truth, Justice, Compassion, Possessor of Knowledge, Benevolence and Beauty among others.

Among the contribution of al-Faruqi in *al-Tawhid*, is elaborating the worldview behind it. He discusses the tawhidic worldview in a way none before him did. Al-Faruqi explains that there are 5 principles underlying the *tawhidic* worldview. He uses these terminologies, namely: Duality, Ideationality, Teleology, Capacity of Man and Malleability of Nature, and Responsibility and Judgement (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 10-15).

By Duality, he means that Reality is dual. It consists of God and non-god. That God can only be God and the rest are His creations. God cannot "be united with, infused, confused with or diffused into the creature" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 10). The significance of understanding this *tawhidic* principle is that people will not be easily led to believe any creature or object is divine or infused with divinity as people are wont to be led, thus creating irrational beliefs.

By Ideationality, al-Faruqi means that the relationship between God and Man, and Creation can be understood rationally. There is no need to explain the relationship between God and Man through the use of symbolism and mystery. Humans are endowed with understanding. Indeed, rational explanation will make an idea acceptable to everyone, not just among a very particular adherent.

By Teleology, the author means that the universe and everything in it were created to serve their purposes. Everything fulfils a purpose and there is a cause and effect behind Nature. There are utilitarian aspects to natural laws which can be fulfilled by freewill when the purposes are understood. Science cannot function if the same causes do not produce the same result. Understanding them is necessary to serve humanity and promote advancement either in sciences and technology or in human sciences such as sociology, psychology, etc.

Related to Teleology, Capacity of Man and Malleability of Nature, the author tries to explain that humans are given capacity and freedom to act or not to act and Nature is malleable enough to receive this act. Related to the idea of Teleology, Capacity of Man and Malleability of Nature supports believe in the freedom of human action, the ability to change the world, the importance of knowledge and the utility of reason. Thus, the principle ties in neatly with the last principle which is Responsibility and Judgement. With the capacity of man to act or not to act there are consequences. Therefore, humankind must take a moral responsibility and proper judgement upon all their actions because of the physical implications that moral failure entails.

It is interesting and most apt that principles in modern Islamic theology should include ideas that are universal, rational, discusses moral-ethical conduct, freedom of action, how nature works and their implications. This newness in looking at and understanding *al-*

Tawhid as a concept challenges the dogmatic ideas of Islamic beliefs which were not suppose to be dogmatic in the first place.

Iman

Another religious terminology that has been misunderstood is *iman*. *Iman* has been understood as faith or belief for a very long time. Al-Faruqi, however, argues and proves that translating *iman* as faith or belief is wrong. He allocated a whole chapter titled "The Principle of Knowledge" to explain this very important concept. He mentioned that the English words "faith" and "belief" today carry the implication of untruth, of probability, of doubt and suspicion which is the exact opposite of the meaning of *iman.* He made a very important point by stating that from an etymological point of view,

> "[T]he term *iman* deriving from *amn* (security), means that the propositions it covers are in fact true, and that their truth has been appropriated, i.e., understood and accepted by the mind...*Iman* cannot be false in the sense that its object is non-existent or otherwise than it purports to say... It is not an act, a decision, not a resolution to accept, or puts one's trust in that which is not known to be true...*Iman* is something that happens to man, when the truth, the factuality of an object strikes him in the face and convinces him beyond doubt of its truth" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, 40-41).

Therefore, *iman* also means the state of being secure because of one's knowledge of the truth of the matter which like any other knowledge requires evidence. Based on the argument by Al-Faruqi, I conclude that the concept of *iman* is thus cognitive, scientific, logic and devoid of the "hocus-pocus" which common people find very attractive and think that for something to be religious, it has to be irrational. This very understanding of *iman* will lead to scientific and rational thinking because it is based on reality not dogma. That belief in God and the unseen is demonstrable by rational arguments. And therefore the result should be that a knowledgeable person is a person who has *iman*.

Al-Faruqi clarifies further saying that:

> "*Iman* is truth given to the mind, not to man's credulity. The truths, or prepositions, of *iman* are not mysteries, stumbling blocks, unknowable and unreasonable but critical and rational. They have been subjected to doubt and emerged from the testing confirmed and established as true. No more pleading on their behalf is necessary" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 41).

All this is important to understand the meaning of *iman*, the true meaning of which Muslims have forgotten, or have been conveniently distorted. Translating *iman* as belief, or *percaya* in Malay, has resulted in the Islamic religion becoming no more than a dogma and thus leading Muslims to fall prey to irrational beliefs. *Iman* in essence is proven knowledge. In other words, since *iman* is derived from the root *amn* which means security, the proper meaning of *iman* is security due to the possession of knowledge.

`Ibadah

The concept of *`ibadah* is very essential in Islam. A loose translation of *`ibadah* is worship. While the underlying meaning of *`ibadah* is to render service, but it is worship that is mostly understood by the common people. Its basis is Surah 51: 56, in which the famously oft-repeated verse reads, "I have not created *jinn* and mankind except to serve (which can also be translated as worship) Me" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 18). Although Al-Faruqi did not elaborate much on the concept of *`ibadah*, his personal translation of the word *ya`buduni* as "serve me" instead of "worship me" is very telling. For herein lays the confusion among Muslims both in concept and in practice. In practice, *`ibadah* has always been understood as worship rather than rendering services. Thus, *`ibadah* is still largely understood as ritual prayers, fasting, charity, performing Hajj, slaughtering of animals, chanting the Quran, and *zikr*, all of which

are ritualistic in nature. This means the idea that "to worship God is to do good to His creatures" or "to serve humanity" or in the words of al-Faruqi, "the purpose of man's existence is the realization of the *summum bonum* (the highest good)" has not fully taken root among the masses (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 66). Thus, we suffer the bad attitude towards work and the prevalent paralysis of social institutions in Islamic societies because work and services are not seen as meritorious services to God even though the idea has been preached. While the idea that all good works is equated to worship or serving God is not totally alien, in practice the concept has been slow to be properly internalised. While other nations invent new institutions or improve the old ones, and invents new machinery to improve the lives of fellow humans, the Muslim *ummah* continues to be negligent and careless towards the fate of their fellow men. Similarly, other human qualities such as kindness and compassion, politeness and helpfulness are not qualities that Muslims are well known for at present due to overemphasis in ritual observance. As a consequence, we have people who pray, fast, give charity, performing Hajj, slaughtering of animals, chanting the Quran, and perform verbal *zikr*, who have no qualms about denying human rights, cheating others, being involved in corruption and injustice, mismanagement of public funds and properties and many others.

Amanah

It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that God created man and the jinn in order to serve Him (Qur'an 51:56). To this end, it has been mentioned that to serve God is equal to worshipping Him. Can there be worship or service to God without the ethical dimension *amanah*? *Amanah,* like *iman* is derived from the same root *amn* which means security. While *iman* means to be secure with knowledge, *amanah* means to be secure from irresponsibility. Al-Faruqi's discussion of *amanah* is to show its importance in the *tawhidic* paradigm. Quoting verse 33:72, which reads, "We have offered Our trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains. But they were frightened by and refused to carry it. Man however accepted and carried it". He argues that *amanah* means ethics or moral responsibility. He said, "The divine trust is the fulfilment of the ethical part of the divine will. Whose very nature requires that it be realized in freedom, and man is the only creature capable of doing so" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 61). The traditional translation of *amanah* is trust; which I find vague. Redefining *amanah* to mean moral responsibility is more precise and emphasizes the importance of ethics to in the concept of Tawhid. Furthermore, it is easier to grasp why it is important to be virtuous if one believes in the tawhidic concept. The concept of *ibadah* and *amanah* are unambiguous, inclusive and related to each other according to al-Faruqi's explanation.

Ummah

While the term *ummah* does not differ much in application and meaning as used either by traditional Muslims or Al-Faruqi, this concept, by al-Faruqi's own argument seems to be leading to the conclusion that all those who believe in the Islamic world view and morality and willing to work together to achieve the highest good are one *ummah*. For example, he states that "the *ummah* is translocal, not determined at all by geographical considerations" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 105). The *ummah* is '"not synonymous with "the people" or the nation or "the state"' (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 105). "the *ummah* is a universalist brotherhood in which all men are members, potentially by virtue of birth, and actually by virtue of a free personal, ethical decision to enter into the world fellowship of the law" (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p. 119). In another place, he states that, all men are one, measurable only in terms of piety. He quoted the Quranic verses 49:13 "O mankind, we have created you male and female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. Indeed, the most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and well acquainted with all things".

We are in need to understand that despite all the arguments above, al-Faruqi insists on separating or dividing humanity by religion even though the Charter of Medina indicated that the *ummah* included the Jews too. The Charter of Medina clearly states about the

inclusion of Jews as one *ummah* with the Muslims in the first article and further elaborated about their duties and responsibilities mentioning all the Jewish tribe involved. The Charter also illustrates that the Jews and the Muslims had equal rights (Ahmed, 2013). In fact, the verse quoted above is more in line with the Charter of Medina than the concept of separation of people by religion where people who adhere to a common moral value are more rightly to be considered as one. Therefore to use the term *ummah* to refer to the Muslims as a collective is clearly a political decision rather than religious. In 2015, in the spirit of pluralism and inclusivity, perhaps the term *ummah* might be more suitable to indicate people who share the same aspirations and values who are working towards the highest good. This is true because good Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Atheist, Agnostics etc., are more alike each other. Likewise, there is no difference between haters of any religion and of the secular persuasions.

Conclusion

The approach that Al-Faruqi has taken in redefining and re-explaining the terminologies such as *ilah, tawhid, iman, ibadah, amanah* and *ummah* is very deliberate although veiled behind other complex topics and issues and its importance cannot be overemphasized. It has helped many students to understand Islam better because the explanations of these terminologies although complex are directly linked to their implications to human thoughts and behaviour. The reason that Muslims understanding of Islam have stagnated to dogmatic conservatism is precisely caused by misunderstanding these important terminologies.

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