

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

If the concept of *tawhīd* is central to Islam and everything Islamic, it is because of its centrality to existence and everything that exists. Belief in the Divine Principle, the transcendent Allah, brings with it the understanding that all creation is subservient to Him. With this relationship at the core of all matters, all things and all creatures are thus interrelated, at least at the most basic level. But in most cases that is only the beginning. Indeed, Islamic science, whether religious, moral, or natural is essentially a quest to discover the order underlying the variegated world of multiplicity.

The work of *al Shahīd*, Dr. Ismā'īl Rājī al Fārūqī on the subject of *tawhīd* affords the reader not only a look at the axial doctrine of Islam, but further allows the reader to understand that doctrine from a number of different perspectives. In the endeavor to explain the simple truths of the doctrine of unity, Dr. Al Fārūqī touches upon a broad spectrum of subjects, drawing into his discussions elements from history, comparative religion, anthropology, philosophy, ethics, epistemology, archaeology, and other disciplines. As such, his concept of *tawhīd* is rich in the depth of its erudition, abundant in its perceptions. Indeed, it is perhaps this work more than any other that reflects the profound and original thought of Dr. al Fārūqī.

The International Institute of Islamic Thought is proud to present the reader with a completely new edition of this important contribution to the contemporary Islamic library. In this edition, great care has been taken to ensure the integrity of the original text. Moreover, a glossary of foreign terms has been added and the index has been significantly expanded. Another important feature is that all of the Qur'anic verses quoted in the text appear in the footnotes in the original Arabic. In short, no effort has been spared to ensure the quality of this edition.

In closing, we remind ourselves as well as our readers that perfection belongs to Allah alone. Thus, any corrections or suggestions about the improvement of this work will be most welcome.

And it is Allah who prospers and assists!

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PREFACE

This book carries a number of presuppositions which, if understood, would serve to clarify as well as to justify it.

First, the world ummah of Islam is undeniably the most unhappy ummah in modern times. Despite the facts that it is the largest in number, the richest in land and resources, the greatest in legacy and the only one possessing the most viable ideology, the ummah is a very weak constituent of world order. It is fragmented into an endless variety of states, divided against itself at loggerheads with other ummah(s) on all its frontiers, incapable of producing what it needs or consumes, of defending itself against its enemies. Above all, instead of being the ummah wasat (the median among the peoples of mankind) (Quran 2:143), which Allah (SWT) wished it to be, it is the prey of everybody. If it has made any contribution to the historical battle of humanity against disease, poverty, ignorance, hostility, immorality and impiety in modern times, it has been negligible.

Second, the divine dictum "Allah will not change the condition of a people unless and until they change themselves" (Quran 13:12) is equally the decree of history. Applied to the world ummah of Islam, it explains the failure of previous attempts at reform, and the reason for the continuing malaise. In the less recent past, the attempts undertaken by the Salafiyah movements in the Arabian Peninsula, in North and West Africa, in the Indian Subcontinent, registered far more success than the more recent attempts. For they have addressed the ummah's deterioration more deeply and sought more radical cures. They attacked the *ghuluww* (excessiveness, inordinateness) of *tasawwuf* (mysticism), which is proper; and they set out to confront the rest of the ummah and/or the outside world without adequate preparation, which was their fatal mistake. Consequently, they all failed despite their excellent intentions. The more recent reforms undertaken by the "nationalist" governments of the Muslim world (whether constitutional monarchies and republics or dictatorships) were mostly constructions on sand. When sincere, these reforms addressed the material needs of the ummah but omitted the graver need of the spirit. Indeed, they increased the vitium in society by

spreading nationalism, a despicable Western virus of an old disease the ummah had confronted earlier in its long history, namely, *al shū'ubiyah* (tribalism). Nationalism has succeeded in Europe (though only for a while and is certainly dying at present) largely because the authority of the Catholic Church was sacked by the Protestant Reformation and their God was dethroned by skepticism. The Muslim, devoid of authoritarian church and endowed with unshakable faith in a unique transcendent Absolute which is God, and an overpowering *shari'ah* (law, Islamic law, law of God) to govern his social behavior, never understood nationalism, let alone became its addict. That is why he showed some enthusiasm when the "nationalist" leader associated himself with the cry *Allah akbar* and quickly reverted to his unconcern when that image of the leader faded. Man was not remade by these movements; for none of them had the right insight into the Muslim's predicament. Modernization failed because it was Westernization, alienating the Muslim from his past and making of him a caricature of Western man. Even the little attention given by the earlier movements to purify the Muslim's basic world-view from the accretions of superstition and ignorance was nowhere present in these reforms which looked down upon religion and sought to transcend it *a la West*. The prerequisite for a change of fortune laid down by Allah (SWT) was not fulfilled; and the world ummah continued to skid.

Certainly al Ikhwan al Muslimun movement sought to fill the gap benefitting from the experience of the century. It had a wonderful beginning but could not keep the pace. Besides the tragedy of allowing itself to be sucked into a battle it could not win—its minor fault the graver tragedy was its inability to crystalize the vision of Islam as relevant to every moment of human life, every shade of modern human activity. The vision was at its brightest in the mind of the late Hasan al Banna; but it was somewhat confused and less clear in his followers. Unfortunately, the great Muslim minds kept themselves busy elsewhere. They did not rise to fill the task left over by al Banna, of elaborating the principles of Islam as those of a modern and viable experience. Thus the movement could grow in numbers but not in ideational depth which is the requirement of change prescribed by the divine decree.

The third and last presupposition of this book is that the world ummah of Islam will not rise again or be the ummah *wasat* except through that which gave it its *raison d'être* fourteen centuries ago, its character and destiny through the ages, namely, Islam. It is the Muslim's conception of himself as the *khalifah* (vicegerent) of Allah (SWT) on earth that

makes him the vortex of human history. Only as God's *khalifah*, and hence only in proper commitment to the vision of Islam, may man act responsibly in the totality of space-time. As such, the Muslim must interfere in the causal processes of space-time (the material, the psychic, the social and the spiritual) so as to redirect their course toward fulfillment of the divine pattern. As such, the Muslim's interference into space-time will be to reconstruct it, not to abolish it or escape from it, as in Hindu-Buddhist spirituality. And in his reconstruction of it, it is not his "creative" will that the Muslim pursues, but the will of God. Finally, the Muslim's reconstruction is not an act of defiance and conquest as in the Promethean West, but a responsible act of submission. Hence, the Muslim enjoys a triple protection: against his own capacity for exploiting nature; against the arrogance of power if he succeeds; and against tragedy where helplessness and despair are of the essence, if he fails.

It is Islam's vision of reality that this book seeks to present for the instruction of Muslim youth. In it, the author hopes to take the youth further on the road of genuine self-reform, bringing up-to-date as it were, the early ideational insights of the great reformers of the Salafiyah movement, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhab, Muhammad Idris al Sanusi, Hasan al Banna and others. The relevance of Islam to the various fields of human thought and activity is here analyzed and elaborated with the hope of its becoming the groundwork for reformative programs in each of these fields. No other groundwork of Islam will succeed. The essence and core of Islam being al tawhid, al tawhid is the name of the book as well as content of that relevance.

May Allah (SWT) accept this work as humble contribution of one of His servants on the greatest of all topics. And may He guide the reader to His truth. Whether this book contributes to this positively by showing that truth, or negatively by showing what it is not, the author is content that Allah (SWT) will have used his work as instrument toward that goal.

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