



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i3/3991>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i3/3991

Received: 27 Feb 2018, **Revised:** 20 Mar 2018, **Accepted:** 28 Mar 2018

Published Online: 30 Mar 2018

In-Text Citation: (Mohd Sharif & Osman, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Mohd Sharif, M. F., & Osman, A. S. Bin. (2018). "Din Al-Fitrah" According To al-Faruqi and His Understandings about Religious Pluralism. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(3), 689–701

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Vol. 8, No. 3, March 2018, Pg. 689 – 701

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'Din Al-Fitrah' According To al-Faruqi and His Understandings about Religious Pluralism

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Abstract

Religious pluralism has become one of the significant issues in the field of religion and theology. Among the major issues highly debated by the theologians are fortuity of birth, salvation and truth, and the status of the People of the Book. This article discusses 'din al-fitrah' according to Ismail Raji al-Faruqi and his understanding about religious pluralism. The finding suggests two things: first is that al-Faruqi attempts to highlight that all religions were once rooted from a true religion or 'din al-fitrah'- the term coined by al-Faruqi. Nevertheless, all the religions have gone astray from their true paths due to many factors throughout their historical journeys. Of all, only Islam remains in its original form and does not change until the day of resurrection; second is that al-Faruqi denies the idea that truth is found in all religions – the idea which is established by some theologians while debating religious pluralism.

Keywords: Din Al-Fitrah, Religious Pluralism, Al-Faruqi, Theology, Islam

Introduction

Al-Faruqi (1921-1986) is a genius modern Islamic scholar. His knowledge about the west and Islam is so vast. This prolific writer has published more than 20 books and 100 articles on various areas. He is very courages and diligent in seeking knowledge and he has vast experiences, besides being granted a genius thinking (al-'Alwani 1994). He is adored by other Muslim and non-Muslim colleagues and is as well awed by many. According to Rahman (1919-1988), the friends of al-Faruqi at the Faculty of Theology, Chicago University, label him as a *guerilla scholar* and Fazlur Rahman illustrates al-Faruqi as 'Jamal al-Din al-Afghani' during his epoch (Rahman 1986). Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000), the Director of Islamic Education Institute, McGill University recommends that al-Faruqi be granted the *Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship* and be invited to join the Faculty of Theology as an affiliated researcher in studying the Christianity and the Jews. In two years time, *Christian Ethics* was produced (this book is deemed by Esposito as al-Faruqi's masterpiece that took two years to be produced. It is a critical analysis and a contribution of

thought from an Islamic scholar towards the Christian). Frost (1938), a dean at the Centre of Graduate Studies and Research states that al-Faruqi is a debater who holds tight to his principles, an encouraging and a generous friend. He regards al-Faruqi as a person of two worlds, the east and the west (Frost, 1968). For his student, Esposito (1940), the writings and the studies of al-Faruqi regarding Islam and other religions, especially Christianity, are internationally certified. This is especially true with the publication of the books *Islam and Other Faiths* (compilation of al-Faruqi's articles in answering the questions of the *inter-religious dialogue*) and *Christian Ethics*.

The main concern here is the elements of religious pluralism in al-Faruqi's paradigm, which has been found to be obviously portrayed in his two mentioned books. Few researchers quote al-Faruqi's words which may prove the existence of religious pluralism elements (Ibrahim, 2005). In a research conducted by Ibrahim (2005), four of al-Faruqi's concepts, which have been discovered to contain religious pluralism elements, were highlighted. The concepts include *The Primordial Tradition (din al-fitrah)*, *Meta-religion*, *The Abrahamic Tradition* and *The Common Phenomenon of Prophecy*. In this article, the authors discuss the concept of *din al-fitrah* from the perspective of al-Faruqi and his understanding about religious pluralism and how far it fits the Quran and the Sunnah.

The Concept of *Din Al-Fitrah*

Before the concept of *din al-fitrah* be discussed based on al-Faruqi's perspective, it is important that the term be defined generally. The term *din al-fitrah* is a combination of two words, *din* and *al-fitrah*. The word *din* originates from the verb *dāna*, which means believe or embrace (any religion, faith and others). When a person *dāna bi al-Islām*, he or she is said to embrace Islam. Thus, the word *din* means religion, faith, or belief. The word *din*, in its plural form is *adyān* (Wehr, 1976).

According to *Kamus Dewan* (a standard reference of Malay lexicals), the word religion, generally refers to the belief towards God. If the religion, in this context, be constituted with Islam, it brings about the matter of believing in Allah, His characters, and powers as well as accepting His teachings and commands (Baharom, 1998). It also means a belief towards something that is worshipped and is deemed powerful like God. This is basically due to the origin of the word religion in Malay language, '*agama*', which is rooted from Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, it means a written heritage that is transferred from a generation to another. The term religion that is used by the Hindus, for instance, is referred to the Vedic books, the holy books of the Hindus (Baharom, 1998).

Muhammad 'Abd Allah Darraz states that religion could be defined in two aspects: (i) the psychological state that is the '*religiosity*' or the belief or faith towards God who should be devoted or worshipped, and (ii) as an external fact that religion is a theoretical guide that teaches the concept of God and a practical platform for the ritual aspects (Darraz, 1952).

Among the scholars who have extensively elaborated the term *din* is Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. According to him, the term *din* could be generally understood by the word '*religion*', yet the concept of religion in Islam actually differs from the concept of religion in the western history. The word religion is too narrow to discuss the meaning of Islam. The term *din* is more accurate to be combined with the word Islam, for it contains the meanings of culture, civilisation and worldview (Attas 1978; Sardar 1990). He also postulates that the word *din* attains its origin from the Quranic verse which is also known as the "contract verse":

And when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed and made them testify as to themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: "Verily, we have been unaware of this." (al-Quran 7:172)

Referring to Al-Attas, the soul of the Adam's sons are brought in front of the God in order to witness His divinity, and they then bear the witness that He is the only God. This, according to Al-Attas, shows that a memorandum has been agreed between human beings and God, in which every single individual admits and acknowledges Him as God, during the period of pre-existing soul. When they appear to be human beings on this very earth, those who remember the contract would attempt to better their lives in their journeys of meeting God (Attas, 1978; Sardar, 1990). The contract actually means the agreement to obey and to oblige Allah. However, a more vital foundation, besides the humility and the feeling of being a servant to God, is that the sentiment of owing God, for every human being is created by Him from nothing. Therefore, among the meanings of the word *din* is to be in a state of indebtedness, and the only way for one to repay Allah is to return oneself to Him. In other words, *din* relates so much to the concept of 'returning', which has always been emphasised in the Quran. *Din* also means rains, which as well bring us to the connotation of returning, for rains keep 'returning' over and over again to bring good to the earth. Without rains, the earth will die. Hence, the aspect of returning actually equates one's life, that is to lead one to comprehend his purpose of life in this world, and to gain knowledge about the Creator from the perspective of the created ones (Attas, 1978; Sardar, 1990).

The term *fitrah*, meanwhile, originates from the verb *fatara* that means create and make or break, split or fracture (Zainuddin, 2008). *Fitrah* in this context refers to creation, nature, talent, performance, internal characters and affection (Wehr, 1976). If the word *fitrah* be combined with the name of God, that is Allah, it makes the word *fitratullah* which means beings or events that are created within Allah's willing (Baharom, 1998). Ibn Manzur (1988) and Lane (1984) define *fitrah* as:

A natural constitution where a child is created in his mother's womb in either happiness or discontent, but may as well be interpreted as the truth from *syahadah*, which bears *tauheed*, the oneness of Allah and the prophecy of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). With that, *fitrah* also portrays the truth about religion.

The word *fitrah* in the context of the above verse is related to the meaning of *hanif* in which if being generally interpreted, it tells about the tendency one has towards embracing and adhering to the true religion. The term used in the Quran illustrates the prophet Ibrahim's stance who rejects the idea of worshipping the statues, the moon, the stars, or the sun, for all those are not entitled to be worshipped. The one that ought to be worshipped is the essence of God who has created the sky and the earth (Rahardjo, 2002).

When both the words, *din* and *fitrah*, are combined, they make up the term *din al-fitrah*, which means the natural religion of Allah's creation. Based on this definition, emerged is a theory that says the original religion of all human beings is to worship Allah. This is very much related to the faith of the Muslims, as what has been stated in the Quran (7:172) that human's soul, after being created, make a contract with Allah.

Human beings were originally a big community (*ummatan wahidah*, see al-Quran 2:213) in acknowledging and witnessing the existence, the oneness and the purity of the Creator. The original meaning of the absolute affirmation lies in their covenant with God. It is this affirmation that the nature of which the human are created by Allah, as the words of the Prophet Muhammad in the hadeeth narrated by Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah: “every child is born upon the *fitrah* but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian.”

This means that the soul of a man was originally in good and clean condition, in devoting God, in which at the same time denies the God other than Him. Following this, man must prove his claims of divine devotion to Allah, to perform his duty as a servant of God by obeying His commands and cautious (Badron, 2004).

According to al-Qaradawi, the humans need for religion is a matter that cannot be denied by the human mind as both the man and the religion are closely related. In addition, within oneself lies a feeling or conscience. It is the combination of mind, emotions and soul that actually make up an individual (Qaradawi, 1996). In fact, the instinct of religion or worship over a power has been readily available or latent in human (al-Quran, 7:172). The common sense would not be able to outsmart this nature. The religion is a spiritual instillation for human beings as the soul or the spirit belongs to Allah (al-Quran, 17:85). Therefore, the essence of it is in the form of practice and worship to Allah. He said in the Quran when the prophet Ibrahim was seeking for the real God to be worshipped.

Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: “Takest thou idols for gods? For I see thee and thy people in manifest error.” So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude. When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: “This is my Lord.” But when it set, He said: “I love not those that set.” When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: “This is my Lord.” But when the moon set, He said: “unless my Lord guides me, I shall surely be among those who go astray.” When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: “This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all).” But when the sun set, he said: “O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah.” “For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah” (al-Quran, 6:74-79).

Based on the meaning of the above verse, it is obviously shown that man, who uses his thinking to think logically and rationally, would surely discover whether the God that is being worshipped is the real one. On the other hand, for those who do not utilise the brain and the thinking, they would only do something without really thinking of the consequences. This is actually the tradition that has been passed on to younger generations ever since the era of the ancestors. This is what the Prophet Ibrahim was attempting to eliminate, even though it was his own father who actually committed the idolatry.

The Concept of Religious Pluralism

The term religious pluralism has been greatly discussed among Muslim intellectuals since the end of the last century. This is because it was a bizarre term in Islam, and it is only popular

about the last two decades in the 20th century. The popular term in Islam and that its existence is acknowledged in the Quran and the Sunnah is the word 'plurality'. The emergence of the discussion among the Muslims begins after the success of the west in disseminating their ideologies, which are deemed as modern and universal. Among the ideologies are the aspects of democracy, human rights, free trade and pluralism. All these are for the sake of helping other countries, especially the Islamic countries, in their efforts of achieving various aims (Thoha, 2005). Due to the charges or accusations people make over Islam, such as being fundamentalist, anti democracy, intolerant, challenging the human rights and so forth, the issue of pluralism starts to intrigue many Muslim scholars to deeply discuss it. Consequently, many seminars have been conducted to discuss over this matter.

The term 'religious pluralism' comprises two words – 'pluralism' and 'religion'. In arabic language, the term could be referred to *al-ta'addudiyah al-diniyyah*. Literally, the word 'plural' is adapted from a Latin word '*pluralis*' in which the word '*plus*' or '*plur*' is its root word. The word means more than one or many. It is an adjective which is combined with a noun, as could be illustrated in the phrase 'plural society'. From the word *plural* itself, many other words emerge such as *pluralism*, *pluralist*, *pluralistic*, *plurality*, *pluralize (pluralise)*, *pluralizer*, *plurally* and *pluralization* (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989; see also Hamat, 2007).

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2005) also describes the same meaning of the word plural, that is a form of noun or verb which refers to a state of 'more than' a person or a thing. The suffix *ism*, meanwhile, refers to a group of ideas or belief systems or actions (Oxford, 2005). Hence, pluralism could be interpreted as the existence of many groups of people, who are different in terms of race, politics and religious beliefs in a community context. It also means a belief that it is good for different people to live together peacefully in a community (Oxford, 2005). In another English dictionary, it has three meanings: (i) related to church activities (ii) related to philosophy; that is the thinking system which acknowledges different perspectives, and (iii) related to socio-politic, that is a system that acknowledges other races, tribes, and parties, by respecting the differences (see "pluralism" in Webster's, 1966). Therefore, pluralism is an understanding that is embraced by a community that lives together at a place.

It is important to highlight here the difference between the terms pluralism and plurality. The mistakes in defining the two terms would result in different impacts when they are further elaborated (for instance, defining pluralism as diversity, while diversity is actually referring to plurality). It is crucial to note here that pluralism does not refer to diversity or multiplicity. In fact, diversity could be equated to plurality. Pluralism, on the other hand, construes a thinking related to the aspect of diversity of existence. Existence, meanwhile, refers to several contexts, and the most important context is religion. Religious pluralism is a school of thought which revolves around the matter of religious diversity (Hamat, 2007).

It has been an undeniable fact that human beings have embraced certain religions for so long. There are various religions embraced and practiced by people and discrepancies occur when people of different religions interact with one another. In fact, all religions promote the ideas of truth and security. In relation to that, several schools of thoughts emerge among the people (Runzo, 2001). Of all the thoughts, there are three main streams: religious exclusivism, religious inclusivism and religious pluralism. Religious exclusivism is a thought which believes that the truth belongs only to one religion. This portrays that the truths claimed by other religions are deemed as fake, for it is only one religion that is considered to promote the whole definite truth.

Meanwhile, religious inclusivism refers to the belief that the truth belongs to a certain religion, but at the same time the inclusivists still believe that other religions do have parts of the truth. Hence, that particular religion does not own the whole truth. Religious pluralism, on the contrary, believes that the truth is shared by all religions. Those who advocate this thought are known as the pluralists (Runzo, 2001; Hamat 2007). According to Budhy (2010), several Islamic scholars have involved in this perspective of religious pluralism and they include the current scholar under study, Ismail R. al-Faruqi.

The Concept of *Din al-Fitrah* According to al-Faruqi

In acknowledging the diversity of religions, al-Faruqi (1998) emphasises the concept of *din al-fitrah* in which religion is a *fitrah* granted to man. Among other terms used for *din al-fitrah* are *Ur-religion*, *natural religion*, *original/primordial religion* and *innate monotheism*. In this context, al-Faruqi claims that every child is born a Muslim and is granted with *fitrah*, or an innate *sensus communis*, where the use is to understand that there is only one God and He is transcendent. Based on this notion, al-Faruqi believes that every single human being is granted with an ability to know Allah.

According to al-Faruqi, *fitrah* or innate *sensus communis* is a faculty where people understand the quality dimension of reality. The understanding is the raw material, while the data is '*sui generis*', that is the ability of the mind to build a system of idea which could be known as religious knowledge. This is the faculty of natural characterisation, for people is granted with knowledge to know Allah. The Quran stresses that the servants have certain ways in knowing and worshipping God: "whatever is in the heavens and on earth,- let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah, for He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise" (al-Quran, 57:1; see also 17:44; 24:41; 59:24; 2:1; 64:1). This concept is also known as *Ur-religion* (Ur is a name of a place where it is an ancient town in the South of Mesopotamia, near Chaldees [later was known as Sumeria and later as Babylon]. It is a place of birth of the prophet Ibrahim who regards himself as al-hanifiyya. Ur is located at the former channel of Euphrates river which is now situated in the South of Iraq. It has once become a capital of Southern Mesopotamia in the 25th century BC under the first dynasty. Even though its role underwent a fall once upon a time, it became important again around the 22nd century BC. This is mentioned in the Bible [as Ur Kasdim] as early home of the prophet Ibrahim. The prophet Ibrahim lived in Ur before his family transferred to Harran. In the next century, the capital was invaded and destroyed by many groups including the people of Babylon itself. The King of Nebuchadnezzar II resolved it in the 6 century BC. In the year 1920-s and 30-s, it remains as a valuable archeological material (see Hoiberg, 2006; Fisher and Luyster, 1991) or *religio-naturalis*. Al-Faruqi (1998) states that human beings are the most noble creation of Allah. Together with this, the human beings possess an important feature, that is *din al-fitrah* or natural religion. This includes those who are non-muslims. It is an undeniable discovery (*sensus numinis*) which becomes the motivation for people to know Allah as the Only Creator: "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah. That is the standard religion: but most among mankind understand not" (al-Quran, 30:30).

The Islamic concept of *din al-fitrah* and its vision that is made a policy of all religions, according to al-Faruqi, is a meaningful achievement in the inter-faith dialogue. It is a natural symbol of the world unity. The advocates of different religions are brothers in religious

universality. The traditions of each and every religion are original, for they originate from one source. Al-Faruqi invites members of other religions to find the similarities between their religions and *din al-fitrah*, rather than comparing between one religion and another. He also encourages them to together seek for the root of religious historical development and to determine accurately how, when and where each religion adheres to or goes against the *din al-fitrah*. Islam, according to al-Faruqi (1998), is the earliest religion that discovers that a religion contains its historical element, for each religion experiences its own historical development.

Al-Faruqi (1998) also states that Islam reminds people that *din al-fitrah*, whether owned by the Muslims or the non-Muslims, since their birth, should be distinguished from the religious tradition in the human history. This difference may enable people to critically see the religious tradition, which still bases the religion itself. The *fitrah* (the confession about the oneness, the holiness and the greatness of Allah) is created by Allah in each individual even before the emergence of any religious tradition. Therefore, *din al-fitrah* is *Ur-religion* or the original religion. Every individual, regardless of what religion he or she embraces, or of where he or she is born and brought up, does own this original religion. It also gives him or her the right to become a member of the human community that is tied through the tie of brotherhood under Allah's command: "The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account" (al-Qur'an, 3:19).

According to al-Faruqi (1998), Islam that is born in history actually sources from *din al-fitrah*. Islam explains that the differences emerge from *din al-fitrah* are the results of compilations, illustrations, interpretations or alterations that occur in history, which due to the changes of time, place, culture, leadership and other circumstances. Hence, Islam agrees that all religions originate from Allah's religion, that is rooted from *din al-fitrah* and with that, it illustrates various stages of acculturation (Baharom, 1998) and assimilation in the history: "nor did the People of the Book make schisms, until after there came to them Clear Evidence. And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular prayer; and to practise regular charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight" (al-Quran, 98:4-5).

In this context, al-Faruqi (1998) explains that every human being is born in the state of *fitrah* or of a Muslim, as how the prophet Muhammad says in a hadeeth mentioned earlier: "every child is born upon the *fitrah* but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."

Analysis and Discussion

From the authors' viewpoint, al-Faruqi's thought of *din al-fitrah* and its relationship with religious pluralism is parallel to the views of other Islamic scholars. In elaborating the above hadeeth, for instance, 'Asqalani (1989) claims that the most popular view regarding the meaning of *al-fitrah* is Islam. According to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, the view is agreed by many scholars. They have unanimously agreed that what is meant by Allah by *al-fitrah* is Islam. According to al-Qurtubi (see 'Asqalani, 1989), Allah creates the hearts of the sons of Adam that are able to accept truths, as how eyes are able to see and as how ears are able to listen. As long as their acceptance remains, they are said to achieve truths and Islam is a true religion, as how an animal perfectly gives birth to its child. According to Ibn Qayyim (see 'Asqalani, 1989), *fitrah* means to acknowledge and to love Islam. From the hadeeth as well, Karim (1983) states that all babies born in *fitrah* or in

primordial faith are deemed to be Muslims. After that, in the process of upbringing the child, he or she is taught by the parents through the socialization process. It is with this reason that the heaven is waiting for any individual who dies before the onset of puberty (Mohamed, 1995).

Al-Faruqi (see Razak, 1998) does state that the Jews and Christianity, together with Islam, are both the faiths of *fitrah*. Nevertheless, it is important to note here that the Jews and the Christianity meant by al-Faruqi are those of the original ones (*Ur-religion*), or those that undergo no change like the ones that exist today. To further explain, al-Faruqi divides religion into two stages: the original religion (*meta-religion*) and *historical religion*, which refers to the one that has experienced a historical journey. Adding to that, he claims that *meta-religion* is a true religion. This means that the origin of all religions is true and each of them believes in the Only God. It is the historical journey that has brought about many changes in the original noble doctrines (Othman, 2003).

Darwazah (1981) concludes that all religions were once the religions of revelation. While both the Jews and the Christianity are believed to be rooted from the Ibrahim's family, others are most probably originate from the Nuh's descendants. His very claims are based on the Quran: "and We sent Noah and Abraham, and established in their line Prophethood and Revelation: and some of them were on right guidance. But many of them became rebellious transgressors" (al-Quran, 57:26).

This research discovers that al-Faruqi is not a religious pluralist and it is vital to not only base the conclusion on his own writings without having done a thorough research. Should he becomes a pluralist, why must he propagate the concepts of knowledge Islamisation and tauheed? Why does he preach people towards Islam and why does he involve in interfaith dialogue? In fact, al-Faruqi (1989) is very serious in promoting the concept of knowledge Islamisation together with its plannings of execution. Al-Faruqi (1992) also publicises the concept of tauheed based on the phrase *La Ilaha illa Allah*. Even though his concept of tauheed is a bit different from the previous Islamic scholars, it does not go sidetrack of the foundation of tauheed that is the existence of no other god except Allah. Al-Faruqi's approach in promoting the tauheed concept differs, for it is more modern and philosophical. To explain this, he himself is a person of philosophy and lives in the area of the Western community, who are far way more modern and advanced as compared to the Muslims. Al-Faruqi is also actively involved in preaching Islam among the Westerners. He has produced two articles preaching Islam (that is *On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah* and *Da'wah in The West: Promise and Trial*) which have been presented and published in international journals. These do not seem logical if al-Faruqi is regarded as a pluralist who deems all religions are the same. He is also a member of interfaith dialogue and is very popular at the international level. The concept of dialogue is to reach the understanding about matters that cause conflicts between several groups. If al-Faruqi is a pluralist, he might not want to involve in such dialogue with other religions, for every religion is just similar to one another.

The same goes to the case of Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240), who has been regarded as an advocate of religious pluralism based on his writing in his own book (see Ibn 'Arabi t.t.; Ghazali 2009). In few other sources, he actually criticises the Jewish and claims them to be *ahl al-ifk wa al-ilhad* (liar and atheis) and the Christians as *ahl al-dalal* (perverts or those who have gone astray) (Wahid, 2004; Hamat, 2007). Although Ibn 'Arabi accepts other beliefs towards God, in other sources, he still believes that the one brought by the prophet Muhammad as the last

prophet is the most complete amongst all. The vision and missions of his prophecy is a synthesis from the previous teachings (Mukhlis, 2005).

Having discussed religious pluralism, al-Faruqi (1979), in one of his writings expresses the rights of the non-Muslims from Islamic perspective. He states that Islam acknowledges the positions of the *non-believers* in three stages: *humanism*, *revelational universalism* and *historical revelation*. According to al-Faruqi, it is in this context that Islam introduces the concept of *din al-fitrah* (*religio-naturalis* or *Ur-religion*), that is all humans, since small, be granted by Allah a religion that is true, original and valid across time. Based on this *fitrah* religion, Islam is laid by a foundation that is wordly humane. This *fitrah* religion concept explains that all human beings are initially the creation of God and they have the latent ability to know God and His rules. There is no one who could escape from knowing God as the Creator, for each and everyone has been granted with that *fitrah* since birth. With this very concept, according to al-Faruqi (1998), Islam distinguishes between the original religion and the historical religion. If this historical religion divides the people, it would be the original religion that would reunite them and put them as equal servants.

Religion can be classified into two: the true religion, that is *din al-fitrah* and the historical religion. Today's Hinduism and Buddhism, for example, have far gone astray from their original teachings, which were once based on *Tawheed*. In the book *al-Budhiyyah*, to illustrate, some researchers are found to believe that Hinduism, until the emergence of Buddhism, has gone through three stages: (1) the stage of definite tauheed, that is the belief of the ancient Hindus who originated from *al-Sami* (Sam b. Nuh, the son of the Prophet Nuh a.s.); (2) the stage of Brahma clergy and the devotion symbols. This is the time when the three Gods of Hindu emerge - Brahma, Visynu and Shiva. This happened after the end of such a long period of the first stage. This stage is deemed as a poly-God stage, for there are a lot of Gods evolve, and the same goes to the belief of animism; (3) the stage of definite atheis (disbelief of God). At this stage, emerged was the religions of Jayniyyah and Buddhism (Numsuk, 1999).

The derivation of Transcendental Meditation in ancient eastern religions and its similarities with the practice of *tafakur* and *tasbih* have led al-Mawdudi to conclude that Hinduism and Buddhism were once true religions but have later been abused and distorted. Today, the forms of rituals that remain are those with observable advantage like the meditation. The actual reasons for the religion to ask humans to meditate, worship and praise Allah, as well as to observe all His creations have been neglected and have vanished in time. The West later practice the meditation method after it has been proven to offer great benefits in the field of medicine (Badri, 1996).

Shalaby (1988), a famous Egyptian scholar in history and comparative religions also says that Hinduism was once upon a time a true religion. According to him, from one perspective, Hinduism is a *tawhid* religion and from another perspective, it is a pluralistic religion. In this belief, there are various primitive thinking such as the devotions towards the strength of the nature, the ancestors and the bulls or the cows.

Conclusion

Based on the views discussed, it is clearly shown that al-Faruqi attempts to highlight that all religions were once rooted from a true religion or *din al-fitrah*. Nevertheless, all the religions have gone astray from their true paths due to many factors throughout their historical journeys.

Of all, as al-Faruqi maintains, only Islam remains in its original form and does not change until the day of resurrection. This claim, he argued, is supported by the Quran: “We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)” (al-Quran, 15:9).

The fact is that, when al-Faruqi mentions the Jews and the Christianity as the *din al-fitrah*, he actually refers the statement to the era when those two religions have not undergone any amendments. Nonetheless, the two beliefs are no more true religions, for they have been altered after going through such a long history. This explains why Allah sends many prophets to the sons of Israel. The intention is to help correct the belief and the practice of men so that everything is worshipped and devoted for Allah, and far from any form of disbelief towards Allah. Therefore, in order to avoid a misunderstanding about al-Faruqi’s religious pluralism, the study proposes that al-Faruqi denies the idea that truth is found in all religions – the idea which is established by some theologians while debating religious pluralism. Specifically, this study was able to make an impact and new knowledge to the study of religion which can definitely be applied in all fields of knowledge.

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