

Islam and Pluralism

Islamic ideality which is reflected in the Holy Book (al-Qur'an) and Prophetic Tradition (al-Hadith) is often very contrast to Islamic reality which is implemented by Muslim community. The gap between these two is sometimes similar to that of heaven and earth. The case in point is that Islam ideally appreciates variety of opinions. Muslims should tolerate other people's opinions which come even from non-Muslim. In Islamic tradition, the Companions could have different opinions from the Prophet Muhammad. Similarly, students' opinions could be different from those of their teachers. The examples of this pluralistic attitude may be seen in the variety of opinions among Islamic schools such as in jurisprudence, theology, and others. The great Muslim scholar in Islamic jurisprudence, Imam Asy-Syaf'i, for example has many different opinions from his mentor's, Imam Malik. In theology, Wasil ibn Atha' (the founder of Mu'tazilite schools) for example, has also different opinions from his mentor's, Hasan al-Basri. Thus, different opinions should be appreciated as long as they are still in the framework of basic philosophical teaching of Islam.

In the modern period, however, the fact is quite different. Many Muslims often cannot tolerate opposite opinions of others even within Muslim community. Egoistically, they claim that their opinions are the truest, even if the different opinions of others are correct from universal framework of religious norms. These people try to attack the people (not their opinions) whose opinions are seen to be different from theirs. They combat not only against Muslims whose opinions are different from theirs but also against non-Muslims, whether in the domain of religious teachings, politics or culture. This attitude is in fact against the very nature of Islami itself that encourages its adherents to spread peace among people.

As mentioned by Prophet Muhammad, "the difference among Muslim communities is a blessing". Diversity in Muslims' opinions can lead the way to recapture the renaissance of Islam as it is the basis of achieving invention in various fields of science. By deconstructing previous opinions, new interpretation and understanding can be grasped. By using dialectical approach, the reformation of opinion can be carried out. This attitude towards knowledge and science has actually been implemented by the early

generation of Muslims. As Qodri Azizy pointed out, difference or diversity among Muslim jurists has occurred both orally and in writing, since the era of the Companions. In political field, Azyumardi Azra found that there are variety of Islamic political tradition and thought. Muslim intellectuals, scholars, ulama and leaders have variety of opinions on the compatibility between Islam and contemporary ideas and practices of democracy, civil society and human rights. In W.C. Smith's words, as mentioned by Rifa'i Abduh, a religion, especially Islam, must be modern, dynamics and applicable to any situation, time and condition. For this reason, religious teachings must be interpreted in accordance with cultural and spiritual needs. This can only be achieved by reviewing previous thoughts and findings. Then, new possibilities and inventions can also be attained if Muslim intellectuals open their minds in using other kinds of epistemological paradigm. Therefore, Amin Abdullah offers circular approach of using *bayani*, *irfani*, and *burhani* frames of thought.

In bridging the gap between the ideality of Islam and the reality of its adherents, this journal tries to disseminate positive attitude towards variety of opinions. This can be achieved by publishing various topics and opinions in many different fields of religious knowledge. In this edition, *Al-Jami'ah* covers such various topics as Juristic differences in Islamic Law; Political Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia; W.C. Smith's thought on religious faith and truth; Islamic perspective on gender; Islamic arts; New paradigm on interpretation of Holy Book; Religiosity and social structure of Muslims in Indonesia; Muhammad Ilyas' thought on International Islamic Calendar; History of the development of absolute and limited truth in al-Qur'an; Islamic Banking and its regulations in Indonesia; and the language style of al-Qur'an. Last but not least, David S. Powers' book on Islamic law of Inheritance which scientifically reflects the very gap between the ideality and reality is reviewed in this present journal. (*Lathiful Khuluq*)