

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Background of Study

In the history of Islamic thought, the concept of *tawhīd* (God Unity) is always discussed by Muslim scholars, especially the Mu'tazilah and Asy'arie. The most crucial problem in the discussion of *tawhīd* is the problem of Divine Attributes and Essence, human action in relation to God, and acts of God.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to God's attributes, the Mu'tazilah claims that God's Unity is the principal of their doctrines, and it has a specific meaning according to them. They argue that God must be pure of anything that risks His Oneness. He is the only One, and there is nothing that could be equal with Him. He is the most eternal (*qadim*), not because of His attribute. If God eternity is due to His attribute, it would imply that attribute is something other than God, which is eternal. If it is so then there would be two or more eternal being, or in other words, there would be multiplicity of the eternals.<sup>2</sup> In this case God would not be one anymore. This is the reason why Mu'tazilah denied all God's attributes and they claim this as the concept of pure *tawhīd* (*tawhīd khalis*).

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<sup>1</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradhawi, *Aqidah Salaf dan Khalaf: Kajian Komprehensif Seputar Asmā' wa Sifāt, Wali & Karamah, Tavassul, dan Ziarah Kubur*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2005), p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Abd al-Jabbār bin Ahmad, *Syarh al-Ushūl al-Khamsah*, (Cairo: Maktab Wahbah, 1965), p. 196.

On the other hand, the Asy'ariyah maintained their concept of *tawhīd* (God's Unity) by determining that God has attribute, but God's attributes are united in His essence, which neither it is He nor it is other than Him.<sup>3</sup> It is because according to the Asy'ariyah attributes are qualities and not necessarily other than something being attributed.

Since, Mu'tazilah wanted to uphold the concept of pure *tawhīd* (*tawhīd khalis*), they determined that God has no attributes, on the other hand, the Asy'arite maintained determination of God's attributes by looking attributes as qualities. Another idea on God's unity is to be found in the school of Maturidi, which is become middle-way between Mu'tazilah and Asy'arite. God's Unity (*tawhīd*) on this group believes in the Oneness of God. The Oneness of God in this regard is understood as having the negative attribute (*as-shifat al-salabiyyah*), it is viewed into three principal views, the Oneness of Essence (*tawhīd al-dzat*), the Oneness of Attributes (*tawhīd al-shifat*), and the Oneness of Acts (*tawhīd al-af'al*)<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the issue of divine unity in the history of Islamic thought was a matter of great interest and is continuously debated among Muslim scholars. One of the most prominent Muslim scholars who discuss this matter is Muhammad Abduh. He is one of the Moslem scholars who lived in Egypt, in between 1849-

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Imam Abu Hasan al-Asy'arie, *Kitab al-Luma' fi al-Radd 'ala al-Zaygh wa al-Bida'*, tashīh wa taqdīm Hamudah Gharabah, (al-Qāhirah: Matba'ah Munir Syirkah Musahamah Masiyah, 1955), p. 26-31.

<sup>4</sup> Muḥammad Taqī Mishbāh Yazdi, *Filsafat Tauhid*, (Bandung: Arasyi (Kelompok Mizan), 2003), p. 99.

1905. He studied logic, philosophy and mysticism at the Al-Azhar University, Cairo. He was a student of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, a philosopher and religious reformer. Under al-Afghani influence, Abduh combined journalism, politics, and his own fascination in mystic spirituality.<sup>5</sup>

One of his works is *Risalat al-Tawḥīd* (Theology of Unity), which discussed widely about the religious concept. Here, he explained rationally about religious truth. According to Abduh's idea on theology, '*ilm tawḥīd*' is science that studies being and attributes of God, the essential and the possible affirmation of Him. It deals also with the apostles and the authenticity of their message and treats of their essential and appropriate qualities of what incompatibly associated with them.<sup>6</sup> *Risalat al-Tawḥīd* (Theology of Unity)<sup>7</sup> was composed from notes of lectures Abduh delivered in Beirut, Lebanon, during the period when he was in exile from Egypt.<sup>8</sup> First published in 1897, re-issued with notes and a few significant emendations by Rasyid Ridha, which he was the student of him, in 1908, as subsequently running through 18 editions up to 1957.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad\\_Abdul\\_Aziz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad_Abdul_Aziz)

<sup>6</sup> Syekh Muhammad Abduh, *Risālat at-Tawḥīd*, (al-Qahirah, Dār al-Sya'bi, 1970), p.7.

<sup>7</sup> *Risālat* and *Tawḥīd*, as Arabs and Arabists will be quick to insist, are only imperfectly done into English as 'Theology' and 'Unity', though it is hoped by putting this two together as 'The Theology of Unity', no one will be tempted to suppose that this is a treatise about any other kind of unity. To spell this out in 'The Theology of the Divine Unity' seems unnecessary.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Abduh. *Theology of Unity*: (translated from the Arabic by Ishaq Musa'ad and Kenneth Cragg). (Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2004). p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

This book is quite interesting, since Abduh discussed about the concept of God's Unity from various aspects. According to Abduh's theological viewpoint, the discussion of God's Unity is part of subject matter of the so-called '*ilm tawhīd*' and could equally be called '*ilm kalam*'. It is a science that studies being and attributes of God, the essential and possible affirmation of Him. It deals also with the apostles and the authenticity of their message and treats of their essential and appropriate qualities of what incompatibly associated with them.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of this science is the realization of obligation about which there is no dispute to know God most high and His attributes that are necessarily be predicated of Him and to know His exaltation above all improper and impossible attribution.<sup>11</sup>

So, from the discussion above it is clear that Abduh's concept of *tawhīd* is not only the modification of Mu'tazilah's position but also that of Asy'ariyah and Maturidiyah. Therefore it is interesting to elaborate his concept of *tawhīd*, especially when it is related to Divine Attribute; God and Man's action and Good and Evil. However, this study will be carried out with reference primarily to his work *Risālat at- Tawhīd*.

The previous discussions were seemed that Muhammad Abduh's concept of God's Unity is the mixture of various ideas prevailed in the history of Islamic thought. Thus what the writer will elaborate deeply and explain clearly on the later discussions. Based on the foregoing discussion, the writer will study his important work, *Risālat at- Tawhīd*. This will contain:

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Abduh, *Op Cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

1. The concept of Divine Attribute.
2. The concept of God's and Man's action.
3. The concept of Good and Evil.

This study will focus on Abduh's concept of God's Unity with reference to his important work, *Risalat al-Tawhīd*.

### **B. Problem of Study**

Based on explanation above, the problem that will be elaborated by the writer is Muhammad Abduh's concept of *tawhīd* that consist of:

1. What is Abduh's Theory of God's Unity?
2. What is Abduh's Concept of Divine Attributes?
3. What is Abduh's Concept of God's and Man's Action?

### **C. Purpose of Study**

Based on the above problem formulation, this writing is aimed:

1. To find out the Theory of God's Unity.
2. To find out Abduh's Concept of Divine Attributes.
3. To find out Abduh's Concept of God and Man's Action.

### **D. Significance of Study**

From this writing, the writer really expects that this research would be able give a significant on:

1. The subject of Islamic studies in Theology.
2. The religious thought and movements in general.
3. The implementation of that concept in religious daily-life.

#### E. Review of Literature

There are several researches on the thought of Muhammad Abduh that worth mentioning here. The works that specifically elaborates Abduh's thought of *tawhid* are that of:

1. *Muhamad Abduh, Pengaruh Kepada Pembaharuan Politik Islam di Malaysia, (Muhammad Abduh, His Influence on Islamic Political Reform in Malaysia)*, by Zulkifli B. Hj. Mohd. Yusoff, Prospecta Printers SDN. BHD, Kuala Lumpur, 2007. This book discussed about Abduh's thought on reformation in many fields of life, such as in the field of belief (*'aqidah*), education and politic. In the field of belief (*'aqidah*), Abduh gave the explanation about mind and revelation, as well as about apostles, the most important part of *tawhīd*. This book compares the thought of Muhammad Abduh with *mutakallimun*. In the discussion, the author of this book found that there are four matters that become the crucial problems in *'aqidah*: the characteristic of God, the action of God and human being, God's justice, and seeing God. However, the discussion

refers to the controversies among scholars of *Mu'tazilah*, *Asy'ariyah* and *Salaf*. Although the book made good comparisons it does not discuss about each problem clearly, let alone Abduh's concept of *tawhīd*.

2. *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah dan Muhammad Abduh, (The Thought of Muhammadiyah and Muhammad Abduh)*, by DR. Arbiyah Lubis, Bulan Bintang, Jakarta, 1993 This work is a dissertation that discussed the comparison between religious thought of Muhammadiyah and Muhammad Abduh. However, this book does not discuss widely about Abduh's concept on *tawhīd*.
3. *Muhammad Abduh dan Teologi Rasional Mu'tazilah, (Muhammad Abduh and Mu'tazilah Rational Theology)*, by Harun Nasution, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, 1987. This book elaborated *Mu'tazilah's* concept on theology, that became the embryo of rational theology and liberal theology in Islam. It is an attempt to bring Islam to fit to modern society. Here, Harun claimed that Muhammad Abduh was adherent of *Mu'tazilah*, and that was the reason why his doctrine seemed more moderate and more inclusive. Although Harun tries to present Abduh's theology, the former does not elaborate the idea of *Tawhīd* of the later extensively.
4. *Muhammad Abduh dan Ide Pembaharuannya (Muhammad Abduh and His Idea on Modernity)*, by Shofwan Karim, Ushuluddin Faculty of IAIN Imam Bonjol, Padang, 2000. This is an article in the journal of the faculty In this article the author discusses Abduh's statements that the humankind have free will and free action. The basis of this statement is the theory that

relate the mind with theology. The role of the mind in theology is to know the Lord and His attributes. However, the elaboration on Abduh's concept of *tawhīd* is not extensive enough.

5. *The Salafiyya and Sufism: Muhammad Abduh and his Risalat al-Waridat (Treatise on Mystical Inspirations)*, by Oliver Scharbrodt, Western Kentucky University, United Kingdom, 2007. This article questions certain assumptions on the intellectual history of modern Islam and on of the most influential modern reform movements, the Salafiya. This article examines how Muhammad Abduh, the Egyptian reformer, converted to Sufism in his youth after experiencing a spiritual and intellectual crisis. The influence of his paternal great-uncle Syaikh Darwish al-Khadir and of Sayyid Jamaluddin al-Afghani on Abduh's spiritual and intellectual formation were investigated. Here, also discussed about Abduh's major thought on nature of divine knowledge, eschatology, and free will which these problems become the controversies among the philosophers and theologians. Although this article elaborated about the divine nature and the free will, but it does not explain about the concept of *tawhīd* obviously.

Those several books mentioned, which elaborated Abduh's concept of *tawhid*. But, here the writer considered, the elaboration of these works are not comprehensively enough to determine the concept of *tawhid* according to Muhammad Abduh. Where the explanations of God's attributes, God's and man's action elaborated separately. Surely, in this thesis the writer tries to discuss Muhammad Abduh's thought on *tawhid*, which form the concept of God's



attributes as Divine attributes, acts of God, man's deeds, the good and evil, and the prophecy as the helper.

## **F. Methodology of Study**

### **1. Technique of Collecting Data**

This is library research with the emphasis on analytical study, and then the data will be collected by using Documentary Method or the Method of using material of documents.<sup>12</sup> Especially, this related to biography of Muhammad Abduh, his own works, and also the opuses that concerning about him.

### **2. Data Processing**

In processing of data, Abduh's concept of *tawhid* will be described, sorted, classified, and explained deeply. That is the thoughts of Abduh on the concept of God's attributes God's and man's actions, good deed and evil, and the apostolate.

### **3. Data Analysis**

In this process, the data is analyzed. Which first, by the method of interpretation,<sup>13</sup> that is an effort to read and to understand the meaning, value, and

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<sup>12</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo. "Metode Penggunaan Bahan Dokumen" dalam Koentjaraningrat. *Metode-meotde Penelitian Masyarakat*. (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1982) p. 44-69

<sup>13</sup> Anton Bakker and Achmad Charris Zubair. *Metode Penelitian Filsafat*. (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2005), p. 42.

the right purpose of Abduh in his works, until we find the true comprehension toward Abduh's thoughts.

Beside of that, this analyzing is also used the method of *critical-interpretative*, that is mean in addition, of determining the purpose of the writer (Muhammad Abduh), the situation and the background of the pertinent documents are also analyzed. Last, it would turn to *verification* of the expression and Abduh's thought.<sup>14</sup>

## G. System of Study

To explain this title clearly, the writer divided this study into four chapters, and every chapter is cultivated based on the sources and facts that the writer got, deal with the writer's capability and systemized as follow:

### Chapter I: Introduction

In this chapter the writer will discuss the background of study, the problem of study, purpose of study, significance of study, review of literature, methodology of research and system of study.

### Chapter II: Muhammad Abduh and *Tawhīd*

This following chapter will try to explain more about Abduh's biography, about his background of life, his education and also his own works. Then, discussion will turn to the survey of *Tawhīd* and general definition of it. Thus, this part which described entirely in the general definition for *Tawhīd*, will lead the

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

writer in discussing deeply Abduh's thought in the concept of *Tawhīd* in the following chapter, *Abduh's concept on Tawhīd*.

### **Chapter III: Abduh's Concept on *Tawhīd***

Here, the writer discusses first Abduh's definition of *Tawhīd*. And being comparatives with the previous general definitions of *Tawhīd*. And this is the main topic of this thesis. This following chapter has five parts that first tried to explain his thought in The Categories of Knowledge (*Aqsamu al- 'Ulum*), which the concept of it is argumentatively as an act of imagination. The next part is discussion of the Divine Attributes (*as-Shifat as-Sam'iyah*), then third he explains The Acts of God (*Af'al al-Allah jalla sya'nuhu*), next comes explaining about The Deeds of Man (*Af'al al-'Ibad*) and last will discuss about Good and Evil Deeds.

### **Chapter IV: Closing**

This chapter consists of conclusion of the research. Here the writer concludes the concept of Muhammad Abduh *Tawhīd* in his work, *Risalah-l-Tawhīd*. After the conclusion the writer gives some recommendations for the future researchers.