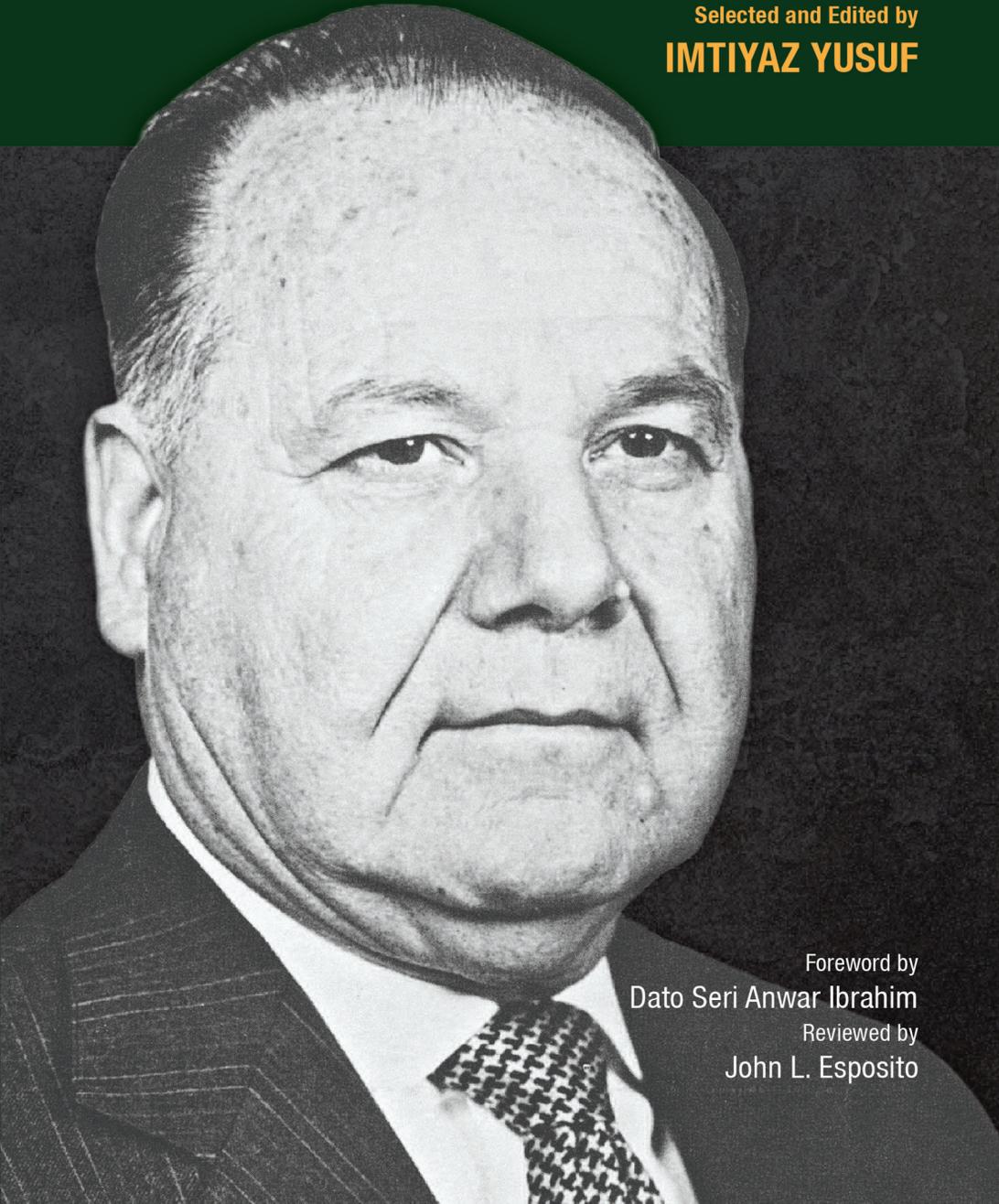


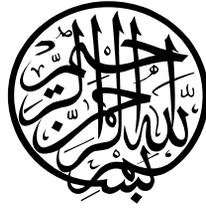
**ESSENTIAL WRITINGS**

# ISMAIL AL FARUQI

Selected and Edited by  
**IMTIYAZ YUSUF**



Foreword by  
Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim  
Reviewed by  
John L. Esposito



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Islamic Book Trust  
Kuala Lumpur

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## About this Book

*“Essential Writings Ismail al Faruqi by Imtiyaz Yusuf is a phenomenal book for those who wish to know everything about Islam, its philosophy, its ethics and aesthetics. For students of Islamization of Knowledge, this is the textbook on Ismail Faruqi’s thoughts which you have been looking for. Faruqi’s mind is as vast as the ocean and as you swim in it, layers and layers of new understanding will take place: of what Islam is, what its relations to other religions is, what is the end goal of education and Faruqi’s take on art and Islam is also a bonus for those working in that area. You will come out dazed after completing reading this book. A must have book!”*

Prof Dr. Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf,  
Professor of English  
International Islamic University Malaysia

“I met Professor Ismail al Faruqi and his wife Lois Lamya al Faruqi in the late 1970s and worked with them on many projects. Professor Imtiyaz Yusuf has done an excellent job in producing this unique material. I was extremely pleased when Professor John Esposito

ESSENTIAL WRITINGS ISMAIL AL FARUQI

wrote to me about this book, ‘What you have done is a wonderful tribute to a remarkable person and scholar, whose life ended too soon and the memory of whom should be kept alive. May Allah be pleased with him.’ Thank you, Imtiyaz.”

M Yaqub Mirza, PhD  
Member of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee of  
Shenandoah University, USA

This wonderful collection of Professor Al Faruqi’s writings edited by Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf serves both as an introduction to the range of thought and ideas of one of America’s early scholars of Islam, and as an invitation to explore further how his views resonate in contemporary Islamic Studies. This volume will inform discussions on such topics as studying Islam in context, on inter-religious understanding and Islamization of knowledge, among others.

Vivienne SM. Angeles, PhD  
Department of Religion La Salle University  
Philadelphia, USA

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- Excerpts from “Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, published courtesy of Temple University, Philadelphia, USA.

## Foreword

Isma'il al-Faruqi, whom I first encountered in the early 1970s when he delivered a series of lectures in Kuala Lumpur on Islam and Modernity, was an intellectual luminary whose abilities as a teacher were prodigious. My fond memories of al-Faruqi during our early encounter are described briefly in *Islam and Knowledge Al-Faruqi's Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought* (2012) edited by Professor Imtiyaz Yusuf.<sup>1</sup>

As teacher, al-Faruqi inspired intellectual discourse as the means of expanding thought and understanding while stressing the importance of intellectual pursuit and *ḥasanah*. In *Al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, he articulated the link between spirituality and activism as well as between self and society, as being indispensable for the removal of injustice, oppression and discrimination. The internalization of *tawhidic*

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<sup>1</sup> Anwar Ibrahim, "Isma'īl Al Faruqi: The Precursor to Civilizational Dialogue," in *Islam and Knowledge: Al Faruqi's Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 47-51.

## FOREWORD

ethics he argued would result in the inculcation of *itqān* (perfection and pursuit of excellence) and piety in one's heart, by which one is able to stand by true principles amidst continuous temptation rather than succumbing to utilitarianism and pragmatism.

Al-Faruqi studied our *zeitgeist* and identified the problems facing contemporary society. To him, it was the limitations of both the secular paradigm and traditional Islamic scholarship that rendered us intellectually debilitated. This prompted him to formulate his key project—the Islamization of knowledge—which rested on the unity of knowledge based on tawhid. He rejected the separation between religion and the secular, the sacred and the profane because he saw these divisions as rooted exclusively in the history of western civilizations. While indeed the conceptual basis of Islamization of knowledge itself has been the subject of rigorous critical scrutiny, it represented at that time a quantum leap in expounding the Islamic *Weltanschauung*.

While the debate between revelation and reason in the traditional epistemological discourse has influenced how our scholars perceive reality, al-Faruqi insisted that such contradiction is actually superficial and futile. There is neither warrant to resort to reason alone in reinterpreting the revelation nor the primacy of revelation over reason. This is consistent with the revival of classical Islamic discourse as seen through the scholarship of al-Ghazzali and Ibn Rushd. Al-Faruqi is of the opinion that both are essentially complementary to each other in as much as divine revelation confers on reason, the knowledge of man's place in the cosmic scheme of things. Reason, unbound, and bereft of the wisdom of revelation, will lead to the path of perdition where speculation takes the place of certainty. That said, rationalism

within the bounds of revelation, can take man to great heights of achievement. In education, for example, al-Faruqi sees rationalism as being constitutive of the essence of Islamic civilization with no presupposition of it prevailing over revelation. He presented Islam as the religion par excellence of reason, science, and progress and any suggestion that the advocacy of rationality in the articulation of educational policies and principles is grounded in secular thinking is without foundation.

He has also much to say about politics. Al-Faruqi, himself a Palestinian, was committed to the struggle for his homeland's liberation. What he rejected was the act of putting the ethnocentric nationalism (*shuubiyyah qawmiyyah*) over Islamic humanism. Fully appreciative of the importance of the concept of humanism in any ethical discourse, al-Faruqi saw that an ethical theory grounded only on parochial or ethnocentric fundamentals would take us to the road to relativist serfdom. On the other hand, Islamic humanism emphasized the primacy of inclusivity for "society is universal permitting no exclusion of any human being" while group separatism is diagonally opposed to the unity of God. This provides rich lens for us to critically analyze our contemporary world.

This book will definitely be an interesting read as we explore the depth of al-Faruqi's thought through his essential ideas on Islam and the link to other faiths. It serves as a pathway for those who are not familiar with al-Faruqi but wish to be acquainted with his ideas before delving further into the rest of his works. By putting al-Faruqi's statements into themes, this compilation offers a structured vista that renders his ideas more accessible to a wider readership. My compliments to Professor Imtiyaz Yusuf, brother Yaqub Mirza and fellow brethren and sisters at the Center for

## FOREWORD

Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) and the Barzinji Project for their unfaltering efforts to continue enlivening al-Faruqi's thoughts and ideas. It is to be hoped that by their efforts, the fruitful mind of al-Faruqi can continue to teach and inspire critical thinking and fresh ideas that cut through so much of the opacity of contemporary Islamic thought.

**Anwar Ibrahim**

20th September 2020

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



# Introduction

*Think not of those, who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. Nay, they are living. With their Lord they have provision.*

Qur'an, Āl 'Imrān 3:169

*And those who believe in Allah and His messengers, they are the loyal; and the martyrs are with their Lord; they have their reward and their light; while as for those who disbelieve and deny Our revelations, they are owners of Hellfire.*

Qur'an, al-Ḥadīd 57:19

Since the tragic and untimely deaths of Professor Ismail al Faruqi<sup>1</sup> and his wife Lois Lamya al Faruqi (Lois Ibsen), an

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of his academic career, Professor Ismail al Faruqi used to write his full name as Ismail Ragi al Faruqi, however while writing his book *Toward Islamic English* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1988), he changed the spelling of his middle name to “Raji” to be

expert on Islamic art and music, thirty-five years ago on May 27, 1986/Ramadan 18, 1406, their influences in the world of knowledge in the area of Islamics, as he would call Islamic Studies, have not faded away. Rather, they have gained more prominence around the world. Their academic works and thought continue to inspire study and research in the field of Islamic thought and civilization and related disciplines and fields: in pure and social sciences and arts and humanities around the world. Ismail al Faruqi made important contributions toward the study of Islam as an area in the academic study of religion and toward the theory of Islamization of knowledge.

It was my great fortune and a blessing from Allah ﷻ to have been one of his hundreds of students from around the world,<sup>2</sup> and his last student assistant.<sup>3</sup>

This monograph is a collection of the most important scholarly comments and remarks Professor al Faruqi made in his writings. The objective is to offer a holistic introduction to scholarly and academic views about Islam and its impact on different aspects of human life, thought and interreligious relations.

The monograph comprises a collection of excerpts from the most important works of Professor Ismail al Faruqi for those who

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more phonetically accurate to the sound of the Arabic letter ج.

<sup>2</sup> Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Ismail al Faruqi: The Link between TUDOR and the Muslim World," in *Breakthrough to Dialogue: The Story of Temple University Department of Religion*, ed. Leonard Swidler (iPub Global Connection, 2020), 177-199.

<sup>3</sup> Imtiyaz Yusuf, *Islam and Knowledge: The Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Ismail Al Faruqi* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

do not have time to read them in detail. It is kind of a handbook of his important thoughts and ideas which will inspire new inquiry and research about him and contribute toward motivating further research and development in the field of Islamic thought and knowledge with the intent to contribute toward the advancement of studies in Islam as a religion and civilization for contemporary and future times.

### **Biography**

Professor Ismail Raji al Faruqi was a distinguished scholar of Islam and religion and one of the most prolific and influential Muslim scholars of the modern age. He made a lasting contribution to the study of Islam and religion relevant to the contemporary age. Professor Ismail Raji al Faruqi (1921-1986) was born in Jaffa, Palestine. Such was his scholarship that it covered the entire spectrum of Islamic Studies and the study of religion, including the study of history and phenomenology of religion, Islamic thought and approaches to epistemology, pedagogy, history, culture, education, interreligious dialogue, aesthetics, ethics, politics, economics, science and gender issues. Indeed, he had an encyclopedic mind, and was a rare and unique type of contemporary Muslim scholar.

After obtaining a BA degree in humanities from the American University of Beirut in 1942, the young Ismail al Faruqi was appointed as Registrar of Cooperative Societies under the British Mandate government in Jerusalem, and was next appointed as District Governor of Galilee in 1945. When Israel became an independent Jewish state in 1948, Professor al Faruqi migrated to Beirut, where he once again enrolled at the American University of Beirut but for a short time. In 1949, he joined the Indiana

University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, from where he obtained his MA in philosophy. Next, he entered Harvard University's Department of Philosophy, from where he received his second MA in philosophy in 1951. After that he returned to the Department of Philosophy, Indiana University, where he submitted his thesis titled "Justifying the Good: Metaphysics and Epistemology of Value," and in September 1952 he was awarded a PhD in philosophy.

During the years 1954 to 1958, Professor al Faruqi went to study Islam at the al-Azhar University, Cairo. From 1959 to 1961, he was a visiting professor of Islamic Studies at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. There he studied Christianity and Judaism at McGill's Faculty of Divinity. At McGill, he met Professor Fazlur Rahman from Pakistan, who was then teaching at the institute. Both of them became friends and shared a common mission dedicated to raising the level of Islamic Studies in the Muslim world. Soon, Professor Ismail al Faruqi and Professor Fazlur Rahman were invited by Dr. I. H. Qureshi, director of Central Institute of Islamic Research in Karachi, Pakistan, to join the Institute in Karachi.<sup>4</sup> Al Faruqi worked as a visiting professor in Karachi between 1961 and 1963. In 1964, he returned to the USA and was appointed as Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the Department of Religion at Syracuse University. In 1968, he was appointed as Professor of

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<sup>4</sup> Ismail al Faruqi to H.A.R. Gibb, letter, March 22, 1963, in "Ismail al Faruqi Papers Collection" (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought). See also "Ismail al Faruqi and Fazlur Rahman: Academic Friends Addressing Issues of Islam and the Modern Age," in *International Symposium on Fazlur Rahman—Perspectives on Philosophy and Ethics* (Malatya, Turkey: Inonu Universitesi Rektorluđu, 2016), 110-137.

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Studies at the newly established Department of Religion at Temple University, Philadelphia, where he remained until his death in 1986.

Professor al Faruqi joined Temple University in Philadelphia when the university changed its status from a private institution to semi-private institution in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. During this era, the study of world religions was just being initiated as a new area of academic study. Temple University's Department of Religion, then led by Professor Bernard Phillips, was launching an ambitious program in the study of Religion where all world religions would be promoted as a foundational base for all branches of study.

Professor Phillips appointed al Faruqi as Professor of Islamics at Temple University after reading al Faruqi's first seminal article in the area of interreligious dialogue titled "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," which was published in the department's *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. Al Faruqi's academic and religious frankness expressed in this article landed him a job at the Department of Religion.<sup>5</sup> Al Faruqi fit in well with the general academic ethos of the department in which "all or most of the players in the venture had previously been transmitting or receiving their faith among fellow religionists based on the assumption of their religious truth. Without abandoning their religious convictions, teachers and taught alike were examining long-held convictions in such a way as to help outsiders to the various traditions understand and appreciate them. The inevitable

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<sup>5</sup> Leonard Swidler, interview by author, March 25, 2010, Temple University, Philadelphia. Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1968): 45-77.

result was an increased appreciation of one's own tradition as it came to be seen in a setting of others. But this was not the primary purpose of the exercise. Like all that goes in college or graduate education, the purpose was the diffusion of knowledge and the dispelling of ignorance.”<sup>6</sup>

Al Faruqi brought a comprehensive view of Islam which was based in an Islamic rationalist approach to monotheism which was also modernist and activist and based in an impartial approach toward the study of religion.<sup>7</sup> In certain aspects he was a modern successor to the medieval Muslim scholars of comparative religion such as al-Biruni (973-1048 CE) and al-Shahrastani (1086-1153 CE).<sup>8</sup>

Professor al Faruqi's contribution lies in four academic areas, viz. Islamic Studies, history and phenomenology of religion, the Islamic educational movement in the modern age and inter-religious dialogue. His contributions to academia played an important role in the creation of several Islamic Studies programs at university level in the United States and across the Muslim world.

In 1973, Professor al Faruqi established the Islamic Studies

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<sup>6</sup> Gerard S. Sloyan, “The Years of Early Growth (Temple University Department of Religion 1965-1985),” unpublished personal memoirs, in my possession. Professor Sloyan taught at the Department of Religion, Temple University from 1967 until his retirement in 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Harrison, *“Religion” and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Al-Shahrastani is regarded as the first person in the world to write a book in the area of history of religion, see Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (Duckworth Publishers, 2009), 11. See also S.D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2010), 67.

Group in the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and chaired it for ten years. In other academic capacities he also served as Vice President of the Interreligious Peace Colloquium: The Muslim-Jewish-Christian Conference, and was President of the American Islamic College in Chicago, USA. He was one of the founders of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), which was established in 1981, first from his home in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, as a US nonprofit 501(c) (3) nondenominational organization. Currently, it is headquartered in Herndon, Virginia, in the suburbs of Washington, DC.<sup>9</sup>

### **Al Faruqi's Thought**

Professor Ismail al Faruqi has been described as a scholar-activist but not much has been written about his personality, thought, style, pedagogy and academic vision.<sup>10</sup> This is largely because he has been viewed from an ideological perspective and because his views about his homeland Palestine have attracted more attention and comment. He was committed to the cause of the liberation of Palestine from Zionist occupation.

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<sup>9</sup> "About Us," *IIIT*, July 26, 2020, <https://iiit.org/en/about-us/>.

<sup>10</sup> Exceptions being the excellent introductions to the thought and works of al Faruqi by John L. Esposito viz., John L. Esposito, "Ismail Raji al Faruqi," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John L. Esposito, vol. 2, *Faqi-Leba* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-4; John L. Esposito, "Ismail R. al-Faruqi: Muslim Scholar-Activist," in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (USA: Oxford University Press, 1993), 65-79; John L. Esposito and John Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2001), 23-38. See also Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Ismail al-Faruqi's Contribution to the Academic Study of Religion," in *Islamic Studies*, 53:1-2 (2014): 99-115.

Al Faruqi viewed Islam as an Arabist without being an Arab nationalist. Professor Khurshid Ahmad of the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, a longtime friend of Professor al Faruqi, has remarked well in the words that “he (Ismail al Faruqi) began as a Muslim Arabist and died as an Arab Islamist.”<sup>11</sup> This sentiment was expressed by Professor al Faruqi himself to the late Professor Ilyas Ba-Yunus on one occasion when he said, “Until a few months ago, I was a Palestinian, an Arab and a Muslim. Now I am a Muslim who happens to be an Arab from Palestine.”<sup>12</sup> Al Faruqi’s Arabism is religion based and is opposed to the race-based nationalism of the modern age. For him, Islam and monotheism is a gift of Arab consciousness to humanity. Of course, such a position stood in opposition to the Orientalist view of the Middle Eastern religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This was unacceptable from the viewpoint of the Orientalists and was not received positively. For al Faruqi, monotheistic-based Arabism is the essence of Semitism. His position was criticized by Professor T. Cuyler Young of Princeton University as “totalitarian Arabism (which) swallows up all that has been normally associated with Semitism.”<sup>13</sup> Professor al Faruqi replied, “I am trying to establish in a scholarly and academic way, the identity of

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<sup>11</sup> Email message, July 11, 2020. For a more detailed view, see Khurshid Ahmad, “Isma‘il Al Faruqi: As I Knew Him,” in *Islam and Knowledge: The Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought: Essays in Honor of Ismail Al-Faruqi*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 61-76.

<sup>12</sup> Ilyas Ba-Yunus, “Al-Faruqi and Beyond: Future Directions in Islamization of Knowledge,” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Science* 5, no. 1 (1988): 14.

<sup>13</sup> Cuyler Young to Ismail al Faruqi, letter, November 5, 1963, in “Ismail al Faruqi Papers Collection” (Herndon, VA: IIIT). Young was Chairman, Department of Oriental Studies, Princeton University, USA.

## INTRODUCTION

the ideological or religious core of the ancient Near Eastern religions with that of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For the Semitic tradition is a unity, a stream of being, which had many moments each of which was a development of what went before it, but never a repudiation or about face. The later religions *i.e.* Judaism, Christianity and Islam are just as moments as the religions of Assyria and Babylonia, though they are the most mature and complex because of their being the last stages of the developing stream.”<sup>14</sup> For al Faruqi, Judaism, Christianity and Islam constitute “the Arab Stream of Being.”<sup>15</sup>

In the area of Islamic thought, al Faruqi was much impressed by Islamic rationalism of the Mu‘tazili theologians like al-Nazzam (775-845 CE) and Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar (935-1025 CE), the ethics of the eleventh-century group of philosophers of *Ikhwan al-Safa’* (Brethren of Purity) and the *tawhidi* (unitarian) theology of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792 CE). Two common themes which run in the thought of these theologians and school of philosophy are *tawhid* (God’s oneness) and ‘*adl* (justice). Being a Muslim and a Palestinian, these two topics were of paramount importance for al Faruqi. In fact, in the tradition of classical Muslim theologians, al Faruqi went on to write his own *Kitab al-Tawhid* in English for the sake of a new generation of Muslims, who are versed in English.<sup>16</sup> It presents a philosophical and

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<sup>14</sup> Ismail al Faruqi to Cuyler Young, letter, November 11, 1963, in “Ismail al Faruqi Papers Collection” (Herndon, VA: IIIT).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Isma‘il R Al-Faruqi, *Al Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Herndon, (Virginia): International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2000); “Islamic Modernism and Islamic Revival,” Oxford Islamic Studies Online, April 25, 2016, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t253/e9>.

ideational view of Islam.

This introduction to the scholarly views of Professor Ismail al Faruqi comprises twenty-five chapters containing key excerpts from his different works concerning the pre-Hijrah sources of Islam; the essence of Islam; Islam and other faiths; religious experience in Islam; Wilfred Cantwell Smith; history of religions and Islam; Islam in global interreligious dependence; a comparison of the Islamic and Christian approaches to Hebrew Scripture; Niebuhr's ideas of society; the encounter between Islam and the West; the Ideals of social order in the Arab world (1800-1968); Christian mission and Islamic *da'wah*; the nature of Islamic *da'wah*; Islam and art; Islam's view of the followers of other religions; the concept of *din* (religion); *'urubah* (Arabism) and Islam; religion, practice, culture and world order; Muslim religious life; the Muslim family; the life mission of a Muslim; the Islamic world order; Islam and Christianity; the Hebrew, Christian and Muslim views of scripture; Islam in the West today and meta-religion according to Islam.

For al Faruqi, a trained philosopher and scholar of religion, religion meant belief and faith in the hearts of human beings with practical implications for life. He approached the study of Islam and religion from the perspective of academic approaches in the study of religion such as phenomenology, history of religions etc.

Religion for al Faruqi is a divine-human collaboration and a life-affirming activity. This approach to the study and practice of religion (and in his case Islam) led to being labeled "scholar-activist." Al Faruqi was no doubt a great and encyclopedic Muslim thinker of the contemporary age who was both a philosopher and

scholar of religion.<sup>17</sup>

Ismail al Faruqi's approach to the Qur'an is ideational, axiological and aesthetical—three concepts which are central to the study of religion and philosophy.

- a. Ideational—in the sense that it highlights the centrality of *tawhid* (monotheism) as the core idea of Arabian consciousness in contrast to other civilizations.<sup>18</sup>
- b. Axiological—valuational adherence to Islam, *i.e.*, it is faithfulness to the values of monotheistic piety, ethicality, ummatism and world affirmation. It is not national, racial or ideological (for these degenerate into fanaticism)<sup>19</sup> adherence to Islam.
- c. Aesthetical—for al Faruqi the Qur'an is an aesthetical revelation evident from the aesthetic character of its Arabic language, which has been the source of the aesthetical expressions found in the Muslim arts of

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<sup>17</sup> John Esposito, "Ismail R. al-Faruqi Scholar-Activist," in *The Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (USA: Oxford University Press, 1993), 65-79.

<sup>18</sup> Pertaining to or involving ideas or concepts.

<sup>19</sup> The branch of philosophy dealing with values, as those of ethics, aesthetics or religion. Faruqi comments that Muslim scholars have not yet spelled out a systematic statement of the values of Islam, Muslim exegesis, theology and jurisprudence comprises of commands and recommendations to do the right, or appealing descriptions of the goods which ought to be the objective or the effects of right action. Ismail al Faruqi, *Urubah and Religion: A Study of the Fundamental Ideas of Arabism and of Islam as Its Highest Moment of Consciousness* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), 173.

literature, calligraphy, architecture, music and painting.<sup>20</sup>

Ismail al Faruqi was probably one of the few modern-age scholars who had studied and researched about Christianity deeply and engaged with some of the top scholars of Christianity in the West, such as his friend Wilfred Cantwell Smith, whom he once called the “Christian al-Biruni of Islam.” Professor al Faruqi also engaged with modern-age Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist etc. scholars of religion such as Mircea Eliade, Joseph Kitagawa, P. T. Raju, William Montgomery Watt, Kenneth Cragg, Bernard Williams, Leonard Swidler, Hans Kung, Richard Martin and Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.

Unlike the populist Muslim preachers and dialoguers of Islam, Professor al Faruqi engaged in deep dialogical discourse highlighting the religious core of the ancient Near Eastern religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the trio representing “the Arab Stream of Being.”<sup>21</sup> He saw the three traditions as representing the unity of the Semitic tradition with each of them passing through different developments and as heirs to the ancient religions of Assyria and Babylon. In his view, the monotheistic perspective of the world has appeared in history in the form of Arab religious humanism expressed in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim forms of monotheism, *i.e.*, religion in the

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<sup>20</sup> The branch of philosophy dealing with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comic etc., as applicable to the fine arts, with a view to establishing the meaning and validity of critical judgments concerning works of art.

<sup>21</sup> Ismail al Faruqi, *Urubah and Religion: A Study of the Fundamental Ideas of Arabism and of Islam as Its Highest Moment of Consciousness* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), 210.

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Arab mind. Thus monotheism is the religious gift of the Arabs to humanity at large.

Professor al Faruqi joined the interreligious dialogue movement at a time when it was in its infancy and was engaged in by few Muslims. He initiated Islam into interreligious dialogue in the contemporary age, and as time passed others joined in and this legacy of his continues until today. From the Christian side it has been remarked that “he has left much for Christians to ponder, and his efforts stand as a monument to one person’s vision of what we all would long to see: a world community working in harmonious relationship to God and to each other.”<sup>22</sup>

Professor al Faruqi has left behind a school of thought known as the Islamization of knowledge, which operates at the level of university education at several Islamic universities around the globe. His school of thought, academic approach and practice is also being applied by hundreds of his students teaching and doing research at different universities around the globe.

### **With Ismail al Faruqi in the Classroom**

Professor al Faruqi was a fatherly figure to his students coming to study with him from all over the world in the United States. However, as a task master in the classroom, he knew well that the majority of the Muslim students in the department were not up to the mark of high standards of required scholarship. He was also well aware that his own prestige as a scholar and a teacher was at

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<sup>22</sup> F. Peter Ford, Jr., “Ismail al Faruqi on Muslim-Christian Dialogue: An Analysis from a Christian Perspective,” *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations* 4, no. 2 (1993): 279.

stake if they did not perform well in their studies in their courses. Thus he would not let us be at ease. I remember his remark on my first paper submission to him. He said, "This goes out of the window. Do not simply quote the Qur'an verses to hide behind them; present an argument and make a reference to the Qur'anic verse." On another occasion, he said, "You are here to learn and read; you are given a scholarship to read, read, read and write." I have not stopped since then.

Professor al Faruqi, also exhorted us, his students, to be dedicated Muslims committed to the upliftment of the *ummah* which was in dire strait on all fronts from educational to social and political. He dedicated all his efforts in roving around the world giving lectures on alleviation of the Muslim condition. He saw his students as those who will carry out this task upon the completion of their studies and returning to their countries. He also went about seeking financial aid from Muslim governments and philanthropic persons and organizations for giving scholarships to the students with good academic records and scholarly plus activist potentialities. He succeeded in getting financial aid from different sources. One aspect of founding IIIT was established for the purpose of advancing Islamic scholarship as the flagship project for the Islamization of knowledge and of offering scholarships to students to study under the guidance of Professor al Faruqi at the Department of Religion at Temple University, Philadelphia. Professor al Faruqi's always expressed his gratefulness to Allah for successfully setting up IIIT and the scholarships it produced in the academic arena as seen in the works of his colleagues Professor Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, Dr. Taha Jabir Alwani, Dr. Mona Fadl, Dr. Ilyas Ba-Yunus and many others associated with the American Association of Social Scientists (AMSS) and his students. In the classroom, he once

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expressed to us his gratitude to Allah for this project by remarking that “thanking Allah a million times is not enough.” This statement of his will remain in my mind forever, and I have shared with many who want to know who Professor al Faruqi was.

Attending Professor al Faruqi’s classes was like taking a tour in the world of religions, learning about the contributions of top scholars and his positive or negative opinions about them. Yet, he respected scholarship. My first course under him was on the Qur’an, where, in spite of personal and even scholarly disagreements with Professor Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago, the course textbook was none other than Fazlur Rahman’s best work, *Major Themes of the Qur’an*.<sup>23</sup> Al Faruqi was magnanimous when it came to recognizing scholarship.

In another course on ancient Near Eastern Religions, he required us to read the top works of scholars on ancient Near Eastern studies and the original texts from that period. After the class, we naive Muslim students, for whom Islam began and ended with Muḥammad ﷺ, became familiar with names such as Gilgamesh, Enkidu, Marduk and Ishtar. After class we used to joke among ourselves about where al Faruqi was leading, for we thought we had come to learn about Islam from him. And during the month of Ramadan, his classes would extend for 6 hours instead of 3 hours i.e. from 9 am to 12 noon with an hour break for Zuhr prayer and continue after that from 1.00 pm to 4 pm. He told us that since we all would be fasting except the non-Muslim students we had nothing do during the day thus we have more time to learn. This was his rationale for the 3 extra hours of

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<sup>23</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an*, 2nd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

lecture by him. And he would lecture continuously for 6 hours showing no signs of fatigue or tiredness. This was al Faruqi, the walking encyclopedia of religion, both in class and outside. He opened new vistas for us. He was also a father figure to all of his students. His greatest joy was the days when his students successfully defended their doctoral dissertations. Such occasions were followed by a grand dinner invitation to his home, where he would prepare a big meal for the successful student and others by himself. And we the invitees were not allowed to help in the kitchen or offer any hand in the dinner preparations.

He also introduced us to the field of the history of religion, a subject unheard of and not taught in the universities of the Muslim world or their theological seminaries, where often the study of other religions is seen as engaging in studying of a path leading to unbelief. For al Faruqi there were no limits to seeking knowledge. He was always ready to enter every field and terrain of information and knowledge to know and learn. He instilled this habit in me, making me ever restless to search and learn, with no limit to learning. The only limit is the biological lifetime.

Al Faruqi held that Islam was not opposed to modern science and technology, be it based in the past or modern paradigms. What mattered was whether it was axiologically sound in terms of values in the areas of ethics, aesthetics and religion—as they impact our perceptions, decisions and actions. He held that Islam is not against science or technology; the charge of Islam is a moral one, given in the realm of ethics, religion and science.

For al Faruqi, teaching Islamics was a dual undertaking: **1.** it is a study of a stream of being, of life and of religio-cultural categories furnished by the data themselves and **2.** rather than drawing from the arsenal of prejudices built by a crusading,

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missionizing, secularist, anti-Islamic, anti-Arab and imperialist West, it is directed toward discovering the meaning of being *homo-religiosus*—the idea that human existence is inherently religious. In other words, that human thought is motivated by religious ideas.<sup>24</sup>

In his own judgment, Professor al Faruqi saw the Department of Religion of Temple University as the ideal place for him to teach Islamics, pursue interreligious dialogue and address the spiritual problems facing humanity in the modern age. It was a department set up by Professor Bernard Phillips and his colleagues with the united mission of educating youth from all over the world on integrating the study of religion and human and natural sciences.

Professor al Faruqi has been accused of and been labeled as being a Mu‘tazili rationalist; an Arab nationalist; a philosophical rationalist influenced by Kantian deontology; a fire-brand Islamist posing as an academic; an intolerant dialoguer; one who stole the idea of the Islamization of Knowledge from others<sup>25</sup>; the ideological father of the Islamization of Knowledge; a poor social scientist; a Palestinian nationalist; etc. In my view, he did not care. Rather, he rode above all of them. He did not have time for petty matters; he thought big and dreamed big.

In my view, Professor al Faruqi, while being concerned about the politics of knowledge, or power and knowledge, was not a politician when it came to seeking knowledge and doing research.

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<sup>24</sup> Imtiyaz Yusuf, “Ismail Al-Faruqi’s Contribution to the Academic Study of Religion,” *Islamic Studies* 53, no. 1/2 (2014): 99-115.

<sup>25</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought, (ISTAC), 1993), xii.

Seeking knowledge and doing research for him had no bounds of time, space or sources.

For Professor al Faruqi, Islam was a worldview, a philosophy of action and an educational undertaking whose universality had no limits or bounds. In my view, the rise and the fast spread of religious exclusivism among Muslims show that along the way we have abandoned, lost or forgotten his legacy in the areas of studying and research about the connection between Islam and the history of religion and interreligious dialogue.

Al Faruqi presented Islam as a religion, a worldview and an integral part of the knowledge process not by engaging in apologetics but by developing new theories about the role of Arabs and Islam in the religious stream of being in non-nationalist terms, an Islamic theory of aesthetics rooted in Qur'anic monotheism and Islamization of knowledge, all of which remain his greatest contributions from his Temple tenure.

Then came the tragic summer day of May 27, 1986/Ramadan 18, 1406, when Professor Ismail al Faruqi and his wife Lois Lamya al Faruqi were brutally murdered in their home in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, while preparing for the *suhur* (predawn meal). There is an interesting personal note I want to share with the readers. Just before the beginning of the summer break that year, just a few days before my departure for Thailand for the summer break, I received a telephone call in the early morning from Professor al Faruqi inquiring when I would be departing and wishing me a happy journey and summer break. He ended the call by saying that we would meet again next semester. Just a few days after my arrival in Thailand, I received a call from a friend that Professor al Faruqi has been murdered. It came as a shock to me as I wondered why anyone would like to kill this great man of

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knowledge and wisdom. I suddenly remembered his last phone call to me. Normally whenever I went home for a break, he would not call me to say goodbye, but in that year of 1986 he did and it was the first time. As I reflect on that phone call, I interpret it as his saying final goodbye to me. Hence, this book and my other writings on the contribution of Professor Ismail al Faruqi are my acts of love and dedication to him—one of the major thinkers and scholars of Islam of the modern age whose contribution to the world of knowledge as a whole remains a lasting legacy and continues to inspire many young and elderly people seeking knowledge about Islam and its contribution to the world of the study of religion and human civilization.

Without al Faruqi, Temple University's Department of Religion would be a small world. Without the department, the Muslim world would not know of Ismail al Faruqi, and students like me and many others would not learn about the larger world of religion. It will be tragic and a pity to ever forget, ignore or look down upon his contribution because of political or other reasons—the deep bond al Faruqi contributed toward building links between the Department of Religion, Temple University and the Muslim world, an academic brand label, which I and his many other Muslim and non-Muslim students carry around the world is his proud legacy.<sup>26</sup>

I take this opportunity to offer special thanks to the **Barzinji Project** at Shenandoah University, an initiative funded by the

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<sup>26</sup> Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Ismail al Faruqi: The Link between TUDOR (Temple University, Department of Religion) and the Muslim World," in *Breakthrough to Dialogue: The Story of Temple University Department of Religion*, ed. Leonard Swidler (iPub Global Connection, 2020), 179-199.

friends and family of Jamal Barzinji (Dec. 15, 1939-Sep. 26, 2015), a Muslim scholar with a passion for higher education, for seeing the merit of this book on the thought and scholarship of Professor Ismail al Faruqi, who was a dear friend and colleague of Jamal Barzinji, and **helping facilitate this project**. Special thanks also go to Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, a member of the Parliament of Malaysia, former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and **Chairman of the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW)** at Shenandoah University, and to Firas J. al-Barzinji, a board member of **CICW**.

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My utmost thanks go to Professor John L. Esposito, University Professor and Professor of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, and Professor Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf, Professor of English and former Deputy Rector of Internationalisation and Global Network at the International Islamic University Malaysia, for reviewing this book and for their punctilious comments.

And a final note, the Islamic honorific titles for Allah and Prophet Muḥammad viz., “*subhanahu wa ta’ala*”, and “*salla Allahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*” respectively are “ﷻ” and “ﷺ” throughout the text. Each chapter begins with an italicized brief introduction followed by the excerpts from the writings of Professor Ismail al Faruqi.

## Pre-Hijrah Sources of Islam

*The content of this chapter visits Professor Ismail al Faruqi's appeal that the study of Islam should be prefaced by studies of pre-Hijrah Islam. His plea for this undertaking began with the article he wrote titled "Towards a Historiography of Pre-Hijrah Islam," Islamic Studies 1, no. 2 (1962): 65-87, which is excerpted in this chapter.*

*This was followed by his focus on the connection between geography, religion and civilization in the three chapters titled "The Ancient Near East: Mesopotamia," "The Ancient Near East: Egypt" and "The Religious Matrix of Greater Syria" in a book he co-edited with his colleague David E. Sopher of Syracuse University, titled *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World*,<sup>1</sup> as a prelude to the study of Islam. This approach to the study of religion is called "cultural geography." It involves investigating and researching about **I**. the influence of the environmental setting on the evolution*

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<sup>1</sup> Ismail R. al Faruqi and David E. Sopher, *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 3-14, 15-28, 33-34 respectively.

*of religious systems and particular religious institutions, 2. the way religious systems and institutions modify their environment, 3. the different ways religious systems occupy and organize segments of earth space and 4. the geographic distribution of religions and the way religious systems spread and interact with each other.*

*Professor al Faruqi was the only Muslim professor in modern times who called for inquiry and research about pre-Hijrah Islam by stressing its contextual importance for the study of and research about Islam as a worldview and a civilization. He emphasized that the neglect of this aspect in Muslim studies about Islam and comparative religion is the cause of the weak and marginalized state of Islamic Studies in the arena of knowledge.*

*For Professor al Faruqi, the human is born with a natural disposition toward religion (*din al-fitrah*), the recognition of ultimate reality in a variety of forms around the world, and this natural religious disposition is the distinctive quality of being human.*

### ***Din al-fitrah—Ur Religion or Religio Naturalis***

Coupled with this dignity is another of even greater importance, namely, that the non-Muslim possesses what Islam calls *din al-fitrah* or natural religion. This consists of the unerring discoveries of the *sensus numinis* by which man recognizes God as transcendent and holy, and hence worthy of adoration. This is not a repetition of man's natural capacity to know through science. It is a new knowledge, a knowledge of the Holy, of the numinous, of God. This natural vision of God, or *din al-fitrah*, stands to be enriched by man's other natural knowledge, *i.e.*, the discoveries of his theoretical and axiological consciousness.

Man's reason and sense of value stand ready to enlighten his service to God. Both faculties, the numinous and the theoretical-axiological, belong to man by virtue of his humanity. As he grows older, the cumulative products of science and morals are his as shortcuts to certainty of what the divine imperative is. Islam reminds him, however, that *din al-fitrah*, or *religio naturalis*, which Muslims and non-Muslims possess by birth, is always to be kept distinct from the religious traditions of history. This distinction makes it possible for him to approach his or any religious tradition critically, yet religiously; and it constitutes a permanent source of reform and creative dynamism for the historical religion. What God has implanted in human nature, namely the recognition of His transcendence, unity, holiness and ultimate goodness is prior to any tradition. Hence, *din al-fitrah* is, properly speaking, *Ur-Religion*, or original religion. Its possession by every man, regardless of the religious tradition or culture in which he was born or nursed, defines his humanity and casts upon him a very special dignity. It entitles him to full membership in the religious community of man, the universal brotherhood under God.

Islam calls this *din al-fitrah* or *Ur-Religion*, "Islam." It identifies itself completely with it, subjects itself totally to its principles and dictates. In Islam's view, the historical religions are outgrowths of *din al-fitrah*, containing within them differing amounts or degrees of it. It explains their differences from *din al-fitrah* as the accumulations, figurizations, interpretations or transformations of history, *i.e.*, of place, time, culture, leadership and other particular conditions. Islam therefore agrees that all religions are religions of God, issuing from and based upon *din al-fitrah*,

and representing varying degrees of acculturation or attunement with history. In a moment of high vision, Prophet Muḥammad said, “All men are born Muslims (in the sense in which Islam is equated with *din al-fitrah*): it is his parents that Christianize or Judaize him.” In the same sense, the Holy Qur’an named the adherents of *din al-fitrah* “*hanifs*” and declared the ancient prophets of God to be *hunafa’* (pl. of *hanif*), *i.e.*, recipient of revelation from God confirming their natural religion or *din al-fitrah*.

In addition to the dignity conferred upon him by his reason, moral sense, and the *sensus numinis*, all of which he shares equally with the Muslim, the non-Muslim enjoys the Muslim’s respect as carrier of *din al-fitrah*, the religion of God, as well as carrier of his own religious tradition as one based on *din al-fitrah*. His Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Buddhism is hence to the Muslim, *de jure*, *i.e.*, legitimate religion despite its divergence from traditional Islam. Indeed, the Muslim welcomes the non-Muslim as his brother in faith, in *din al-fitrah*, which is the more basic and the more important. The Muslim as well as the non-Muslim are hence members of one family, and their religious differences are domestic, *i.e.*, referrable to, and corrigible in terms of a common parental origin which is *din al-fitrah*.

## Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Arabia—

### Divine Transcendence in Pre-Islamic Era

The Egyptian wanted to see God in the creature, not beyond it. God, in his view, lived in nature. The ancient Egyptian was repulsed by any suggestion that removed him from God’s proximity. That is why he regarded God’s

hierophany in nature as constitutive. He did not have to think God; he perceived Him immediately in the phenomena of nature. Wherever he turned, he could tell himself, *Voilà* God. With this givenness of God, the Egyptian mind could afford to be abstract about God's character. Amon-Re was characterless, unknown. "No gods know his true shape ... No witness is born to him. He is too mysterious for his glory to be revealed, too great for questions to be asked of him, too powerful to be known." This enabled the Egyptian to regard God's character as genuinely numinous, *i.e.*, as mysterious and unknowable. He beheld, rather than thought, God; and he knew Him, the God, rather than his character.

The conception of God differed radically in Mesopotamia. There, the tradition had long established God as prior to His creation. As its creator and fashioner, He stood as it were beyond it, prior to it, ontologically as well as in His efficacious animation of it. The Mesopotamian saw God in the phenomena of nature: but unlike the Egyptian, he saw the hierophany only as the occasional appearance of the God, not as constitutive. Nature was for him a carrier—one could almost say an expression—of divine power, never identified with it; *e.g.*, Inanna and her reed. Enlil and his storm etc. The god or goddess was never either reed or storm, though all reeds and all storms were hierophanies of them. Equally, each god had his own domain beyond which he never went. Nonetheless, his realm was never exhaustively equated with him. His divine being was different and separate from the natural phenomenon though inextricably associated with it.

Both the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian felt themselves surrounded by God on every side because nature

surrounded them. However, whereas the Egyptian perceived the divine presence immediately in nature, the Mesopotamian deduced the divine presence immediately from nature, *i.e.*, he saw the natural phenomenon as an index which he related to the divine by an act of thought. For the Egyptian, God was in and of nature, logically equivalent to, or convertible with it, and nature was ontologically constitutive of divinity. For the Mesopotamian, God was in but never equivalent to or convertible with it. Abolish nature from reality: To the Egyptian, you have abolished God; to the Mesopotamian, you have made His effects imperceptible but never touched God.

Religion in the Near East has always been associated with the state. Indeed, religion always provided the state's *raison d'être*. This feature of the religious life is due to the fact that all Near Eastern religion is life-affirming and world-oriented. It means to make or remake history, to remold so as to perfect nature and enable man to maximize his usufruction of it. This connection with history has been the source of corruption in religion. Human life with all its passions, differentiations and motives, its thousand-and-one relativities, is a constant temptation to alter the religion to suit the person, or particular group concerned. Hence, religion has been oscillating between purity and corruption, a stage in which the voice of prophethood speaks in clear terms what God commands and another stage in which the voices of the concerned interpret or tamper with the earlier revelation to advance their cause.

In Arabia, another fact imposes itself upon us. That is the presence of the *hanifs* whom tradition has described as strict monotheists, who rejected Arab polytheism,

maintained a life of purity and righteousness, and rose above tribal loyalties. The *hanifs* were the carriers of the best in the Semitic tradition. They kept up the notion of transcendence entertained by its ancient adherents and prophets; and, it would seem, even further developed it. Their rejection of tribal and Makkan gods and their abhorrence of their images marks them as transcendentalists of the first caliber. They must be the media by which the Semitic tradition of transcendence had transmitted and perpetuated itself.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 22-23, 25-26.

### **Historiography of Pre-Hijrah Islam**

Islam is usually said to have begun with Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. It is considered that it was he who received the Holy Qur'an, who proclaimed God's religion in the divine *ipsissima verba*, who launched the *ummah* on a glorious march in space-time. The institution of the Islamic calendar and its establishment as starting on the day the Prophet had set out to found the first Islamic community in Madinah, is the expression of this consciousness. Never before, so runs the implication, has Islam been a reality of history. Never before has there been a community consciously committed to its pursuit and realization. Pre-Hijrah was, therefore, bound to be a period of "ignorance," of immorality and generally, of evil of every sort—in short, a genuine, all-round Jahiliyyah. Pre-Hijrah was said to be a time when Islam was not: that is a cause sufficient to indict anything! Accordingly, our forefathers—*muhaddithun*, historians, literati or '*ulama*'—deliberately applied

themselves to the indictment of pre-Hijrah. Makkan pre-Hijrah furnished them with an arsenal of arguments which they hurled, with no mean relish, at all human pre-Hijrah history. The history of the prophets was reduced to the prophets' own, personal biographies, while the Jahiliyyah of Makkah became a fact of universal history. The darker the Jahiliyyah was painted, the brighter the advent of Islam through Prophet Muḥammad was supposed to be. Polytheism, stone-worship, tribalism, war, license, egoism, commercialism, vanity, illustrated in the notorious annals of a Basus War, the cynicism of an Imru' al-Qays, the irresponsibility of an 'Abd al-Muttalib in front of Abrahah etc.—all these were projected onto the whole canvas of pre-Hijrah. How could there have been, in this case, any reason to study pre-Hijrah?

Neither did our forefathers feel the need to study that aspect of pre-Hijrah which constitutes the religious history of Judaism and Christianity. In the Holy Qur'an, they read what seemed to them to be a ready-made answer to the question of what both Judaism and Christianity were or will be. Since the Holy Qur'an had given the news-events of those religions, the Muslims thought there was no need to investigate their history. They understood, or rather misunderstood, the narratives of the Holy Book as reportative accounts of the news of the Jewish and Christian past which, as *ghayb*, stood for ever removed from anybody's knowledge but which God had elucidated in the "clear Arabic Qur'an." But God did not mean the Qur'an to be primarily a record of historical events. Where He spoke of past events, it was in order to elicit from them a meaning for the present and the future. That the narratives of the Holy Book are "history" is beside the point

God had wished to make. The meanings these narratives convey, on the other hand, are of the essence. The Qur'an itself tells us that event-reporting is subsidiary to the conveyance of meaning: "And all, we shall tell thee, of the news of the prophets, that you may thereby convince your heart. In these news, there were brought to you truth, good counsel and a reminder to those who believe." Instead of being inspired to seek the basic *facta* of ancient history which the Holy Qur'an had interpreted, the Muslims were content to add to its narratives a drawn-out embroidery of detail. For this purpose, they pressed into service folktales and apocryphal stories current among Near Eastern pagans, Christians, Jews and others.

The golden age of Islamic learning has not added anything to Muslim knowledge in this field ... The Qur'an's invitation to study the ancient times, dramatically issued in the divine assertion that the history of the prophets was other than their own so-called followers had claimed it to be, the most attractive bait for scholarly research ever offered, viz., the Qur'an's insistence that the records in Jewish and Christian possession were falsifications of the original—all this was bypassed by the Muslims without whetting their otherwise insatiable appetite for learning and research. At the root of it all, stood the misunderstanding of the Qur'anic narrative as *khobar* or *naba'*. It is bad enough that more than a whole millennium had to pass before the spirit of the Holy Qur'an inspired men to do such research. But it is all the worse for us Muslims that this Qur'anic spirit has so far inspired not Muslim but Christian scholars.

Though for the most part these sciences and disciplines have been the handmaids of Christian religious pursuits,

they have grown beyond these primitive needs and have now come to assume a place of their own in human culture and world literature. Any reputable bookstore or library in the West now offers a variety of Akkadian, Sumerian, Amoritic, Syriac, Aramic grammar and reading books. The religious and wisdom literature of the ancient Near East of the first, second and third millennia BC, are commonplace readings in Christian scholarly quarters. The whole history of the ancient Near East has been constructed and reconstructed, written and rewritten. The Christian Biblical scholar and Western Semiticist not only know far more about the ancient Near East than any Muslim but stand equipped with that knowledge to reconstruct history in such wise as the Christian, Western spirit dictates ... And it is here that we cannot remain spectators in this greatest drama of all; namely, the attempt of the Western spirit to appropriate, Westernize and Christianize a whole segments of the history of civilization and culture on earth. Furthermore, the men and women whose life-histories the Western scholar has been reshaping, whose religion and ideologies he has been reconstructing, are the Muslims' spiritual ancestors. They were the peoples who, precisely by their religion and their ideology, had paved the way for the advent of Islam. Nay, these men and women were the people who, as God Himself has told us, were *hunaḥfa'* and Muslims long before Prophet Muḥammad. They were the recipients of revelation from the one and true God of Muḥammad. The Qur'an further tells us that they were the recipients of essentially the same message as Muḥammad. How did we fail to seek their history and their religion? How can we fail to be interested in the Christian reconstruction of that history and religion? How can we

allow the Christian scholar's knife to cut into the body of the pre-Hijrah Islamic tradition? There is confronting us to-day a challenge as great as that which confronted our forefathers when they stood at the gates of Greek philosophy and science; but with the added gravity that this concerns us far more closely than Greek knowledge could have ever done. Greek knowledge was a foreign development which we came to face from the outside. Though we have succeeded in Islamizing, appropriating and then developing it as Islamic knowledge, the truth remains that in its Greek development Greek knowledge was Greek. Ancient Near Eastern history, on the other hand, is Islamic history, though it is pre-Hijrah. We cannot allow it to be constructed in any manner. We must be the guardians and defenders of its worthy ideas, of its truths, because these were all Islamic.

It may perhaps be contended that the ancient Near Eastern peoples were not Muslims, that they were by no means related to the advent of Muḥammad and of Islam as he proposed and taught it; that the ancients were, above all, polytheists and pagans. How then, it is argued, can there be any resemblance, not to speak of identity, with Islam which is the religion of *tawhid*?

To begin with, it must be remarked that neither the contention nor its answer may be dogmatic. Both must presuppose a thorough knowledge of the thought of the ancients—which the Muslims do not as yet have. We cannot anymore call the ancient Near Easterners polytheists and pagans outright; and if we carefully study them, we should be at least more humble and cautious than to indict them beforehand. We could be more true to our Islam if we remembered in this connection that

*“there is no people but God had sent it a warner,”*

Qur’an, Fāṭir 35:24, al-Naḥl 16:36

and that this divinely issued warning is the very stuff of which religious thought consists. (Qur’an, al-Kahf 18:56) If we may not call the Jews, for instance, polytheists and pagans, it is not because they did not worship other gods? we know for certain that they did? but because of the presence among them of prophets (*i.e.*, warners) who called them to God’s religion. The sound element in the tradition of Jewish religious thought consists entirely of these “warnings” of the prophets. It is nothing but uninstructed dogmatism to claim that the ancient Near Easterners did not have prophets, or men of spiritual insight as great as those of the Jewish prophets. Once more, it was the Holy Qur’an that announced,

*“... And as for some prophets, We have so far narrated to you their events ; but of other prophets We have brought you no knowledge ...”*

Qur’an, al-Nisā’ 4:164

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “Towards a Historiography of Pre-Hijrah Islam,” *Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (1962): 65-67, 70-73.

## The Essence of Islam

*This chapter introduces Professor Ismail al Faruqi's definition of tawhid, "monotheism," contained in the first principle of Islamic faith, i.e., La ilaha illa 'llah—the witnessing that there is no god but God as the quintessence of Islamic belief, faith and practice.*

*Al Faruqi saw the struggle between tawhid and shirk, "associationism" (associating other beings and entities with God), as the central theme of the religions of the Arabian theater. For al-Faruqi, a Muslim holds a "monotheic" ethical vision rooted in the Qur'anic view of din based on the principles of monotheism, universalism, tolerance and life-affirmation, which enables one to deal with contemporary challenges of materialism and ethno-religious conflicts. It also facilitates Muslim partnering in the dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations.*

*Al Faruqi makes a contrast between the "monotheic" religious worldview of monotheism from the "mythopoeic" religious worldview, which forms the basis of associationism—belief in or worship of more than one god. The mythopoeic view supposes that spiritual truths are better understood by means of myths and*

*symbols. It obstructs the human mind to transcend to an abstracted religious worldview of tawhidi monotheism.*<sup>1</sup>

Islam's view of other faiths flows from the essence of its religious experience. This essence is critically knowable. It is not the subject of "paradox," nor of "continuing revelation," nor the object of construction or reconstruction by Muslims. It is as clearly comprehensible to the man of today as it was to those of Arabia of the Prophet's day (570-632 CE) because the categories of grammar, lexicography, syntax and redaction of the Qur'anic text and those of Arabic consciousness embedded in the Arabic language have not changed through the centuries. This phenomenon is indeed unique; for Arabic is the only language which has remained the same for nearly two millennia, the last fourteen centuries of which being certainly due to the Holy Qur'an. Nobody has denied that Islam has a recognizable essence, readable in the Holy Qur'an. For Muslims, this essence has been on every lip and in every mind, every hour of every day.

The essence of Islam is *tawhid* or *La ilaha illa 'llah*, the witnessing that there is no god but God (may He be Glorified and Exalted). Brief as it is, this witness packs into itself four principles which constitute the whole essence and ultimate foundation of the religion.

First, that there is no god but God means that reality is dual, consisting of a natural realm, the realm of creation, and a transcendent realm, the Creator. This principle

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<sup>1</sup> Ismail R. al Faruqi and David E. Sopher, *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 7-8; Ismail R. al Faruqi. "History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue." *Numen* 12, no. 1 (1965): 64.

distinguishes Islam from Ancient Egypt and Greece where reality was taken to be monophysite, consisting of one realm, nature or creation, parts or all of which were apotheosized. Greek and Egyptian gods were projections of various components of nature idealized beyond their created empirical creaturely naturalness. *Tawhid* distinguishes Islam from the religions of India where reality is also monophysite, but where the natural realm is taken to be the transcendent realm itself but in a state of ephemeral objectification or individuation. Finally, *tawhid* distinguishes Islam from trinitarian Christianity where the dualism of creator and creature is maintained but where it is combined with a divine immanentism in human nature in justification of the incarnation. For *tawhid* requires that neither nature be apotheosized nor transcendent God be objectified, the two realities ever remaining ontologically disparate.

Second, that the one and only God is God means that He is related to what is not God as its God; that is, as its Creator or ultimate cause, its master or ultimate end. Creator and creature, therefore, *tawhid* asserts, are relevant to each other regardless of their ontological disparateness, which is not affected by the relation. The transcendent Creator, being cause and final end of the natural creature, is the ultimate Master Whose will is the religious and moral imperative. The divine will is commandment and law, the ought of all that is, knowable by the direct means of revelation, or the indirect means of rational and/or empirical analysis of what is. Without a knowable content, the divine will would not be normative or imperative, and hence would not be the final end of the natural; for if the transcendent Creator is not the final end of His own creature, creation must be not the purposive event

consonant with divine nature but a meaningless happening to Him, a threat to His own ultimacy and transcendence.

Third, *tawhid* or, as we have seen, that God is the final end of the creature, means that man is capable of action, that creation is malleable or capable of receiving man's action, and human action on malleable nature, resulting in a transformed creation is the moral end of religion. Contrary to the claims of other religions, nature is not fallen, evil, a sort of *Untergang* of the absolute; nor is the absolute an apotheosis of it. Both are real and both are good; the Creator being the *summum bonum* or supreme good and the creature being intrinsically good and potentially better as it is transformed by human action into the pattern the Creator has willed for it. We have already seen that knowledge of the divine will is possible for man; and through revelation and science such knowledge is actual. The prerequisites of the transformation of creation into the likeness of the divine pattern are hence all, but for human resolve and execution, fulfilled and complete.

Fourth, *tawhid* means that man, alone among all the creatures, is capable of action as well as free to act or not to act. This freedom vests him with a distinguishing quality, namely responsibility. It casts upon his action its moral character; for the moral is precisely that action which is done in freedom, *i.e.*, done by an agent who is capable of doing, as well as of not doing, it. This kind of action, moral action, is the greater portion of the divine will. Being alone capable of it, man is a higher creature, endowed with the cosmic significance of that through whose agency alone is the greater part of the divine will to be actualized in space-time. Man's life on earth, therefore, is especially meaningful and cosmically significant. As Allah has put it in the Holy

Qur'an, man is God's *khalifah*, or vicegerent on earth. It is of the nature of moral action that its fulfillment be not equivalent to its non-fulfillment, that man's exercise of his freedom in actualizing the divine imperative be not without difference. Hence, another principle is necessary, whereby successful moral action would meet with happiness and its opposite with unhappiness. Otherwise it would be all one for man whether he acts, or does not act, morally. Indeed, this consideration makes judgment necessary, in which the total effect of one's lifetime activity is assessed and its contribution to the total value of the cosmos is acknowledged, imbalances in the individual's life are redressed and his achievement is distinguished from the non-achievement of others. This is what "the Day of Judgment" and "Paradise and Hell" are meant to express in religious language.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 131-133.

## What is the Essence of Islam?

*First, Islam is rationalistic.* Its very word for faith, namely, *iman*, is contrasted severely with that state wherein man "submits," or "surrenders to," "accepts without question," or "believes" without rational conviction," items of pseudo-knowledge on the basis of authority. In Islam, the highest state of religious certainty—*iman*—is not merely the act of believing, an "act of faith," but a state in which religious knowledge produces an intuition of its certainty as a result of the consideration and weighing of all possible alternatives. Here the subject wholly determined by the data of his "will to believe" is nil. Nothing is allowed that

overpowers his intellect, that demands its “yea” or “nay” before analysis and the most searching scrutiny of which that intellect is capable. “No coercion in religion,” the Qur’an asserts, ruling out all forms of coercion, physical as well as mental, and explains,

*“Truth is now manifest and is clearly distinguishable from falsehood”.*

Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:256, al-Isrā’ 17:81

*Second, Islam is transcendentalist.* It repudiates all forms of immanentism. It holds that reality is of two generic kinds—transcendent and spatiotemporal, creator and creature, value and fact—which are metaphysically, ontologically unlike and different from each other. These two realms of being constitute different objects of two modes of human knowledge, namely, the *a priori* and the empirical. Consciousness of this duality is as old as man; but it has never been absolutely free of confusion, absolutely clear of itself, as in Islam. Ever since the fourth millennium BC when in the speculations of the Theban (the Theban region refers to a portion of the Nile Valley north and south of the site of Thebes (modern Luxor) in Upper Egypt from around 3200 BC) and Memphite (Memphis—the capital of Ancient Egypt) theologies the two realms of being were so confused by man so as to become one, the consciousness of transcendence, or of the duality of being, has been struggling to attain clarity. Although it was denied in the Indian religions which, while taking their stand on monism, have denied reality to the spatiotemporal and assigned it all to the transcendent, the consciousness of transcendence was confused by the anthropomorphic understanding of deity in Judaism and the incarnational

theology of Christianity. Islam takes its distinguishing mark among the world religions precisely by insisting on an absolute metaphysical separation of transcendent from the spatiotemporal.

*Thirdly, Islam is world affirmative.* The world, or space-time, is good. It was not created in vain, or in sport, but for the good purpose, namely the fulfillment of divine will. Inasmuch as divine will is value, or the good, and because its fulfillment is its concretization or actualization in space-time, the final objective of Islam is not extrinsic to this world but in and of it. Islam does not regard the final realization of the absolute as something that will take place outside of space-time, after this world has come to a cataclysmic end. On the contrary, it regards that realization as taking place in this world.

*Fourth, Islam is "societistic."* Because the whole world, creation itself is the object of the Muslim's will to transform and refashion, the society of Islam in the human race in its totality. Here everyman is a citizen and everyone counts. None is excluded by virtue of his progeny, religion or culture. Man's humanness constitutes his full candidacy for membership. Even if he is not a Muslim, his entry into a contract of peaceful coexistence with the Muslims makes him a constituent member of the society of Islam ... In Islamic society, therefore, the doing of good and prevention of evil are the credit of all the citizens and their opposites are the moral failure and bane of all.

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Wing-tsit Chan, Ismail R. al Faruqi, Joseph Mitsuo Kitgawa, P. T. Raju, *The Great Asian Religions: An Anthology* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), 308-317.

## **Divine Transcendence in Islam**

### ***The Human Capacity to Understand***

The first point to bear in mind is that Islam does not tolerate any discrimination between humans as far as their capacity to understand the transcendence of God is concerned. Divine transcendence is everybody's business; and in Islam it is the ultimate base of all religion, and all anthropology.

### ***The Human Capacity to Misunderstand***

Having asserted that humans are all endowed with the capacity to recognize the transcendent God, Islam does not assert that they all must have in fact achieved such recognition. In the terms of a hadith (tradition) of the Prophet ﷺ "Every man is born a Muslim (in the sense of nature, or a *Sollensnothwendigkeit* for recognizing Allah). But it is his parents (or nurture, tradition and culture) that Judaize or Christianize him." Departure from this primordial, innate monotheism, is the work of culture and history. Its sources are passion and culture; the former, when vested interest in a view elevates it to the status of dogma, of an article beyond contention; the latter, when the student disciple or seeker's nerve fails in the *épôche* requisite for grasping a truth not under the categories of his own culture. The first is evidenced by the reply of Heraclitus (fl. 500 BC) to the Prophet's emissary who called him to Islam. The second, in the problems early Islamic thought had contended with relating to the divine attributes.

Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians have entered Islam in its

early days and brought with them the mental categories of their inherited cultures. The majority did not speak Arabic. Naturally, their minds, accustomed to thinking in terms of divine immanence, particularism and concreteness, could not readily absorb the radical idea of divine transcendence. They understood Allah in the only way they were accustomed to, *i.e.*, anthropomorphically. They were called *Mushabbihah*. They took the Qur'anic descriptions of God literally, and fell into the unanswerable abyss of questions regarding divine nature. If as the Qur'an says, God spoke to the prophets and angels, then He must have a mouth and tongue! And if He sees and hears, He must have eyes and ears! And if He sat on the throne, or descended from it, then He must have a body and a posture. Al-Shahrastani (d. 548 AH / 1153 CE) following al-Ash'ari (d. 322 AH / 935 CE), tells us that the *Mushabbihah* (anthropomorphists) namely, Mudar, Kuhmus, Ahmad al-Hujaymi, Hisham ibn al-Hakam, Muhammad ibn 'Isa, Dawud al-Jawaribi and their followers held that God could be interviewed and embraced: that He visits people and is visited by them; that He has organs like and unlike those of humans; that He has hair etc. They even falsely ascribed to the Prophet sayings confirming their claims. Al-Shahrastani took care to inform his readers that most of these claims were adopted from the teachings of Jews—Qara'ites—and singled out hadiths pertinent to the creation of Adam in God's image, to God's regret for the Deluge. His development of an eye-ache of which He was relieved by the angels etc.

The *Mu'tazilah* were the first to rise to the threat this anthropomorphism posed for Islam. In their enthusiasm, they shot at and beyond the target at the same time. The divine attributes, they said, were of the nature of literary

similes which must be interpreted allegorically and their abstract meaning extracted. That God spoke is an allegorical way of saying that revelation has been conveyed to man; that He sees and hears means that He has knowledge; that He sits on the throne means that he has power; etc. This was sufficient to refute anthropomorphism and cut it out from the Islamic tradition once and for all, but it created the danger of *ta'til*, i.e., of neutralizing the attributes or "stopping their functioning as attributes."

As transcendent Being, Allah is never given to sense, and can therefore never become the object of a sensory intuition. To the artist whose business is to present a sensory intuition of the subject, God is an absolutely hopeless case. The Muslim conscience shudders at the very suggestion of a sensory representation of God. In this very despair of the Muslim artist came the breakthrough. Granted Allah's transcendence removes Him beyond aesthetic representation and expression, is the same true of His unrepresentableness, of His aesthetic inexpressibility? The answer is negative. God is indeed inexpressible, but His inexpressibility is not. This inexpressibility became the object of aesthetic expression and the unconscious object of the Muslim artist. Stylization and its ultimate, the geometrical figure, constituted the media, the expression of God's inexpressibility constituted the goal. There remained for the Muslim artistic genius to create the design which when applied to the medium would achieve the goal.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 44, 48-49, 55-56.

***The Expression of Transcendence in Belles-Lettres***

Long before the Prophet, the Arabs had already perfected the literary art and achieved their greatest distinctions in it. Their ability to produce works of great literary merit was tested, and the esteem they accorded to such great works was without parallel in any other culture. History knows of no other people with whom the word and its beauty had equal importance. To the Arabs, the word was a matter of life and death, of oblivion and eternity, of war and peace, of virtue and vice, of nobility and vulgarity.

*I'jaz* is the name given to the phenomenon of the Qur'an's challenge to all men at all times, but especially to the Arab contemporaries of the Prophet, to produce a work matching it in beauty and excellence. It contains two elements: The first is the innate character of the Qur'an which, when perceived by the mind capable of perceiving it, produces the feeling of fascination, of being moved, of experiencing the highest and most intense values, in short, of encountering ultimate reality with all the experiences attendant upon such encounter. The second is the realization of the difference that separates man, the perceiver, from God, the perceived, an index of which is man's incapacity to produce anything like the Qur'an. The former is innate to the Qur'an; the latter, to man. The Arabs refer to the second simply as *i'jaz*, the phenomenon or event of miraculousness; but refer to the first as *wujuh al-i'jaz* or aspects of miraculousness of the Qur'an.

That *i'jaz*, as event, has taken place among the believing and non-believing Arabs during the life of Muḥammad, as well as among the Muslims of all ages, is an undeniable fact of history. The Qur'an's challenge to the unbelievers and

their failure to meet the challenge has been recorded in the Qur'an with relish (*taqri*). *I'jaz*, however, is not only an event of history. The Qur'an's challenge is timeless and so is its success. The proof of this is the Qur'an's continuing power to convert men to Islam, to convince them immediately of its divine origin. No man who reads what the Muslims wrote concerning their experience with the Qur'an, or who observes the Qur'an's effects upon their consciousness, their lives and thoughts can avoid the conclusion that the Qur'an has such character.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 59-60.

## Islam and Other Faiths—The History

*Islam originated, grew and lives in cosmopolitan religious, cultural and socio-economic settings around the world. The cosmopolitanism of Islam is illustrated in the worldwide spread of the ummah (Muslim community) which has always been inclusive of different faiths around the world.<sup>1</sup> Professor Ismail al Faruqi stressed this global interdependence of Islam with other religions in his writings, talks and designing of Islamic Studies curriculums for tertiary education and research. This chapter contains his views about Islam and other religions both in history and in terms of its implications for tawhid (monotheism), the core doctrine of Islam.*

The ... lesson we learn from the essence of Islam is not a fanciful projection of a daydreamer, of a man wishing for a felicitous interreligious relationship. It is, rather, the vision of an actual movement in history. It is a vision which has been translated into directives for daily living and action,

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<sup>1</sup> Ismail R. al Faruqi and Lois Lamy al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986).

crystallized permanently into law (the Shari'ah), actually observed by millions of people, across fourteen centuries, in areas covering a wide and long belt of the surface of the earth.

In Makkah, before the existence of the Islamic state, indeed before the formation of the Muslims into an organic *ummah*, Islam declared itself a confirmation of all previous revelations and identified itself with Judaism and Christianity. But noticing the baffling array of doctrines, creeds and practices of Jews and Christians, Islam distinguished between these phenomena of history and the original Judaism and Christianity which God gave to His prophets. By its criticism of the discrepancies and contradictions, it incepted objective study of the history of the two religions, critical study of their scriptures, the Torah and the New Testament. It recognized the divine base of both and ascribed the historical growth to human effort, whether well or ill-meaning. It identified itself with the religion of Abraham, Moses and Jesus and, before them, with the religion of Adam and Noah. It rehabilitated the whole of mankind religiously by recognizing a *religio naturalis* innate in all men; and related to them all without exception by declaring itself as a claim to no more than the content of that primal, original, *Ur-Religion*, or gift of God to every human being.

When Makkan persecution became unbearable for many of his followers, the Prophet ordered them to seek refuge in Ethiopia, the Christian Kingdom, confident that the followers of Jesus Christ are moral, charitable and friendly, promoters of the worship of God. His high regard for them was well placed. For their Christian emperor rejected Makkah's demand for extradition of the Muslim refugees

and acclaimed the Qur'anic recognition of the prophethood of Jesus, the innocence of his mother and the oneness of God.

Upon arrival in Madinah, where the Prophet founded the first Islamic state, the Jews were recognized as an autonomous *ummah* within the Islamic state. Henceforth, Jewish law, religion and institutions became a sacrosanct trust whose protection, safe-keeping and perpetuation became a Muslim responsibility imposed by the religion of Islam itself. Only questions of external war and peace fell outside the jurisdiction of the sovereign Jewish *ummah* and even on this level, the Islamic state was not to act without *shura* (consultation) with all its constituents, including the non-Muslims. Likewise, the Christian Arabs of Najran came to Madinah following the Prophet's launching of the new Islamic state to negotiate their own place in the emerging society. The Prophet himself called them to Islam and argued with them at length with all the eloquence at his disposal. Some of them converted; but the majority did not. Muḥammad nonetheless granted them the same autonomous status accorded to the Jews, loaded them with gifts and sent them home under the protection of a Muslim bodyguard and a Muslim statesman, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, to organize their affairs, solve their problems and serve their interests.

As the Muslims fanned out of Arabia into Byzantium, Persia and India, large numbers of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Buddhists came under their dominion. The same recognition granted to the Jews and Christians by the Prophet personally was granted to every non-Muslim religious community on the one condition of their keeping the peace. The case of Jerusalem was the *typos*

of this Muslim tolerance and goodwill on the religious level as well as on the social and cultural. The brief but illustrious charter reads:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. This charter is granted by ‘Umar, Servant of Allah and Prince of the Believers, to the people of Aelia. He grants them security for their persons and their properties, for their churches and their crosses, the little and the great, and for adherents of the Christian religion. Neither shall their churches be dispossessed nor will they be destroyed, nor their substances or areas, nor their crosses or any of their properties, be reduced in any manner. They shall not be coerced in any matter pertaining to their religion, and they shall not be harmed. Nor will any Jews be permitted to live with them in Aelia.

Upon the people of Aelia falls the obligation to pay the jizyah; just as the people of Mada’in (Persia) do, as well as to evict from their midst the Byzantine army and the thieves. Whoever of these leaves Aelia will be granted security of person and property until he reaches his destination. Whoever decides to stay in Aelia will also be granted the same and share with the people of Aelia, in their rights and the jizyah. The same applies to the people of Aelia as well as to any other person. Anyone can march with the Byzantines, stay in Aelia or return to his home country, and has until the harvesting of the crops to decide. Allah attests to the contents of this treaty, and so do His Prophet, his successors and the believers.

Signed: ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab

Witnessed by: Khalid ibn al-Walid, ‘Amr ibn al-‘As [d. 664], ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Awf and Mu‘awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan.

Executed in the year 15 AH

Nothing is farther from the truth and more inimical to Muslim-non-Muslim relations than the claim that Islam spread by the sword. Nothing could have been and still is more condemnable to the Muslim than to coerce a non-Muslim into Islam. As noted earlier, the Muslims have been the first to condemn such action as mortal sin. On this point, Thomas Arnold, an English missionary in the Indian Civil Service of colonial days and no friend of Islam wrote:

... of any organized attempt to force the acceptance of Islam on the non-Muslim population, or of any systematic prosecution intended to stamp out the Christian religion, we hear nothing. Had the caliphs chosen to adopt either course of action, they might have swept away Christianity as easily as Ferdinand and Isabella drove Islam out of Spain, or Louis XIV made Protestantism penal in France, or the Jews were kept out of England for 350 years. The Eastern Churches in Asia were entirely cut off from communion with the rest of Christendom throughout which no one would have been found to lift a finger on their behalf, as heretical communions. So that the very survival of these Churches to the present day is a strong proof of the generally tolerant attitude of the Muhammadan governments towards them

Compared with the histories of other religions, the history of Islam is categorically white as far as toleration of other

religions is concerned. Fortunately, we have on record many witnesses from those days of Muslim conquest to whom we should be very grateful for clearing up this matter once and for all. Michael the Elder, Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch, wrote in the second half of the twelfth century, “This is why the God of vengeance ... beholding the wickedness of the Romans who, throughout their dominions, cruelly plundered our churches and our monasteries and condemned us without pity—brought from the region of the south the sons of Ishmael, to deliver us through them from the hands of the Romans.” Barhebraeus (1226-1286) is author of an equally powerful witness in favor of Islam. Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, a Dominican monk from Florence who visited the Muslim East in about 1300 CE, gave an equally eloquent witness of tolerance—nay, friendship—to the Christians. And yet, if the Muslims were so tolerant, the Christian persistently asks, why did his coreligionists flock to Islam by the millions? Of these coreligionists, the Arabs were the smallest minority. The rest were Hellenes, Persians, Egyptians, Cyrenaicans, Berbers, Cypriots and Caucasians. Canon Taylor once explained it beautifully at a Church Congress held at Wolverhampton. He said:

It is easy to understand why this reformed Judaism (*sic!*) spread so swiftly over Africa and Asia. The African and Syrian doctors (*sic!*) had substituted abstruse metaphysical dogmas for the religion of Christ: they tried to combat the licentiousness of the age by setting forth the celestial merit of celibacy and the angelic excellence of virginity—seclusion from the world was the road of holiness, dirt was the characteristic of monkish sanctity—the people were

practically polytheists, worshipping a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels; the upper classes were effeminate and corrupt, the middle classes oppressed by taxation, the slaves without hope for the present or the future. As with the bosom of God, Islam swept away this mass of corruption and superstition. It was a revolt against empty theological polemics; it was a masculine protest against the exaltation of celibacy as a crown of piety. It brought out the fundamental dogmas of religion—the unity and greatness of God, that He is merciful and righteous, that He claims obedience to His will, resignation and faith. It proclaimed the responsibility of man, a future life, a day of judgment and stern retribution to fall upon the wicked; and enforced the duties of prayer, almsgiving, fasting and benevolence. It thrust aside the artificial virtues, the religious frauds and follies, the perverted moral sentiments and the verbal subtleties of theological disputants. It replaced monkishness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 146-150.

Each religion must be credited with sublime achievement in the upholding and fulfillment of these principles in history. Islam has called this core *din al-fitrah* and defined man in terms of it. Every human creature, it proclaimed, is endowed with this core at birth, equally with all other humans, without the slightest discrimination. And, recognizing its permanence, Islam declared this *Ur-*

*Religion* to be the *sensus communis* of mankind, and based it on a built-in *sensus numinis* by which the creature recognizes its Holy, transcendent (and thus numinous) creator. Equally, this is the avowed base of Islam's universalism, which Muslims everywhere have always assumed in all humans—indeed even in non-humans, as God's creatures. No wonder that Islam's consistent adherence to it reinforced its universalist claim and was responsible for Islam's exemplary respect for and tolerance of other religions. This great privilege of recognizing *Ur-Religion* for what it is, namely, the universal characteristic of all men, Islam declares, belongs equally to Judaism and Christianity. Islam does not therefore claim for itself superiority in this matter, but assigns to Judaism and Christianity a position on a par with its own. All being God's, all representing God's will revealed through His prophets, they are all true, all crystallizing the one and same truth.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 216.

## **Implications of *Tawhid* for Other Faiths**

*Tawhid*, the essence of religious experience in Islam, carries a number of implications for the theory of God, the theory of revelation, the theory of man, the theory of society. Every one of these carries in turn implications for the place of other faiths in Islam's consideration.

1. *Theory of God.* Islam's insistence on the absolute unity and transcendence of God is an affirmation of God's lordship over all men. To hold God as Creator means that all men are His creatures. The measure of His absoluteness

as Creator is at once the measure of the creature-likeness of all creatures. In being creaturely, they are all one though they may be distinguished among one another. But vis-à-vis God, they are all one and the same.

As human creatures, therefore, all men are God's vicegerents on earth. All men stand absolutely on a par under the obligation to fulfill the divine will and are judged on a scale of justice that is absolute for one and all. God's transcendence does not allow discrimination between the creatures as such. Therefore, God could not have given any special status to any person or group. His love, providence, care for and judgment of all men must be one if His transcendence is not to be compromised. Certainly, men receive differing judgment's because their individual merit and demerit are different, and these in turn are different because its endeavors, capacities and achievements are different. But God will not have with any human being a relationship to which every other human being does not stand equally entitled. Thus Islam knows no theory of election, not even an election of Muslims, such as Judaism teaches for the Jews, under which the Jew remains God's elect even if he goes astray, indeed even if he apostasizes. In Islam, all men, Muslims and non-Muslims, stand to God in identically the same relation, *i.e.*, they fall under the same imperative and are judged indiscriminately by the same law. God's covenant is one and the same with all men. It is not a "Promise" but a two-way contract in which man obeys and God rewards or man disobeys and God punishes. Because Allah is absolutely One and Transcendent, the non-Muslim is not a "gentile," a "goy," an "estranged" or "lesser" human being in any way, but a being who is as much the object of divine concern as the

Muslim, as much *mukallaf* or subject of moral responsibility as the Muslim.

2. *Theory of Revelation.* In Islam the divine will, the ought or content of the religious and moral imperative, is knowable directly through revelation or indirectly through science. Revelation is not a privilege peculiar to the Muslims, but a blessing granted to all mankind. This is not to argue that the content of prophecy is aimed at mankind which is especially true in the case of Muḥammad ﷺ but that the phenomenon of prophecy is common to and present in every people and nation. Allah has said, “There is no people unto whom We have not sent a prophet-warner,” and that “We have sent no Prophet but that We have revealed to him that men should worship and serve Allah and avoid all evil ways.” Revelation, therefore, is a common prerogative of mankind; and so is its content, the divine will, the ought or religious and moral imperative; though this does not preclude Allah’s revelation of messages addressed to some people alone, in their own language and for their own peculiar benefit. The non-Muslim is hence not underprivileged by comparison to the Muslim in this regard. He has been as much the object and subject of revelation as the Muslim, though, unlike the Muslim, he may have dissipated, lost, tampered with or confused what has been revealed to him. Universalism of prophecy follows from God’s transcendence. Revelation being an act of mercy, necessary for certain knowledge of the divine will, it would not be consonant with divine transcendence to give it to some and to deny it to others. Instead of being the forsaken who benefits from what has been gifted to others, the non-Muslim is the proud partner who is as much the benefactor of this divine gift as the Muslim.

As to science, the indirect way of learning the divine will, its prerequisites are the senses, intellectual curiosity and the will to research and discovery, the availability of data and communicability of experience, memory and the preservation of knowledge, reason and understanding or the capacity to grasp, synthesize and develop knowledge. All these prerequisites are indiscriminately gifted to all mankind. No people or group may lay exclusive claim to them. Great in God's eyes are those who seek, promote, keep and distribute knowledge of the truth. Education is one of the greatest Islamic duties, and knowledge of the truth is one of the greatest virtues. Every Muslim stands under the obligation to develop his own faculties as well as those of humanity, to gather all existent knowledge regardless of source and to disseminate such knowledge to all mankind. Every piece of knowledge achieved and established becomes the property of mankind. No one has exclusive title to it.

The content of science is the pattern God has implanted in creation. It is His will insofar as it is relevant to the creature in question. The divine will in nature is natural law. It is the pattern of being peculiar to each creature, which realizes itself necessarily, thus constituting natural law. The human psyche, human consciousness and personality, the human group and the patterns of its political, economic, sociological and cultural behavior are all equally subject to this comprehensive "science." So is moral knowledge also discernible, knowledgeable through a "scientific" (that is, rational) analysis of moral phenomena. Such knowledge is wisdom. Its acquisition is especially meritorious; its dissemination as free counsel and advice for the sake of God earns for its author no less than Paradise.

Here, as in the science of nature, the non-Muslim stands absolutely on a par with the Muslim. Each is by nature equally capable of it, equally obliged to honor it and equally deserving if he offered it to all men. The only differences allowed are those which pertain to personal aptitudes which may vary from subject to subject as widely among Muslims as among non-Muslims. Also legitimate are differences in the personal zeal and application of the pursuer of wisdom, the personal purity of motive and intention in its acquisition and dissemination; but of these, the Muslim is, again by nature, as capable as the non-Muslim. In themselves, these differences have nothing to do with adherence or otherwise to the Islamic faith, though such adherence may consolidate the wisdom and add to the merit of the subject. Universal egalitarianism in man's capacity to discover and recognize God's will in creation is a consequence of God's will itself. For a divine will that is beyond human grasp and understanding will either remain ignored or be followed in puppet-like fashion. In either case, the requirements of morality would not be met and, in consequence, the divine will would not be adequately realized. Indeed, the most important part of it, namely the moral, would remain unrealized. A frustrated God would not be God.

An atheist may ask: May not the good—whether as moral norm, or as natural law—be discovered, pursued and observed for its own sake, rather than as divine will? Certainly, we may answer; for man's innate capacity for science and wisdom may be developed and successfully exercised without the realization that the truth and the good being discovered are the will of God. That is why God has implanted in all men yet another faculty, one especially

designed to recognize God as transcendent Creator of all that is. This is the *sensus numinis*, the faculty by which man apprehends the sacred quality or dimension of reality. Its insights are the raw material, the data *sui generis*, on which the mind can build the system of ideas known as religious knowledge. It is an innate faculty, a natural endowment by which man knows or comes to know God. The Holy Qur'an asserts that there is no creature but that which in its own peculiar way, recognizes its Creator and serves Him.

Recognition of God and awareness of His existence, of His transcendent creatorship, is therefore the prerogative of all men. It is a universal birthright, guaranteeing man's consciousness of God to all. Here too, the Muslim stands at no advantage when compared with the non-Muslim. Both are equally endowed and equally capable since religion itself is rooted in their innate capacity to sense the holy.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 133-137.

### **Islam and Other Faiths—The Ideational Relation**

For the Muslim, the relation of Islam to the other religions has been established by God in His revelation, the Qur'an. No Muslim therefore may deny it; since for him the Qur'an is the ultimate religious authority. Muslims regard the Qur'an as God's own word verbatim; the final and definitive revelation of His will for all space and time, for all mankind. The only kind of contention possible for the Muslim is that of exegetical variation. But in this realm, the scope of variation is limited in two directions: First, continuity of Muslim practice throughout the centuries constitutes an irrefutable testament to the meanings

attributed to the Qur'anic verses. Second, the methodology of Muslim orthodoxy in exegesis rests on the principle that Arabic lexicography, grammar and syntax, which have remained frozen and in perpetual use by millions ever since their crystallization in the Qur'an, leave no contention without a solution. These facts explain the universality with which the Qur'anic principles were understood and observed, despite the widest possible variety of ethnic cultures, languages, races and customs characterizing the Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia, and from Russia and the Balkans to the heart of Africa. As for the non-Muslims, these may contest the principles of Islam. They must know, however, that Islam does not present its principles dogmatically, for those who believe or wish to believe, exclusively. It does so rationally, critically. It comes to us armed with logical and coherent arguments; and expects our acquiescence on rational, and hence, necessary, grounds. It is not legitimate for us to disagree on the relativist basis of personal taste, or that of subjective experience.

We propose to analyze Islam's ideational relation in three stages: that which pertains to Judaism and Christianity, that which pertains to the other religions and that which pertains to religion as such, and hence to all humans whether they belong to any or no religion.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 72-73.

## Innate World Ecumenism

Islam's discovery of *din al-fitrah* and its vision of it as the base of all historical religion is a breakthrough of tremendous importance in interreligious relations. For the first time it has become possible for an adherent of one religion to tell an adherent of another religion, "We are both equal members of a universal religious brotherhood. Both of our traditional religions are *de jure*, for they have both issued from and are based upon a common source, the religion of God which He has implanted equally in both of us, upon *din al-fitrah*. Rather than seek to find out how much your religion agrees with mine, if at all, let us both see how far both our religious traditions agree with *din al-fitrah*, the original and first religion. Rather than assume that each of our religions is divine as it stands today, let us both, cooperatively wherever possible, try to trace the historical development of our religions and determine precisely how and when and where each has followed and fulfilled or transcended and deviated from, *din al-fitrah*. Let us look into our holy writ and other religious texts and try to discover what change has befallen them, or been reflected in them, in history." Islam's breakthrough is thus the first call to scholarship in religion, to critical analysis of religious texts, of the claim of such texts to revelation status. It is the first call to the discipline of "history of religion" because it was the first to assume that religion had a history, that each religion has undergone a development which constitutes that history.

Islam puts the lowest premium on the "act of faith," or self-identification with a religious tradition. Unlike Augustinian and Lutheran Christianity which makes salvation a function of faith and assigns little or no value to

works, Islam assigns to the confession of faith the value of a condition, only a condition. Unlike the act of faith in Christianity, which is personal and secret, works are public. Islam not only acclaims good works wherever and by whomever they are done, it regards them as the only justification in the eye of God and warns that not an iota of good work or of mischief will be lost on the Day of Reckoning. The non-Muslim therefore has the public record of works he has done to justify him in Muslim eyes; indeed, to establish him as a man of great piety and saintliness. For, in Islam, works earn merit with God regardless of the religious adherence of their authors. Moreover, salvation consists of nothing more than such merit as the good works earn. The act of faith is itself a work which is added and whose inclusion affects the whole. But the *hanif*, who has never heard of the revelation of Muḥammad, but who has observed *din al-fitrah* and done good works, is as much saved and the occupant of Paradise as the one who did, who believed and achieved identically the same record of “good works.” Finally, it must be remarked that the nature of “meritorious work” in Islam has nothing to do with sacraments since Islam has none, or with secret personal acts of devotion since all of Islam’s devotions are public and communal. Islam’s ethic being totally world-affirming, positive, of-the-world and governed by public law, the non-Muslim has as much potential and room for meritorious works as the Muslim. No religion allows its adherent to call the non-adherent a better adherent to itself than the professed adherent, and do so religiously, except Islam and, perhaps philosophical Buddhism, which has relatively few adherents and no religious community anyway.

Islam prescribes the most tolerant *modus vivendi* for the Muslims and non-Muslims living under its aegis. Where the Muslims are the dominant majority, or where the state is an Islamic state, the non-Muslims who agree to live with the Muslims in peace constitute an *ummah*, alongside the Muslims. This term “*ummah*” used by Prophet Muḥammad, in the covenant of Madinah with regard to its Jewish minority population, means a society governed by its own law, carrying its own political, economic, educational, judicial, cultural and religious institutions. Allah, the Prophet, the Islamic state and the whole world-*ummah* of Islam are their guarantors and protectors. Their defense against external attack as well as any internal encroachment, whether by Muslims, non-Muslims or their own members, is a duty imposed by God upon the Muslims. They are supposed to render the *jizyah*, a poll-tax that is a far lesser economic and financial burden than the *zakah* imposed upon Muslims, and are to live in virtual independence from the Muslims except in matters of security and prosperity of Dar al-Islam as a whole. Most important, however, is the recognition not only that the non-Muslim is not to be coerced or subversively influenced to convert, but that he is fully entitled to pursue his non-Muslimness and pass it on to his descendants. From the view of any religion or -ism whose stand is not one of skepticism, this is indeed the supreme and ultimate demand that the foreigner can make. Islam fulfills it beautifully.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 138-140, 145-146.

**Islamic Humanism—  
The Basis for Inter-Religious Cooperation**

This brilliant theory of the other faiths presented by Islam is unmatched and unmatchable. While Vatican II has in a condescending and paternalizing manner decreed twenty centuries after Jesus, that Judaism is religiously acceptable as a *preparatio* for Christianity, and fourteen centuries after Muḥammad, that Islam is a tolerable approximation of Christianity, it asserted that outside the Roman Catholic Church no salvation is possible, thus withdrawing with one hand what it granted with the other. That no one will be saved unless he is a member of the Catholic Church of Rome consigns to eternal damnation not only the Muslims and the Jews but all the Protestant Christians as well. As to Protestantism, we have still heard nothing regarding Islam except rumors and hearsay from individuals. The World Council of Churches has so far not spoken on these issues. Indeed, it even turned down Libya's invitation to join the Islamic-Christian dialogue of Tripoli (1976). Apparently, it participates only in dialogues held under its own auspices. Previously, the WCC did hold its own dialogue sessions with Islam (Bhamdoun, Brummana, Hong Kong etc.) but under its own terms and with Muslim representatives of its own choosing.

Judaism and Hinduism are ethnocentric religions by nature. In modern times, they have become more ethnocentric than ever. Their religious exclusivism is incompatible with dialogue with the other world religions. But their traditions are not devoid of strands favorable to ecumenism and encouraging to dialogue. An ethical monotheistic Judaism, born in the Middle Ages under the

aegis of Islamic philosophy, culture and mysticism has gained strength since the Emancipation, under the influence of the Enlightenment and of Western humanism. But it has been severely weakened in recent times by Zionism, which is the archetype of ethnocentric exclusivism. Likewise, Hindus have recourse to an established tradition of philosophical Hinduism which provides ample room for interreligious dialogue and universalist human fellowship. Both these tendencies in Judaism and Hinduism deserve encouragement.

Islam's theory of other faiths, backed by the experience of fourteen centuries, still commands the loyalty and support of a billion Muslims around the world. It provides us with the best foundation for a religious world-ecumene in which the religions honor one another's claims without denying their own. It also provides us with the only legitimate foundation for seeking the religious unity of mankind. If interreligious dialogue is to move beyond the exchange of information and courtesies, it has to have a religious norm in terms of which it can compose the differences between the religions. This religious norm must be common to the dialoguing parties. Islam finds this norm in *din al-fitrah*. It is also essential that the dialoguing parties feel a measure of freedom vis-à-vis their historical religious traditions. No idea is more conducive to such freedom than Islam's suggestion that the religious tradition is a human outgrowth from primal *din al-fitrah*. It was this Islamic idea which incepted in history the academic study of religion involving a critical assessment of the historical authenticity of the religious traditions of mankind, of their holy texts, traditions and practices. Scholarship in religion, *i.e.*, critical analysis of texts and history, has begun in the

West in the Enlightenment. Islamic scholarship in religion is a whole millennium older, and has an advantage over the most advanced scholarship of today, namely, that its stand is not one of skepticism. The skeptic may ask questions in religion; but he may not answer them.

The Islamic theory is particularly strong as regards Judaism and Christianity which it treats not as “other religions” but as itself. Its recognition of the God of Judaism and of Christianity as its God, of their prophets as its prophets, and its commitment to the divine invitation to the People of the Book to cooperate and live together under God constitute the first and only real step toward religious unity of two world religions ever made. An Abrahamic unity of Judaism, Christianity and Islam based on the *hanifi* religion of Abraham, the *din al-fitrah*, is a real possibility. It did in fact exist in the Muslim world until Western imperialism, colonialism and Zionism came to subvert it. Their effort, however, has been in vain. The Muslim will continue to believe in and work for this unity, confident that his God Whom he knows to be one as truth is one and the moral law is one, cannot but desire one religion, to be entered into by all men freely and deliberately, because it is itself when it is the result of personal conviction, not of a blind wager *a la Pascal*, but a certainty reached after a critical weighing of all the options, of all the evidence. In following up this ideal, nothing could be more worthwhile to the Muslim to subsidize and to promote whether in the Muslim world, or the non-Muslim world, than the comparative study of religion.

The Islamic stand toward the other faiths thus combines three crucial distinctions: First, it is not only tolerant, but assumes the Holy of the other religions to be Holy, their

prophets to be prophets of God and their revelations to come from God. Tolerance implies dualism and a basic difference between the subject and object of tolerance. Islam does away with the basic difference as it eliminates the dualism itself. It identifies itself with Judaism and Christianity and enjoins upon its adherents at least as much, if not more, religious respect and devotion to the prophets and revelations of Judaism and Christianity. No religion preserved the shrines of another in its own base, and indeed enabled them to prosper in its midst, except Islam. And no tolerance whatever has ever reached the point of enforcing the other religions' laws in its own territory, except in Islam. Nay more, no religion has ever countenanced, or can ever countenance, teaching its own adherents as well as having them enforce the idea that it is part of their religion, and hence their religious obligation, to enforce the observance of the other religions' laws as long as their adherents live in their midst. And only in the Muslim world and under an Islamic government would it be true to say that neither Jew nor Christian is free to de-Judaize or de-Christianize himself in rebellion against or in defiance of his own religious authority.

Secondly, the Islamic stand toward the other faiths, having brought all faiths under the single roof or *din al-fitrah*, satisfies the only condition for constructive dialogue and interrelation. Under it, all differences between the religions are domestic family squabbles. Criticism, argument and counter-argument mutually affect all the members on account of this organic relationship in which Islam has bound them to one another. Such criticism across the lines of various religions is brought forth by constituent members concerned about the total system which houses,

includes and unites them. Unless the religions become conscious of and emphasize this common bond, they may never be able to meet and surmount their present difficulties. Besides this advantage, the Islamic stand furnishes the religions with the groundwork necessary for an effective purge, a creatively constructive reform of their own traditions. Given *din al-fitrah* or the first presuppositions of human religiosity, any religious tradition should be able to face the strongest criticism without fear. For its ultimate concerns, namely God, the purposiveness of existence, the real possibility of salvation and the final redressing of the balance of happiness—all these are safeguarded. Skepticism in epistemology and metaphysics or cynicism in ethics, value-theory and religion, cannot be silenced by the religious authoritarianism of an *ex cathedra* pronouncement, or of a dogmatic assertion. Only reason and experience can do so. That is what the Islamic stand offers us. Islamic rationalism has indeed achieved what the Enlightenment and its followers in the West have failed to do; namely, to absorb the criticism of the skeptics—the empiricists and romantics of the nineteenth century—and so press forth creatively and critically for a rational authentication of the religious traditions, a rational validation of their diverse claims. Such scholarship is not an idle wish. It is a genuine hope stemming from a religious conviction which looks upon creation with the eyes of the most fastidious and critical science and exclaims: O Lord, You have not created all this in vain, in sport!

Thirdly and finally, the Islamic stand toward the other faiths constitutes a new humanism because it is founded on a new faith in man. Man's nature is being badly abused in

the world today. Having lost the battle of establishing man as a lump of sin, a *massa peccata*, Christianity has practically given up contending in the matter of the nature of man. Skepticism, ethnocentric particularism and materialism divide the field of the theory of man. While materialism defines man as little more than teeth, hands and stomach, nationalist madness declares him a Jew, or a German to the exclusion of all other men. In the meantime, skepticism stands by and mocks at man and his crucifiers. It is no wonder that the serious among Westerners are all skeptics. For skepticism is the most rational of the three stands prevalent in the West.

Islam's *din al-fitrah* is the only idea capable of pulling Western man out of his predicament and launching him on a dynamic and creative road to self-fulfillment. As it did for the ancient Mesopotamian, *din al-fitrah* can do for man today: it gives him the world to knead and remold in the service of God. To serve God is hence to create culture and civilization. But this is none other than to attain the highest possible self-fulfillment.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 151-155.

### **Islam and *Ummah*(s) of Other Religions**

Persia's incursion into Arabia had left behind it some Persian and some, though very few, Arab converts to the Zoroastrian faith. A large number of these lived in the buffer desert zone between Persia and Byzantium, and in Shatt al-'Arab, the lower region of the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, where Arabia and Persia overlapped. Notable among the Persian Zoroastrians in

Arabia was Salman al-Farisi, who converted to Islam before the Hijrah and became one of the illustrious Companions of the Prophet. According to some traditions, it was the Prophet himself who, in the Year of Delegations (8-9 AH/630-631 CE), the year which witnessed the tribes and regions of Arabia sending delegations to Madinah to pledge their fealty to the Islamic state, recognized the Zoroastrians as another *ummah* within the Islamic state. Very soon afterwards, the Islamic state conquered Persia and included all its millions within its citizenry. Those who converted to Islam joined the *ummah* of Muslims; the millions of others who chose to remain Zoroastrian were accorded the same privileges and duties accorded by the constitution to Jews. The Prophet had already extended their application to the Christians eight years after the constitution was enacted. They were extended to apply to the Zoroastrians in 14 AH/636 CE, following the conquest of Persia by the Prophet's Companions, if not sooner by the Prophet himself.

Following the conquest of India by Muhammad ibn Qasim in 91 AH/711 CE, the Muslims faced new religions which they had never known before, Buddhism and Hinduism. Both religions coexisted in Sind and the Punjab, the regions conquered by Muslims and joined to the Islamic state. Muhammad ibn Qasim sought instruction from the caliph in Damascus on how to treat Hindus and Buddhists. They appeared to worship idols, and their doctrines were the farthest removed from Islam. Their founders were unheard of by the Muslims. The caliph called a council of '*ulama*' and asked them to render judgment on the basis of the governor's report. The judgment was that as long as Hindus and Buddhists did not fight the Islamic state, as

long as they paid the jizyah or tax due, they must be free to “worship their gods” as they please, to maintain their temples and to determine their lives by the precepts of their faith. Thus, the same status as that of the Jews and Christians was accorded to them.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 89-90.

## Religious Experience in Islam

*Religious experience is the core of the origin of all religions. Tawhid (Islamic monotheism) constitutes the core of a Muslim's religious experience and worldview. The subject of religious experience has been discussed variedly in the field of history and phenomenology of religion. Professor al Faruqi delves into the definition and content of the tawhidi religious experience of the Muslim as the essence of religious experience in Islam.*

To my knowledge, no Muslim thinker has ever denied that his religion has an essence. Granted that the question itself is a modern question and that the thinkers of the Middle Ages did not raise it in the manner we do today, we can still say with certainty that for all of them, Islam was religion, religion par excellence, indeed “the religion”; that it was a coherent, autonomous system of truths about reality, of imperatives for action and of desiderata for all kinds and levels of human activity. All of them affirmed that at the center of this system stood God, the knowledge of Whom they called *tawhid*; that the whole rest is a hierarchy of imperatives (*wajibat*), recommendations (*mandubat* and

*makruh*), prohibitions (*muharramat*) and desiderata (*hasanat*)—collectively called the Shari‘ah and knowledge of which the Muslims called *fiqh*.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam,” *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 186.

### **Essence of Religious Experience in Islam**

The essence of religious experience in Islam, we may say in conclusion, is the realization that life is not in vain; that it must serve a purpose the nature of which cannot be identical with the natural flow of appetite to satisfaction to new appetite and new satisfaction. For the Muslim, reality consists of two utterly disparate orders, the natural and the transcendent; and it is to the latter that he looks for the values by which to govern the flow of the former. Having identified the transcendent realm as God, he rules out any guidance of action that does not proceed therefrom. His rigorous *tawhid* (unization of divinity) is, in final analysis, a refusal to subject human life to any guidance other than the ethical.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam,” *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 200.

### **Core of Religious Experience in Islam**

At the core of religious experience in Islam stands God. The *shahadah* (confession of Islam) asserts, “There is no god but God.” The name of God “Allah,” which simply means “the God,” occupies the central position in every Muslim place, every Muslim action, every Muslim thought.

The presence of God fills the Muslim's consciousness at all times. With the Muslim, God is indeed a sublime obsession.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam," *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 193.

## **God as the Final End**

God is the final end, *i.e.*, the end at which all finalistic nexus aim and come to rest. Everything is sought for another which in turn is sought for a third and so on and hence demands the nexus or chain to continue until a final end is reached which is an end-in-itself. God is such an end, an end for all other ends, all chains of ends. He is the ultimate object of all desire. As such it is He Who makes every other good good; for unless the final end is posited, every link in the chain is undone. The final end is the axiological ground of all chains or nexus of ends.

It follows from this conception of God as ultimate finalistic terminus and axiological ground that He must be unique.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam," *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 194.

## **Uniqueness of Muslim Confession of Faith**

It is this uniqueness which the Muslim affirms in his confession of faith, "There is no God but God." In the long history of religions, the Muslim's assertion of God's existence would have come late. Indeed God had told him in the Qur'an that "there is no people unto whom he had not sent a prophet," and that "no prophet but had been

sent to teach the worship and service of God.” But his assertion of the uniqueness of God is new. It brought a refreshing iconoclasm at a time and place where dualism and trinitarianism were the higher, and polytheism the lower state of religious consciousness. And, in order to purge that consciousness free once and for all, Islam demanded utmost care in the use of language and percepts appropriate to the unique God. “Father,” “intercessor,” “savior,” “son” etc., were utterly banished from the religious vocabulary; and the uniqueness and absolute transcendence of the divine being were stressed that no man may claim any relation to God which all other men cannot claim.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam,” *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 195.

### **Islamic Soteriology—The Doctrine of Salvation**

Islamic soteriology therefore is the diametrical opposite of that of traditional Christianity. Indeed, the term “salvation” has no equivalent in the religious vocabulary of Islam. There is no savior and there is nothing from which to be saved. Man and the world are either positively good or neutral, but not evil. Man begins his life ethically sane and sound, not weighed down by any original sin, however mild or Augustinian. In fact, he is at birth already above the zero point in that he has the revelation and his rational equipment ready for use, as well as a world all too ready to receive his ethical deed. His religious felicity (the term Islam uses is *falah*, which comes from the root meaning “to grow vegetation out of the earth”) consists of his fulfillment of the divine imperative. He can hope for God’s mercy and

forgiveness, but he may not count on it while refraining from doing the divine will whether out of ignorance, laziness or blatant defiance. His fate and destiny are exactly what he himself makes them to be. God's government is just, neither favorable nor unfavorable. Its scale of justice is absolutely that of the most precise and perfect balance. And its system of worldly and otherworldly rewards and punishments disposes for everyone, whether blessed or unblessed, exactly what he deserves.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam," *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 199.

### ***Pax Islamica*—The World of Islam**

Islamic religious experience had great consequence for world history. The fire of the Muslim's vision caused him to hurl himself onto the stage of history therein to effect the realization of the divine pattern his Prophet had communicated to him. Nothing was for him worthier than this cause. In its interest, he was prepared to pay the maximum price, that of laying down his life. True to its content, he regarded his stage as consisting of the whole world, of his *ummah* as consisting of mankind less a few recalcitrants whom he sought to bring within the fold by force of arms. His *pax Islamica*, which stood on his arms, was never conceived as a monolithic society in which Islam alone predominates. It included Jews, Christians, Sabeans by Qur'anic authority, Zoroastrians by Muhammadan authority, and Hindus and Buddhists by the jurists' extrapolation of that authority. The ideal remained the same, namely, a world in which, as the Qur'an puts it, "the divine word is supreme," and everybody recognizes that

supremacy. But such recognition to be worth anything at all must be free, the deliberate decision of every person. That is why to enter into the *pax Islamica* never meant conversion to Islam, but entry into a peaceful relationship wherein ideas are free to move and men are free to convince and be convinced.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam," *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 199.

### **Meaning of Being a Muslim**

To be a Muslim is precisely to perceive God alone (that is, the Creator, and not nature or the creature) as normative, His will alone as commandment, His pattern alone as constituting the ethical desiderata of creation. The content of the Muslim's vision is truth, beauty and goodness; but these for him are not beyond the pale of his noetic faculties. He is therefore an axiologist in his religious disciplines of exegesis, but only to the end of reaching a sound deontology, as a jurist. Justification by faith is for him meaningless, unless it is the simple introduction into the arena of action. It is there that he claims his best, as well as his worst.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam," *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 200.

## Wilfred Cantwell Smith

*Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000) was a Canadian Islamicist, comparative religion scholar and Presbyterian minister. He was the founder of the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in Montreal, Canada and later the Director of Harvard University's Center for the Study of World Religions. Professor Ismail al Faruqi and Professor Smith shared a long history of personal friendship and scholarly bond in spite of their differences in opinions about Islam. I remember very well that on an occasion of interreligious dialogue conference organized by the Department of Religion, Temple University, in 1985 Professor al Faruqi described Professor Smith as a "Christian al-Biruni of Islam."*

(Wilfred Cantwell) Smith was the first orientalist to demand autonomy for the Islamics discipline, to condemn all interpretations of Islam made under alien categories. His essay "Comparative Religion: Whiter—and Why?" published in honor of Joachim Wach was the first and still is the classical statement of the Western student-of-religion's need for humility in front of the data of another

religion; and the McGill University Institute of Islamic Studies, of which he was the architect and founder and which stood on the principle that the study of Islam must be cooperatively undertaken by Muslims and Westerners if it is to achieve any valid understanding of its subject matter, was for some time a living monument to this attitude. All this notwithstanding, Smith suspended this supreme demand when he came to discuss the essence of Islam. Indeed, he devoted a substantial part of his book to telling the Muslims what is a truer understanding of their scripture, the Arabic Qur'an. Against the fourteen centuries of Muslim Qur'anic scholarship and understanding, he concluded that the claim that Islam was a system and has an essence is a relatively modern affair arising out of three tendencies or processes of reification to which the Muslims have been subject in history. These are: Influence of the reified Near Eastern religions upon the Qur'an, of the reifying hypostases of Greek thought upon Islamic thought, and of modernist apologetics.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Essence of Religious Experience in Islam," *Numen* 20, no. 3 (1973): 188.

## History of Religions and Islam

*In the field of history of religions, al Faruqi offered a Muslim perspective of religion based on the study and knowledge of the historical-critical research of the ancient Near Eastern history and texts. For him religion is not a thing; but a perspective with which everything is invested. It is the highest and most important dimension of being human. This plea along with his other writings laid the theoretical and methodological foundations of his Islamic approach to the history of religions.*

*Ismail al Faruqi's scholarship was a combination of being a trained philosopher and historian of religion with a Muslim perspective. For him, study and research of religion was not a detached inquiry but a critical engagement directed toward a critical study of the place of religion including Islam in human history.*

Islam has for centuries been teaching the religiousness of all space-time, of all life.

Not only the personal act of faith, nor the social act, nor the whole of space-time and life as relata, but the whole of life

and space-time as such constitute the data of history of religions. History of religions studies every human act because every act is an integral part of the religious complexus. Religion itself, however, is not an act (the act of faith, or encounter with God, or of participation), but a dimension of every act. It is not a thing; but a perspective with which everything is invested. It is the highest and most *important* dimension; for it alone takes cognizance of the act as personal, as standing within the religio-cultural context in which it has taken place, as well as within the total context of space-time. For it, the act includes all the inner determinations of the person as well as all its effects in space-time. And it is this relation of the whole act to the whole space-time that constitutes the religious dimension. Everything then is subject matter for the history of religions.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue," *Numen* 12, no. 1 (1965): 37-38.

## History of Religions

This restoration to the religious of its universal scope and relevance widens the horizons of the history of religions. Henceforth, it should include every branch of human knowledge and pursuit. For its purposes, mankind may still be divided into Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and other, but the whole history, culture and civilization of the Christians, the Buddhists, the Hindus, the Muslims etc., should be its object.

## History of Religions—Limitations

The history of religions had its jurisdiction further curtailed in another direction. While, theoretically, it was supposed to be history of all religions, it turned out to be in reality, a history of “Asiatic” and “primitive” religions on the one hand, and of the extinct religions of antiquity on the other. By far the overwhelming majority of the literature of the library of history of religions has been devoted to them. Judaism, Christianity and Islam always managed somehow to escape. This is not to plead that one group of materials is better, richer or more important than another. Primitive and ancient religions may very well hold for us many great lessons. But they are far more impenetrable than the other group because of obstacles of language, of remoteness of time, of wide difference between their categories and ours. The truth that cannot be gainsaid here is that the comparativist has so far found the remoteness of primitive and ancient religions far more reassuring than the explosive character of the living world religions. Hence, he has been far bolder to collect the data of the former, to systematize, generalize about and judge them than the latter. He seems to have shied away, whether in awe or in panic, from handling the data of the living religions.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue.” *Numen* 12, no. 1 (1965): 38-39.

## History of Religions—the Case of Islam

Islam had for a long time been engaged with the West in a hot colonialist war. The Islamic states bore the brunt of

most European expansion in the 18th and 19th centuries. Islam was too “hot” to handle with a cool presence of mind and was allowed to become a subject for the missionaries to study in reconnoitering the infidels’ field. With the development of the discipline, Islamics, a fair portion of this reconnaissance work passed on to secular hands. But these were more interested in helping the colonial office at home than in the discovery and establishment of truth. With the decline of the age of colonialism, an autonomous Islamics discipline came to life and, using the pioneer works of the previous generations of Islamists and the popularized mastery of the Islamic languages, Western knowledge of Islam developed very rapidly. All these considerations discouraged the serious student of comparative religion from studying Islam. While in the earlier stages the Western comparativist was a missionary, and as such disqualified from the study of the Islamic religio-culture, in the later stage (viz., the stage of the secular Islamics discipline), he has been totally eclipsed by the Goldzihers, Schachts, Gibbs, Arberrys and men of like stature. So little is the Western historian of religions nowadays equipped in Islamics that that discipline, to which he has hardly contributed anything, does not seem to need him. Even today, no historian of religions proper has had anything to say that would catch the attention of the men of knowledge in the Islamics field. At the root of this shortcoming stands the fact that Islam was never regarded as an integral part of the subject matter of history of religions.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue,” *Numen* 12, no. 1 (1965): 39-40.

## **History of Religions: Its Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue**

The Old Testament is not only Hebrew Scripture (or the divine law revealed to Moses and the nationalist history of an extremely particularist people) nor only Christian Scripture (or, according to the dominant *Heilsgeschichte* school, the inspired record of God's saving acts in history culminating in the Incarnation). It is also Islamic scripture, inasmuch as it is the partial record of the history of prophecy, and hence of divine revelation. Indubitably, every one of these religions can point to something in the Old Testament substantiating its claim. But the whole truth cannot be on the side of any. Furthermore no religion is, by definition, equipped to transcend its own categories so as to establish the historical truth of the whole which, as a religion, it interprets in its own way in order to suit its own purpose. Only the historian of religions measures to the task who would relate the ideas of the Old Testament to the history of the Hebrews as ancient history has been able to reconstruct it, holding in *epoche* both the Christian and the Islamic understanding of Hebrew Scripture. But we may not make total abstraction of the Hebrew understanding because the Old Testament is, after all, a Hebrew Scripture written in Hebrew by the Hebrews and for the Hebrews. The contents however are not strictly speaking all Hebrew materials. The ideological overtones of the scripture, namely, those set in the books of Genesis and Exodus, are Hebrew versions of Semitic themes which belong to all Semites. Islam is a Semitic religion whose formative years were spent in Arabia, the cradle of all things Semitic. It is natural that the Islamic version of these themes is another version of ideas which are much older than "J". The Islamic

claim may not therefore be brushed aside as external to the matter in question. For just as Christianity is “a new Israel,” Islam is “an other Israel” legitimately giving a version of Semitic origins which are as much, if not more, its own as that of the Hebrews. Secondly, the examination by history of religions of the formative centuries of Christianity is equally involving for Islam. Islam is not a foreigner here. Islam is Christianity inasmuch as it is a moment in the developing Semitic consciousness of which the Hebrew, Judaic and Christian religions were other moments. That is why Islam rejected neither the Hebrew prophets nor Jesus but, recognizing the divine status of their missions, reacted to the assertions of Jews and Christians regarding them. Although Prophet Muḥammad and his first Muslim followers were personally neither Jews nor Christians, yet their ideas were in every respect internal to the Jewish and Christian traditions, affirming, denying and in some cases transcending what Jews and Christians have held to be or not to be the faith of Adam, of Abraham, of Noah, of Jacob, of Moses and of Jesus. The “Christianity” which Islam is, therefore, is an alternative to Orthodox Christianity; but it is as much Christianity as Orthodox Christianity is. Neither is Islam’s Christianity an alternative posed in *abstracto*, as a discursive contradiction or variation, but in *concreto*, a historical alternative. Islam too did not come about except “in the fullness of time” but this fullness consisted in the attempt by Orthodox Christianity to wipe out the Christian alternatives to itself. In the first century of Islam, the greatest majority of its adherents had been Christians in disagreement with Orthodox Christianity concerning what is and what is not the revelation and religion of Jesus Christ. Islam is certainly a Christian revolution with as

much connection to Jesus as Orthodox Christianity can claim. We should not be misled by the fact that the Islamic revolution within Christianity reached farther than what it had originally set out to accomplish. The fact is that Islam was no more new than the religion of Jesus was in respect to the religion of the Jews.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and the Muslim-Christian Dialogue," *Numen* 12, no. 2 (1965): 82.

## Islam in Global Interreligious Dependence

*Islam is the youngest religion in history, with a 1,400-year tradition. In a way, it is related to other religions around the world founded before it. Early Muslim scholars of comparative religion such as al-Biruni (973-1048), Ibn Hazm (994-1064), al-Shahrastani (1086-1153 CE), Rashid al-Hamadani (1247-1318) and Hafiz-e Abru (d. 1430) have engaged in the study of other religions much before the 18th century European Enlightenment and its colonial expansion in the nineteenth century accompanied with the enterprise of Christian mission. The scholarly studies of these early Muslim doctors of study of religion along with majority of Muslims living alongside with the followers of different religions Islam around the world contributed toward creating an atmosphere of mutual understanding, coexistence and cooperation in the building of a universal Islamic civilization, with its hallmarks of humanism, world affirmation and interreligious respect.*

Islam is the youngest of the world's religions. It is unique in that it has related itself to most of the religions of the world;

that it has done so in its formative stage; and that on this account, its relation to other religions has a constitutive place in its very essence and core. Islam's relation to other religions has been ideational, *i.e.*, linking the world-view of Islam, its view of God (may He be Glorified and Exalted), of reality, of man, of the world and history to the other religions. It is also practical, *i.e.*, providing a *modus vivendi* for Muslims and adherents of other religions to live and work together, but each group according to the values and precepts of its own faith. In the case of Judaism, Christianity and Sabaeism, the relation was crystallized first by God through direct revelation, then by Prophet Muḥammad himself ﷺ working under divine authority provided by revelation. In that of Zoroastrianism, the same relation was extended by the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) three years after his death (13 AH / 635 CE) when Persia was conquered and brought into the fold of Islam. As for Hinduism and Buddhism, the same extension took place following the conquest of the lower region of the Indus Valley in 91 AH / 711 CE. In all of these cases, Islam has maintained a long history of cooperative interaction with the other religions: fourteen centuries long with the religions of the Near East; and thirteen centuries long with those of India. It has developed an ideational base for that interaction which is constitutive of the religious experience of Islam, and is hence as old as Islam itself.

It is rather repugnant to Muslim ears to hear Western scholars claim that the discipline of comparative study of religion is a Western innovation born out of the European Enlightenment, or out of Europe's colonial and industrial expansion in the nineteenth century; or that the coming

together of the world religions was first initiated by the Chicago Congress in 1893. Joachim Wach (1898-1955) opened his *Comparative Study of Religion* with the assertion “there can be little doubt that the modern comparative study of religions began with Max Müller (1823-1900), about a century ago.” The “little doubt” in question is the result of ignorance, of a superiority complex which blinds the Western scholar to the achievements of non-Westerners. We are inclined, however, to respond to such a claim with a smile and invite our Western colleagues to do their “homework.” The contribution of Islam to the academic study of other religions in the past has been colossal by any standard; and its potential contribution to the forthcoming Global Congress is certainly worthy of its great past. It can supply principles and ideas for the encounter of religions, and forms and structures for their coexistence and cooperation. The *modus vivendi* which Islam provided for the world religions in Madinah, Damascus, Cordoba, Cairo, Delhi and Istanbul is certainly worthy of emulation by the whole world. Indeed, we who prepare for the Global Congress would be quite happy if the projected Congress could realize a fraction of what Islam had done many centuries ago.

### **Islam’s Contribution to Global Inter-Religious Dependence**

Islam’s potential contribution to world order, to interreligious dialogue, understanding and living, to global religious interdependence can be very, very significant.

First, Islam has 1,400 years of experience in interreligious intercourse between the widest variety of ethnic and religious entities.

Second, with Judaism and Christianity, the two other surviving Semitic religions, Islam has built a relation of common origin, of one and the same God, of one and the same tradition of prophets and revelation, tantamount to self-identification with them.

Third, this relation of identity with Judaism and Christianity which Islam established with the authority of revelation, the Muslims extended to cover all other religions on the basis of their common origin in God, and in a necessary *religio naturalis* innate to all humans.

Fourth, following theory with practice and implementation, Islam devised the *millah* system as an Islam-led federation of religious communities, guaranteeing their freedom, and girding it with rights and obligations clearly laid down in Islamic law and invocable in the courts by individuals as well as communities, Muslim as well as non-Muslim.

Fifth, rather than skepticism, doubt, secularism or materialism, which would tolerate the religions of the world out of contempt and unconcern, Islam has based itself and its interaction with other religions on respect for them and concern for their adherents.

Sixth, without falling into dogmatism, Islam has laid its claim rationally and critically to seeking to convince the others in freedom and responsibility. It did not dilute its claim, nor renounce the exclusivity of religious truth, while ever maintaining its esteem for other religious claims.

Seventh, and finally, Islam managed to create an atmosphere of mutual dependence and love between the adherents of various religions, and to secure their cooperation in the building of a universal Islamic

civilization, where humanism, world affirmation and piety remained dominant.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 71-72, 90.

## A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture

*The religion of Judaism and the Hebrew Scripture are provincial or nationalistic in their teaching and practice. The Hebrew Bible was Christianized by the Christian interpretation of Jesus as being “the Word of God” and as God.*

*In Islam faith is necessary, valuable and an indispensable human condition. Islam’s revelation the Qur’an is ideational where salvation is based in belief in God and doing good works and not by election nor justification.*

Read from ... a presupposition-free standpoint, Hebrew Scripture presents us with the story of the life of the Hebrew. Every theological and moral idea, historical or geographical account is subordinated to the overall theme of the growth and decay of a people, and derives its significance from its pertinence to the history of that people. Hebrew Scripture is the record of Hebrew national

history, written and preserved for the sake of the Hebrews, in order to mirror or to inculcate their faith in themselves as a people or to edify them in that faith. It is often held that the most characteristic feature of this national history is their religion and that the most central concept of their religion is that of the Godhead. But the fact is that religion is a characteristic not of the Hebrews, but of their later descendants, the Jews. As we understand it today, religion was impossible to the Hebrews. Their “religion” was their nationalism; and it was this nationalism of the ancestors that became—with its literature, its laws and customs—the religion of later times, of the Exile and post-Exile Jews down to the present day. The Ancient Hebrew worshipped himself; he sang his own praise. His god, Jahweh, was a reflection of his own person, a genuine *deus ex machina* designed to play the role of other-self in the Hebrews’ favorite intellectual game, viz., biographical painting or self-portraiture in words.

The god of the Hebrews is not what Christians and Muslims understand by the word “God,” or what modern Jews understand by that term after centuries of exposure to Christian and Islamic influences. Rather, the “God” of the Hebrews is a deity which belonged to the Hebrews alone. They worshipped it as “their God,” always calling it by its own proper names, of which it had many. To be sure that it is not confused with any other gods—the possibility and existence of which was never denied, though they were always denigrated—the Hebrews were fond of calling their god by the unmistakably relational names of “God of Abraham, ... of Jacob, ... of Isaac, ... of Israel, ... of Zion” etc. This deity could not even conceive of itself as capable of being worshipped outside the limits of their geographic

domain. Their mind was so obsessed with “the God of the Hebrews” that it was incapable of developing the concept “God” as a connotative category of thought rather than a class name with denotative meaning only. Theirs was certainly not monotheism, but monolatry, since there is not a single time where such a connotative concept of God occurs in Hebrew Scripture. Wherever “God” is mentioned, it is always the particular deity that is in question. True, at a late stage of their history and only at that stage, they did regard their god as lord of the universe, but their doing so was always an attempt at extending its jurisdiction so as to requite their own national enemies. Their god was never the god of the goyim in the sense in which he was said to be the god of the Hebrews; the former always falling under his power in sufferance, as patients of his might, especially of his revenge of his people, never equally as subjects of his own creation or care. Significantly, such extension of his jurisdiction did not take place except under the dream of Isaiah of a master-race, vanquishing the nations and entering them into a relation of servile servitude to the Hebrews.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 283-285.

This Hebrew Scripture was Christianized. Its Christianization appears to have been predetermined by four notions which are implications of the Christian belief that Jesus is God. These pertain to the nature of revelation, the nature of divine action, the nature of man and the nature of God. First, the Christian believes that Jesus is “the Word of God.” This fact determines for him the nature of revelation.

Since Jesus was also man, and therefore an event in history, divine revelation must be an event; not something that God says, but something that He does. And Jesus is the revealed word inasmuch as he is a doing of God, a historical event, whose every part or deed is divine because Jesus himself is wholly God. From this it follows that revelation is not ideational but personal and historical. Jesus, the perfect personality, the perfect event, the perfect history, is according to this belief, God's perfect revelation. From this Christian point of view, Hebrew Scripture is not the conceptual word of God, but that of the Jahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist and Priestly editors. Its divine status does not pertain to its ideas and laws. These constitute the human tools which the editors have used in order to record the revelation. The word of God in Hebrew Scripture is the events, the doing and living of Hebrew Scriptural personalities. These events are revelation. Pointing to the dramas of Hebrew Scripture, the Christian exclaims, *Voilà* God's acts in history! Acts all designed and predetermined by Him to the end that He may reveal Himself and achieve His purpose. God's method being that of revelation through personality, God chose a people, the Hebrews, and took them by the hand, as it were, on a long journey. At the end of this journey, when the time was fulfilled, He sent His Word, Jesus, and through his personality, *i.e.*, his living and dying, God achieved man's redemption. Hebrew history is *Heilsgeschichte* or salvation-history.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 285.

In Islam, revelation is ideational and only ideational. "Thus

saith the Lord” is the only form revelation can take. Islam upholds the prophetic notion of immediate and direct revelation as given in Hebrew Scripture. “Thus saith the Lord” means precisely what it says. For, in Islam, God does not reveal Himself. Being transcendent, He can never become the object of knowledge. But he can and does reveal His will; and this is wholly the ethically imperative, the commandment, the law. This He reveals in the only way possible for revealing the law, namely, the discursive word. The moral law is a conceptually communicable, ideational schema of a value-content endowed with moving appeal. Certainly, it is not an event. The event may or may not realize the moral law; but it is not itself the law.

This Islamic view of revelation, which is also that of Hebrew Scripture, does not conflict with the phenomena of responsibility, freedom and conscience. For an idea does not coerce. It “moves”; and man may very well be, as not-be, “moved” by the idea. An event, on the contrary is one necessarily caused by necessary causes and issuing in necessary effects. Islam therefore is safe against ever having to rely upon a deterministic theory of history in order to justify itself. It does hold, though, that God may act in history. But such a divine act it always interprets as the reward of virtue or the punishment of vice; and it explains such divine intervention in history as the necessary real connection, or causal bond, that relates the real-existential *matériaux* of moral value or disvalue, with those of happiness or suffering. The so-called “saving acts of God” in Hebrew Scripture, Islam regards as the natural consequences of virtue and good deeds.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian

Approaches to Hebrew Scripture,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 286.

The Qur’an admits that God had sent His word to the Hebrews, and that many a prophet and many a man believed and did rightly, and were consequently “blessed” and “raised above the rest.” But the rest rejected God’s word and were hence subject to his dire punishment. For the covenant is a purely ethical contract, unequivocally binding upon man and God. It is not denied. “Allah accepted a [similar] solemn pledge from the children of Israel ... And God said, ‘Behold, I shall be with you! If you are constant in prayer, and spend in charity, and believe in My apostles and aid them, and offer up unto God a goodly loan, I will surely efface your bad deeds and bring you into gardens through which running waters flow.’” The Qur’an also awards the status of elect to the Muslims, but on the firm basis that the Hebrews had rejected the prophets, the messengers of God, including Jesus; and with the unequivocal understanding that God’s word is a command to be realized, that if the Muslims should ever fail to fulfill that command, God will not only withdraw the trust and the election, but would destroy them and give their property as inheritance to another people more prepared to carry it out.

In Islam, election and justification are not at all by faith, but by works. Faith in Islam is only a condition, valuable and often necessary, but not indispensable. The Qur’an counts among the saved not only the *hanifs*, or the pre-Islamic righteous, but many post-Islamic Christians and Jews and gives as reason for their salvation their devoted worship of God, their humility, their charity and their good

deeds. Islam may be said to have recaptured the pure Semitic vision, beclouded by the old Hebrew racialism as well as by the new "Christianism," of a moral order of the universe in which every human being, regardless of his race or color—indeed of his religion in the institutionalized sense—gets exactly what he deserves, only what his works and deeds earn for him on an absolute moral scale of justice. Certainly God may award His compassion, love and mercy to whomsoever He pleases; but it is not for man to go about the world carrying his title to Paradise, as it were, in his pocket.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 288.

The Christian's obsession with sin is not altogether unhealthy and has the merit of focusing attention on that which is to be overcome. But this advantage immediately turns sour if attention to sin is exaggerated, as is the case with Christian doctrine, where it becomes the first principle of creation as well as of man's moral being. However, the Christian asserts sin in order to deny it; for the Jesus-event had no rationale save the destruction of sin as a universal and primordial phenomenon, as human essence. But having denied it in the assertion that universal salvation is a *fait accompli*, the Christian has *ipso facto* forfeited his moral enthusiasm and laid wide open the gates of moral complacency. Gratitude, or the recognition that God has in fact saved him, gives man no ethic other than the obligation to give thanks and proclaim the salvation-news. That is precisely how many Christians (*e.g.* Karl Barth, 1886-1968) understand the moral imperative. Faced

with such difficulties, the Christians interpret Adam's act in a variety of ways: Some insist that it is his knowledge of good and evil; others, that it is his desire to be like God; others, that it is his self-assertion and egotism; others more philosophic but with no little Buddhistic sensitivity and existential boredom with life, that it is his very actuality and existence. All these views evidently imply either that man's creation was faulty or that it was undesirable. They transform man's noblest endowments—namely his knowledge and will to knowledge, his cosmic uniqueness, his will to be and to persist, his will to become like unto God, into instruments of doom.

In Islam, far from being the father of sin, Adam is the father of the prophets. He received his learning directly from God, and in this he was superior to the angels to whom he taught the "names" (*i.e.*, essences, definitions) of the creatures. God commanded him to pursue the good as well as to avoid evil, the latter being the nature of the tree whose fruit he was forbidden to eat. The identification of the tree as "the tree of life and knowledge" is neither God's nor Adam's; but, if a Muslim may here make a guess on the basis of Christian Old Testament scholarship, the work of the priestly editors of "J" who branded knowledge of good and evil as evil in pursuit of their will to power and in perpetration of their monopoly over man's reaching toward God. The Qur'an calls this wrong identification a lie told by Satan in order to lure Adam, prone as he was to know and pursue the good, to transgress God's command and do evil. "Satan," the Qur'an says, "enticed Adam saying, 'O Adam, shall I show you the tree of life and power eternal?' Adam ate of the tree and committed a transgression and an evil deed. But God corrected him and

he atoned and was rightly guided.” Adam, therefore, did commit a misdeed, namely that of thinking evil to be good, of ethical misjudgment. He was the author of the first human mistake in ethical perception, committed, with good intention, under enthusiasm for the good. It was not a “fall” but a discovery that it is possible to confuse the good with the evil, that its pursuit is neither unilateral nor straightforward.

The fact that Jesus has redeemed man not only implies a theory of man—which we have just discussed—but equally a theory of God. Jesus, for the Christian, is God; and redemption not only implies a certain kind of man, but equally a certain kind of God; a God who is so concerned about man that He would redeem him by doing what Jesus did, or by doing what He did “in” Jesus.

Thus, the Christian looks upon the declaration of Genesis “Let us make man according to our image” and sees therein the confirmation he needs of man’s fellowship with God. Man, an image of God, was created to be God’s fellow in Paradise. But man has sinned. God would not acquiesce in this estrangement, in this self-waste to which man has committed himself. Hence, He punished him at first; then He chased him out of Paradise and inflicted upon him all sorts of afflictions. Nonetheless man continued to sin. God then decided that all creation was a mistake except for one man, Noah, and his family, and destroyed all life in a Deluge. Thereafter, touched by the “sweet savor” of Noah’s sacrifice, God vowed never to destroy life again as He had just done. But man continued to sin. Whereupon God decided upon another course of action, the election of the Hebrews and their divinely operated history to the end that He may Himself assume man’s sin and redeem him, acting

through the God-man Jesus. All this points to the fact that God is man's partner and fellow, and man is God's partner and fellow, each of whom is indispensable for the other.

This Christian fellowship of man with God, though drawn from a Hebrew Scriptural account, puts God in a position irreconcilable with His omniscience and omnipotence. Nonetheless, it contains a great deal of truth. For despite the context in which the Christian understands it, man's "fellowship" with God is an expression of the rapport which exists between God's commandment, the ethically imperative, or value, and man. This rapport consists in that the ought-to-be, the modality of the ideally existent value which possesses genuine moving power and being, is beamed toward man. It also consists in the capacity of the latter alone in creation to grasp that ought-beam and fall under its determination. Man's capacity to know and to do the good, or God's will, is his "divinity." God's moving power, directed to man, is his "humanity." But it should not be forgotten that this "human divinity" and "divine humanity" are not real facts, but mere modalities of real facts. The ought-to-be is a necessary modality of value; it may not be called a "need" unless value, or divinity, is hopelessly anthropomorphic, and it is crude to speak of it as a "fellowship," or to ascribe to it the assumption of man's "guilt," to "crucify" it etc. which the Christian does.

In Islam, God created man for the specific purpose of carrying out a trust in this world, a trust so great that the angels, to whom it was first offered, turned away in terror. This trust is the perfecting of an imperfect world deliberately created imperfect so that in the process of a human perfecting of it, ethical values would be realized which otherwise (*i.e.*, in a necessarily perfectable or

created-perfect world) would be ruled out *ex hypothesi*. God, therefore, is not man's fellow, but his Transcendent Creator and First Mover whose moving does stand *en rapport* with man's capacity for being moved. The nearness of a First Mover, of value as a genuine entelechy, is beyond question. But it is not the nearness of a "fellow" who is willing to do his partner's supreme duty, as in Christianity. Rather, it is the nearness of a modality of our knowledge of the being of the Godhead, the nearness of the ethically imperative.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 289-292.

In Islam, far from being the father of sin, Adam is the father of the prophets. He received his learning directly from God, and in this he was superior to the angels to whom he taught the "names" (*i.e.*, essences, definitions) of the creatures. God commanded him to pursue the good as well as to avoid evil, the latter being the nature of the tree whose fruit he was forbidden to eat. The identification of the tree as "the tree of life and knowledge" is neither God's nor Adam's; but, if a Muslim may here make a guess on the basis of Christian Old Testament scholarship, the work of the priestly editors of "J" who branded knowledge of good and evil as evil in pursuit of their will to power and in perpetration of their monopoly over man's reaching toward God. The Qur'an calls this wrong identification a lie told by Satan in order to lure Adam, prone as he was to know and pursue the good, to transgress God's command and do evil. "Satan," the Qur'an says, "whispered unto him, saying, 'O Adam! Shall I lead thee to the tree of life eternal;

and [thus] to a kingdom that will never decay?’ And so the two ate [of the fruit] thereof: and thereupon they became conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with pieced-together leaves from the garden. And [thus] did Adam disobey his Sustainer, and thus did he fall into grievous error. Thereafter, his Sustainer elected him [for His grace], and accepted his repentance, and bestowed His guidance upon him.” Adam, therefore, did commit a misdeed, viz., that of thinking evil to be good, of ethical misjudgment. He was the author of the first human mistake in ethical perception, committed, with good intention, under enthusiasm for the good. It was not a “fall” but a discovery that it is possible to confuse the good with the evil, that its pursuit is neither unilateral nor straightforward.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, “A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture,” *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 290-291.

In conclusion, we may therefore say that the Christian approach to Hebrew Scripture is dogmatic; *i.e.*, governed by the desire to confirm articles of the Christian creed; whereas the Islamic approach is ethical, *i.e.*, governed by absolute and immutable ethical laws, without regard to dogma. In consequence of his approach being dogmatic, the Christian is compelled to resort to a deterministic view of man and history, to an allegorical interpretation of unequivocal texts and to glossing over accounts and narratives of human conduct which no worthy morality can accept. *Per contra*, in consequence of his approach being ethical, the Muslim is compelled to separate the ethically valid from the perverse in Hebrew Scripture, for

only the former he can call the Word of God. But Hebrew Scripture does not lose by having any of its parts demoted, as it were, from the status of revelation to that of human editing. Unlike revelation, human writing is capable of having both the good and the evil. On the contrary, rather than losing, Hebrew Scripture gains through such an attitude. Such an attitude to Hebrew Scripture as the Qur'an expresses is the first prerequisite of the whole discipline known as Old Testament criticism which has saved Hebrew Scripture from the slow but sure process of repudiation by Christians of the last two centuries, by correcting its claims, reconciling its contradictions and reconstructing its history on a sounder foundation. The first principle of this discipline has been the Qur'anic principle that not all the Old Testament is God's word, but only some; that much of it—Christian scholars go to the extreme of claiming that all of it—is the work of editors and redactors of all sorts of affiliation.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "A Comparison of the Islamic and Christian Approaches to Hebrew Scripture," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 31, no. 4 (1963): 292.

## Richard Niebuhr's Ideas of Society

*K*arl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) was an American Reformed theologian, ethicist, commentator on politics and public affairs and a professor at Union Theological Seminary for more than thirty years. Niebuhr was one of America's leading public intellectuals for several decades of the 20th century and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964.

In his major book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932), he criticized modern liberal Protestantism for not taking seriously the depth and pervasiveness of sin. The thesis of the book is that people are more likely to sin as members of groups than as individuals. He was critical of liberalism, both secular and religious, and predicted the rise of fascism throughout the 1930s.

Niebuhr distinguished between the moral and social behavior of individuals versus social groups—national, racial and economic. In his view, the highest moral ideal is justice and the highest individual ideal is altruism. For Niebuhr, justice was fundamental; it should be constructed around agape. Justice meant equal balancing of power.

Ever since he became a Christian, Western man has lived a split life and suffered from a split personality. Jesus and his ethical renunciation on the one hand, and nature with its self-assertion and nature-affirmation on the other, divided his loyalty and being. Although he conducted his life oblivious to Jesus's emphasis on the spiritual over and against the material, yet he invoked Jesus's blessing for every move. While vindicating the self-assertive within now with brute force, now with rational argument, Western man never had the courage of his conviction that the life of nature was right. Consequently, he strove to convince himself that Jesus really approved. This self-deception, however never worked. It took but a simple apparition of the person of Jesus to Western man's consciousness (often evoked by a recitation of the Sermon of the Mount by the Passion, or by a genuine Jesus-like deed on the part of his neighbor) and the veil of rationalization of his affirmation was rent. Christianity never succeeded in subjugating nature within, in conquering Western man's ethos-in-action; but it did establish itself as unquestionable master of his ethos-in-consciousness.

This self-deception, which did not work, nevertheless left indelible stains upon the nature of Western man and affected, through his deeds, countless millions of people. In his pursuit of "the World" Western man has exploited his neighbors, colored and white, while all the time representing his efforts to himself as Utopia, liberation, socialism, progress, or (as in the case of the Puritans who invented a causal relationship from material success to divine election) as something not so much of his own doing as of God's. On the international level, Western man

has committed aggression, invaded, colonized and imperialized. His Christian missions carried the cross only side by side with the national flag and often raised the latter higher than the former. His case would deserve sympathy if it were that of the candid man who falls short of his ideal, better self. If this were the case, he would have acknowledged his trespasses, learned from experience and endeavored to become better. The fact is, however that instead of getting progressively closer to each other, the poles of his deeds and his moral judgments continue to travel in opposite directions.

This empiricism, and the confirmation of the Hobbesian thesis that the nature of man is egoistic, self-assertive, hypocritical and necessarily hostile toward other men imply, further, the rejection of the ethic of Jesus on the personal level, however much Niebuhr has proved to be lacking in the courage to pursue his thought to its logical conclusion. Inasmuch as Niebuhr is an instance of Western consciousness, the problem of Western man today is radically different from that of the first three centuries of Christianity. At that time the personality of Jesus was struggling to invade Western man's ethos. Today, after twenty centuries of "Christian" existence, that ethos is regrouping its forces and struggling to repel, and utterly to banish, that holy personality.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "On the Significance of Niebuhr's Ideas of Society," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 7 (1961): 100-101, 107.

## The Encounter Between Islam and the West

*In this short excerpt, al Faruqi highlights how the arrival of Napoleon in Egypt with modern artillery shocked the Arabs and awakened them to embark on the path of reform and emulation of the West.*

### **The Beginnings—Napoleon in Egypt— The Arab World's Encounter with the West**

When Napoleon's army marched in Egypt, on the eve of the nineteenth century (1798), the Mamluk ruler and commander of the Egyptian defense forces picked from his loyal troops the most courageous soldier and ordered him to march forward to the enemy lines and challenge Napoleon, the enemy commander, to a duel. With the sword drawn, fanfare blowing and drums beating, the Egyptian hero mounted his decorated horse and advanced. As soon as the French forces knew what he was about, they answered with one rifle shot, and the Egyptian hero fell

bleeding from a mortal wound. This is a real story, and it expresses clearly the gap that existed between Western society and Arab society at the close of the eighteenth century. For Egypt and the Arabs, the time was still the Middle Ages. For the West, it was modern times.

Napoleon's expedition to Egypt served as an alarm bell to awaken Arab society to modern times. Though at first the French were regarded as infidels and their military equipment as the devil's artifact, as soon as their success was ascertained, they became in Muslim eyes worthy of emulation and their science worthy of learning.

Some Arab enthusiasts rejected outright both Napoleon and all that he brought. These suffered the destruction of their claims regarding the witchcraft of modern science as it succeeded demonstrably in their very midst. The others—and they were the majority as well as the religious leadership—quickly learned to desire science and modernity in good Islamic conscience. Al-Jabarti, on-the-spot historian of the period, described the visit which Shaykh Hasan al-'Attar and his staff of *'ulama'* paid to the French factories, workshops, and laboratories at the invitation of Napoleon and reported the rector as saying, in conclusion of the visit, "Our country needs change; many branches of knowledge must be renovated."

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Ideal Social Order in the Arab World, 1800-1968," *Journal of Church and State* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 239-240.

## The Ideals of Social Order in the Arab World 1800-1968

*Surveying the state of the Arab world since the end of Ottoman Empire in 1924 and the rise of Arab nations, Professor al Faruqi, laments its deplorable conditions. He calls for the alleviation of poverty and the misery of Arab society through the reviving of ijtiḥad (systematic original thinking). The poverty and misery of Arab society is of its own making. Nobody will change their condition unless they change it themselves:*

*“God does not change the condition of a people unless they change themselves”.*

Qur’an, al-Ra’d 13:11

Islam, the Qur’an, its scripture and the Sunnah, the exemplification of the ideal by the Prophet, have determined and still determine Arab consciousness. It is this Islam, concrete, specific, and founded on an uncorrupted, complete and untranslated historic book, that

constitutes the base, the presupposition and the ultimate *prius* determining Arab thought. Let us now return to the categories.

1. The Ideal is to be understood in the Qur'an, which is the prime source of truth and value. But its claim, though authoritative is not authoritarian. It must be validated and understood by, set at peace with, the critical reason. *A fortiori*, no Muslim's word is valid until evidence has fully justified it. Away, therefore, thought the modernist, with all the legacy of tradition until it has established its points anew and critically! The speculations, Israelitisms, Christianisms, Persianisms, historical materials of the fathers—all the legacy of the past must be purged clean. Only al-Sunnah al-Sahihah, or the verified Sunnah, those traditions of the Prophet, of his immediate companions and their children, which pass the critical tests of a most fastidious consciousness and can truly be said to explicate and instantiate the abstract ideal of the Qur'an constitute the normative Sunnah. *Ijma'* (consensus) is only *their ijma'*, that of the sick society constitutes none. No eisegetic interpretation (*bi al-batin*) but with reference to the Qur'an itself and "the verified Sunnah." Hence, too, no pantheism, no miracles—not even by Muḥammad—and no knowledge by esoteric illumination.
2. The gates of *ijtihad*, or creative interpretation of the Islamic imperative and of its application, are to be reopened (after their closure in the thirteenth century) and kept open. Since Islam has no Church *magisterium* and rejects the idea of one, and since its scripture is open, public and makes rational claims upon men, every man is duty bound to seek a first-hand

understanding of its message.

3. Existence is a serious affair, for God has endowed us with a trust which we must fulfill, and may not fulfill at the risk of damnation and peril. This trust is to be realized in the rough and tumble places and battlefields of Makkah and Madinah. It is to be realized *yaqazatan la hulman* (in clear wakefulness and not in dreamlike reality) as ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab said.
4. The poverty and misery of Arab society is, therefore, the work of Arab society and its responsibility, within the scheme of the all-encompassing Sunnah (pattern of God). Nobody will change their situation unless they change it themselves, for

*“God does not change the condition of a people unless they change themselves”.*

Qur’an, al-Ra’d 13:11

5. *Imamah*, or the formation of the Muslim community into an organized whole, what some contemporary thinkers call “societism,” is necessary. For, the soteriology of Islam conceives of no personal salvation in dissociation from mankind. Even a prophet cannot be contented with his personal harmony, or mystical with the divine. He has to reach his fellow men, to contend with them, to concert and lead them in the cause or perish as their hand ... *Imamah*, in the sense of the leadership of the community, is a contractual relation between ruler and ruled. Its basis is the law and it is a two—way affair, *i.e.*, giving rise to rights and

obligations for both ruler and ruled. Modern Islamic thought has rejected the idea of a unique imam for the whole community, and recognized the community's division into geographic and cultural groups as legitimate grounds for a multiplicity of imams, but not of laws.

6. The ideal state is a replica of the cosmic state in that it embodies a perfect realization of justice. Just as God never punishes without warning, His laws are inexorable and know no distinction, so should the worldly state honor the Shari'ah always, regardless of advantage to anyone.
7. Within Arab society as conceived by the thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the citizen is free to earn his living singly and amass all the fortune he can. There is therefore no restraint upon his initiative and ambition. Capitalism is of the essence and private property is as "sacrosanct as the Day of Pilgrimage." But, fortune may not be amassed through injustice, by immoral or deceitful ways.
8. The ideal social order in modern Arab social thought may be characterized as comprehensive enveloping this world and the next in full accord with classical Islam which conceived itself as leading to the two happinesses: Here and beyond. No Arab thought, to my knowledge, is secular in the sense of compartmentalizing human life into two autonomous spheres ... There have of course been a few lonely voices who pleaded for secularism. But these ... are convinced and non-Islamic, or if Muslim then either ambivalent, or simpletonian and confused.

9. The ideal social order in modern Arab thought is populist and free of class struggle. For over a century, the appeal of reform has been directed toward the masses. This appeal was so strong that it sometimes colored itself with provincialism, for the particular socioeconomic problems of the Arab masses in Iraq, Algeria, Egypt and Palestine were not always identical. But in as much as it invoked Islamic values, the appeal was universal. Likewise, the classlessness of classic Muslim society inspired and guided Arab reformers to seek to wipe out the class differences which vitiate Arab society by peaceful means ... Neither *pasha* nor *fallah* could resist the appeal of Islamic brotherhood and equality, taught and nurtured by centuries of inter-marriage, of prayer-in-one-straight-row, of pilgrimage in identical pieces of unsewn linen, of creaturely submission to the One Almighty God.
  
10. Lastly, the ideal social order in modern Arab thought has always been open to influence by modern events, by experimentation and failure. Apparently, the absence of *ex-cathedra* definitions of Islam, the maintenance of the doctrinal prerequisites of Islamicity to the bare minimum of the *shahadah* (the profession that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is His Prophet) and the general refinement implied in the expression “*wa’llahu a’lam*” (And God knows better), stood guard against the presentation of social thought as socio-political *dogmatique*. Neither are the rulers hesitant to give newer and newer versions as departures from any *dogmatique*.

THE IDEALS OF SOCIAL ORDER IN THE ARAB WORLD

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "The Ideal Social Order in the Arab World, 1800-1968," *Journal of Church and State* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 245-250.

## Christian Mission and Islamic *Da'wah* —A Discourse<sup>1</sup>

*Professor Ismail al Faruqi was a deep scholar of Christianity and its theological transformation over the centuries. Instead of glossing over the theological differences between Islam and Christianity, he was frank that the only path to genuine Christian-Muslim theological dialogue which will lead to peace and overcome misunderstanding should begin with revisiting the Christological position set up at the Council of Nicaea of 325 CE.*

*Western Christians need to understand Christianity from the poetical bent of the Semitic mind and real Muslim-Christian*

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter comprises comments by Professor Ismail al Faruqi at a conference on Christian mission and Islamic *da'wah* organized by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, in consultation with the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, on Jumada II 28-Rajab 4, 1396/June 26-30, 1976 in Chambésy, Switzerland.

*dialogue should begin by Western missionaries owning up to the moral wrongs they have been committing in the Muslim world. It requires sitting down with the Muslims and working out a mode of cooperation.*

**1. Ismail al Faruqi’s response to “The Concept and Practice of Christian Mission,” a paper presented by Arne Rudvin, Bishop of Karachi, United Church of Pakistan**

The basic difficulty with Bishop Rudvin’s paper is that it oscillates between being a historical statement and a statement of his personal faith. It commits the error of taking Matthew 28:14 as the historical evidence for the origin of the missionary command. Biblical criticism has shown that this verse belongs to a later stage of Christian development and could not have been said by Jesus. Equally, although baptism was known in those days, it was not institutionalized as a Christian sacrament in Jesus’s time; nor had the “trinity” then become integral to Christian doctrine. On the other hand, the paper’s claim that since the content of the Gospel has been given and since mission is dependent upon the Gospel, neither is open to discussion, strikes me as contradictory to the historical standpoint altogether. Such statements of personal faith cannot serve as basis for discussion in this conference convened precisely in order to discuss mission, Christian as well as Muslim.

Bishop Rudvin’s claim that Jesus’s “mission” was addressed to all men runs counter to Jesus’s own statement as reported by the same authority (viz. Matthew) that he was sent only to the lost tribes of Israel. He also underrates the reformatory character of Jesus’s mission, namely, to

combat the specific issues of ethnocentrism and legalistic externalization of religion which had arisen among the Jews. Jesus spoke to an acute problem among his own people. This is not to deny that Jesus's mission later led to a universalist stand by Christians in consequence of his spiritualizing, internalizing and personalizing call. But his objective was to break Jewish aberration.

If Christian mission to Muslims has helped to reopen the old Christological question thought to be settled once for all by the Council of Nicaea, Muslims welcome the development.

If the Christological question is to be raised at this conference, this necessarily implies reconsidering all the christologies of the ante-Nicene fathers as well as that of Islam as standing on a par with that of catholic Christianity. No discussion of the Christological question will be beneficial if one Christology is to be raised above the rest and made arbiter of all.

However, questions of methodology have to be raised and agreed upon before any christological matter is discussed. I would suggest that Christians wishing to enter into dialogue with Muslims eschew the "personal," "experiential" basis on which the Bishop based religious knowledge as epistemologically precarious. Any prejudice or hallucination can then masquerade as "religion" and claim authority on that basis.

All the arguments which the Bishop gave in support of his Christology strike me as those of a mind not acquainted with the poetical bent of the Semitic mind which belonged to Jesus as well as his disciples. Statements such as "I am the truth, the way, the life," "I and my Father are one,"

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,” “lord and master,” which can be repeated today by any mystic; the plural form “We” of Genesis which is still an agreeable convention of politeness—all these are common in Semitic parlance, where they do not at all mean what Christians take them to mean. Like the ancient Hellenes’, the Western mind does not seem to have the capacity to take Semitic anthropomorphisms, figures of speech, allegories and the like, poetically. The Semitic notion of transcendence was lost to the Christian tradition because transcendent truth can be expressed only in poetical language.

There is the even more serious side of religious and moral content. The claim that Jesus is God is the consequence of two assumptions: first, that all mankind is necessarily and hopelessly fallen (the “peccatist” thesis); and second, that God has saved them by suffering death as price of their fallenness (the “saviorist” thesis). The first is a warped view of human nature which is always as capable of doing the good as the evil. It is a non-empirical, psychopathic view of history. The second, by its emphasis on vicarious suffering, is repugnant to moral sense and cognition and destroys God’s transcendence, the divine ultimacy, on the metaphysical and axiological levels. It denigrates man, flouts his moral responsibility, and renders not only *diakonia*, but religion itself, meaningless.

The separation of *kerygma* (proclamation) from *diakonia* (service) is welcome. But this elevation of *diakonia* to the place of first Christian duty is unacceptable, and precisely for the reasons Bishop Rudvin has given.

But it is precisely the identity of “scripture” which is here in question, as well as the methodology of understanding and

interpreting it. Knowing that the early Christians had no “scripture” except that of Judaism, that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament we know today were not canonized by the Church as “scripture” until the third century of the Christian Era, at which time there were countless apostolic epistles and “Gospels” in circulation, how can you be sure that the “Gospel” as we have it today (27 books), and as interpreted in Lutheran theology, contains the truth about God? Are not other reports about God worthy of some scholarly scrutiny? Take the word *kurios*, which you claim Jesus applied to himself with a meaning similar to the *rabb al-‘alamin* in the Qur’an. The meaning you give is based upon the report by John, a century after Jesus, that a certain Thomas confessed Jesus as his Lord and God. In those days there were many people attributing divine status to all sorts of men. How can you take this as evidence that Jesus called himself God? Then you say that in addition to this so-called “evidence,” you experience Jesus as the living Lord. This is a reflection upon you, as much as Thomas’s confession—even if proved historically—is a reflection upon him, not Jesus. It is indeed to be regretted that we have no documents from Jesus. But this ought to make us all the more careful as to what we ascribe to him *in absentia*.

Permit me to remove some ambiguity regarding the term “salvation.” In its general sense, Islam does of course hold that salvation is man’s deep religious need. Allah is the Savior Who forgives man his sins and saves. In Christianity, however, “salvation” has another meaning, that is, pulling man out of the sinful predicament into which he is “fallen,” by nature of his very existence on earth as man, and from which he can never extricate himself by

his own effort, no matter how great or moral he be. It’s true, such “salvation” does not exist in Islam’s vocabulary.

Now it seems to me that the Christian claim that Jesus is God is based on two assumptions: that all mankind is necessarily and hopelessly fallen—what I call “peccatism,” and that God has rescued men by paying the price for their fallenness. But if men were thus fallen, why should God have rescued them anyway? To argue that it is an expression of God’s *agape* is to argue in a circle, because his *agape* would more logically be the consequence of his having rescued them and to argue some kind of cosmic justice is a Manichaen view. Moreover, the crucifixion, as vicarious suffering, is opposed to our moral sense.

I welcome Bishop Rudvin’s separation of *kerygma* and *diakonia*. But what are the criteria for *diakonia*! It must have its rules and priorities, first among which is the consent of the served. In the Muslim world I believe there is no consent for the Christian *diakonia*. And even if you want to carry the Muslim to Heaven on your shoulder, you must still acknowledge his priorities—and today his spiritual and political needs are more urgent than his developmental or economic ones. And before any further Christian *diakonia* takes place in the Muslim world, there is an enormous backlog of dirt in our relationship which needs to be cleaned.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rudvin, A. 1976, The Concept and Practice of Christian Mission. *International Review of Mission*, 65: 385-389. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1976.tb03573.x>

## **2. Al Faruqi's responses to comments on the two papers on Muslim experiences of Christian mission in Indonesia and Tanzania.**

Professor Ihromi seems to be yearning for a state in Indonesia in very much the same terms as the western state—a centralized state in which all citizens obey the same laws. It is a real pity that Asians and Africans should yearn after the kind of state which was born out of intellectual and spiritual movements in Europe beginning with the Reformation and finishing in nineteenth century Romanticism. It is these movements which have brought about the notion of the state as a single monolithic body. In Islam we have a different concept of the state—a state truly as a servant of the people rather than their master, a state ruling to preserve public order, but still giving freedom to the various minorities within the state to exist, survive and prosper.

The idea of every “citoyen”—the very term is charged with European Romanticism—being a duplicate of every other “citoyen,” is foreign to the spirit and traditions of Islam. But the western mind is incapable of conceiving of a state which is not monolithic in nature.

It is much more honest to say that we realize that neocolonialism is a force, and that here in this consultation we are trying to discover ways and means of saying what, within our spheres of power, we will do about it. I personally do not agree to discuss with anyone who argues that there is no neocolonialism today in, for example, Indonesia. And what concerns us very much here is the linkage between the missionary movement and neocolonialism. If you don't see that Christians in places

like Tanzania and Indonesia are being used by imperialist forces, then there is no point in our continuing our conversation.

Formulating a code of missionary behavior is not the first thing that we should be concerned with here. It is a second stage. The first stage must be the establishment of mutual trust. This requires the Christian missionaries who have been so far ahead of the Muslims in missionary work, and whose history of missionary activity over the last hundreds of years is full of incidents which create suspicion in the eyes of Muslims, to recognize that moral wrongs have been committed and to show their determination to take positive action to redress the situation. This must precede any attempt to sit down with Muslims to try to work out a mode of cooperation.

Unless there is real Christian repentance I don't think this conference will be of any avail. But apparently we are faced by forces that do not want to admit the moral wrongs and the mistakes.

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“Two Case Studies: Indonesia And Tanzania” *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976).

### **3. Al Faruqi's view on *Religio Naturalis*, *Din Al-Fitr* and Unity of Prophethood—An Interaction with Kenneth Cragg, Michael Fitzgerald and Khurshid Ahmad.**

**Cragg:** What you are saying, then, is that God has sent prophets everywhere, but *ex hypothesis* these prophets must be consistent with Islam.

**Al-Faruqi:** Yes, Islam as *religio naturalis*, *din al-fitrah*.

**Cragg:** But that which in Buddhism is antithetical to Islam and to rationalism is not simply chaff mixed with wheat, if I may put it that way; it is the very wheat of Buddhism. By your analysis here it must then have been a false prophecy which brought the Buddhist to that belief.

**Al-Faruqi:** I won't say a false prophecy. I would say that a true revelation through an authentic prophet has been thoroughly falsified.

**Fitzgerald:** But by what historical criteria is the "true" prophet to be identified? And where is the "true" prophecy of which you speak within Buddhism?

**Al-Faruqi:** I don't know, but it can be researched; the fact that I assume it to be there at the origin is at least a good step in the direction of ecumenical tolerance.

**Ahmad:** It is very possible that rudiments of the true prophecy are to be found even in some pagan religions.

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Ismail al-Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah," *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 403.

## On the Nature of Islamic *Da‘wah*

*Da‘wah (calling to Islam) cannot be coercive. It has be based on the Qur’anic principle of “Argue the cause with them [the non-Muslims] with the more comely arguments” (Qur’an, al-Naḥl 16:125). If they are not convinced, they must be left alone (Qur’an, Muḥammad 47:32). If the non-Muslim is still not convinced, the Muslim is to rest his case with God. The Prophet himself allowed the Christians of Najran who were not convinced by his own presentation of Islam to keep their faith and return home in dignity.*

*Da‘wah is to be grounded in the study and knowledge of the history of religions and not the hear-say about other religions or berating and deriding other religions and their contents. That is why the early Muslims engaged in the intellectual enterprise of studying other religions through critical analysis of their religious texts and claims. The first Muslim doctors of what is now known as the discipline of “history of religions” were the first to assume that all religions had a history and that each religion has undergone a development. Undertaking such a scholarly grounded study and research about other religions is the first step of engaging in da‘wah.*

Allah, has commanded the Muslim, “*Call men unto the path of your Lord by wisdom and goodly counsel. Present the cause to them through argument yet more sound*” Qur’an, al-Nahl 16:125. *Da’wah* is the fulfillment of this commandment “to call men unto the path of Allah.” Besides, it is the effort by the Muslim to enable other men to share and benefit from the supreme vision, the religious truth, which he has appropriated. In this respect it is rationally necessary, for truth wants to be known. It exerts pressure on the knower to share his vision of it with his peers. Since religious truth is not only theoretical, but also axiological and practical, the man of religion is doubly urged to take his discovery to other men. His piety, his virtue and charity impose upon him the obligation to make common the good which has befallen him.

### ***Da’wah* is not coercive**

“Calling” is certainly not coercing. Allah has commanded, “*No coercion in religion*” (Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:256). It is an invitation whose objective can be fulfilled only with the free consent of the called. Since the objective is an exercise by the called of his own judgment that Allah is his Creator, Master, Lord and Judge, a forced judgment is a *contradictio in adjecto* and hence punishable with *jahannam*. Humanistic ethic regards coerced *da’wah* as a grave violation of the human person, second only to homicide, if not equal to it. That is why the Holy Qur’an specified the means of persuasion to be used. “*Argue the cause with them [the non-Muslims] with the more comely arguments*” (Quran, al-Nahl 16:125). If they are not convinced, they must be left alone (Qur’an, al-Ma’idah 5:108, Āl ‘Imrān 3:176-177, Muḥammad 47:32). Certainly, the Muslim is to

try again and never give up that God may guide his fellow man to the truth. The example of his own life, his commitment to the values he professes, his engagement, constitute his final argument. If the non-Muslim is still not convinced, the Muslim is to rest his case with God. The Prophet himself allowed those Christians who were not convinced by his own presentation of Islam to keep their faith and return home in dignity.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah," *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 391.

### ***Da'wah* is directed to Muslims as well as non-Muslims**

It follows from the divine commandment that *da'wah* must be the end product of a critical process of intellection. Its content cannot be the only content known, the only content presented. For there is no judgment without consideration of alternatives, without comparison and contrast, without tests of inner consistency, of general consistency with all other knowledge, without tests of correspondence with reality. It is this aspect of *da'wah* that earns for the called who responds affirmatively to its content the grace of *hikmah* (wisdom). Allah described His prophets and saints as "men of *hikmah*" precisely because their Islam was a learned thing, not a narrow-minded addiction to a single track of thought, certainly not a "prejudgment." That is why *da'wah* in Islam has never been thought of as exclusively addressed to the non-Muslims. It is as much intended for the benefit of Muslims as of non-Muslims.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah,"

*International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 393.

### ***Da'wah* is rational intellection**

Since *da'wah* is a critical process of intellection, it is of its nature never to be dogmatic, never to stand by its contents as if by its own authority, or that of its mouthpiece, or that of its tradition. For it to be critical means that it should keep itself always open to new evidence, to new alternatives; that it continually cast and recast itself in new forms, in cognizance of the new discoveries of human science, of the new needs of human situation. In making the *da'wah*, the *da'iyah* labors not as the ambassador of an authoritarian system, but as the co-thinker who is cooperating with the *mad'u* (the called) in the understanding and appreciation of Allah's double revelation, in creation and through His prophets. So much for the standpoint of the *da'iyah*.

As rational intellection, *da'wah* shows that in Islam, faith has to do with knowledge and conviction, whereas in Christianity it is, as Pascal found out, a blind wager. The Arabic word *iman* does not mean "faith" as Christians use the term. Rather, it means "conviction." It does not involve the functioning of a sacrament. There is no *ex opere operata* principle in Islam.

### ***Da'wah* is rationally necessary**

Islamic *da'wah* is therefore the presentation of rational, *i.e.*, critical, truth. It is not the proclamation of an event, or even of a truth (idea), but the presentation, for critical assessment as to truth value, of a proposition, a factum, which has theoretical (metaphysical) and practical (ethical)

relevance for man. As to the recalcitrant will, Islam recognized it for what it is, namely, recalcitrant and delinquent, and left the subject of that will to himself until God guides him to the truth. It respected his will and his judgment and, indeed, it extended to him its protections and *pax Islamica*. But it asked him to respond equally with peace and not to interfere with his neighbor’s right to listen and be convinced. Moreover, the Muslim of history has always presented his case in the open, never entered or practiced his Islam in secret.

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Ismail al Faruqi, “On the Nature of Islamic Da‘wah,” *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 394.

That *da‘wah* is rationally necessary is implied by the fact that in presenting its case, Islam presents it as natural or rational truth. “Rational” here means “critical.” Men differ in their use of reason but there would be no point to our dialogue unless we assume the truth to be knowable, that is, unless we believe it possible to arrive at principles which overarch our differences. Therefore, the standpoint of Islam is not an “act of faith,” but one of “conviction.” It is one of knowledge, of trust in the human power to know.

### ***Da‘wah* is anamnesis—Recalling**

In commanding the Muslim to call men to the path of Allah, He ﷻ did not ask him to call men to anything new, to something which is foreign or unknown to them. Islam is *din al-fitrah* (*religio naturalis*) which is already present in its fullness in man by nature. It is innate, as it were, a natural constituent of humanity. The man who is not *homo religiosus*, and hence *homo Islamicus*, is not a man. This is

Allah's branding of His creation, namely, that He has endowed all men, as His creatures, with a *sensus numinus*, a *fitrah*, with which to recognize Him as Allah (God), Transcendent Creator, Ultimate Master and One. It is history which confirms this natural faculty with its primeval perceptions and intellections, cultivates and enriches it or warps it and diverts it from its natural goal.

As *anamnesis*, *da'wah* is based upon the Islamic assertion that primeval religion or monotheism is found in every man (*din al-fitrah*), and that all he needs is to be reminded of it. The function of the prophets is to remind people of what is already in them.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da'wah," *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 395.

### ***Da'wah* is ecumenical par excellence**

Islam's discovery of *din al-fitrah* and its vision of it as base of all historical religion is a breakthrough of tremendous importance in interreligious relations. For the first time it has become possible to hold adherents of all other religions as equal members of a universal religious brotherhood. All religious traditions are *de jure*, for they have all issued from and are based upon a common source, the religion of God which He has implanted equally in all men, upon *din al-fitrah*. The problem is to find out how far the religious traditions agree with *din al-fitrah*, the original and first religion; the problem is to trace the historical development of religions and determine precisely how and when and where each has followed and fulfilled, or transcended and deviated from, *din al-fitrah*. Holy writ as well as all other religious texts must be examined in order to discover what

change has befallen them, or been reflected in them, in history. Islam's breakthrough is thus the first call to scholarship in religion, to critical analysis of religious texts, of the claim of such texts to revelation status. It is the first call to the discipline of "history of religions" because it was the first to assume that all religions had a history, that each religion has undergone a development.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da‘wah," *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 396.

*Da‘wah* is ecumenical par excellence because it regards any kind of intercourse between the Muslim and the non-Muslim as a domestic relationship between kin. The Muslim comes to the non-Muslim and says, "We are one; we are one family under Allah, and Allah has given you the truth not only inside yourself but inside your religious tradition which is *de jure* because its source is in God." The task of dialogue, or mission, is thus transformed into one of sifting the history of the religion in question. *Da‘wah* thus becomes an ecumenical cooperative critique of the other religion rather than its invasion by a new truth.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "On the Nature of Islamic Da‘wah," *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 396-397.

### **Contents of *Da‘wah***

The essence of Islam is *tawhid* or the witnessing that there is no god but God.

First, that there is no god but God means that reality is dual, consisting of a natural realm, the realm of creation,

and a transcendent realm, the Creator.

Second, *tawhid* means that God is related to what is not God as its God, that is, as its creator or ultimate cause, its master or ultimate end. Creator and creature, therefore, *tawhid* asserts, are relevant to each other regardless of their ontological disparateness which is not affected by the relation.

Thirdly, *tawhid* means that man is capable of action, that creation is malleable or capable of receiving man's action and that human action on malleable nature, resulting in a transformed creation, is the purpose of religion.

Fourthly, *tawhid* means that man, alone among all the creatures, is capable of action as well as free to act or not to act. This freedom vests him with a distinguishing quality, namely responsibility. It casts upon his action its moral character; for the moral is precisely that which is done in freedom, *i.e.*, done by an agent who is capable of doing, as well as of not doing, it.

Fifthly, *tawhid* means the commitment of man to enter into the nexus of nature and history, there to actualize the divine will. It understands that will as pro-world and pro-life and hence, it mobilizes all human energies in the service of culture and civilization. Indeed, it is of its essence to be a civilizing force. In consequence, Islamic *da'wah* is not based upon a condemnation of the world.

Finally, *tawhid* restores to man a dignity which some religions have denied by their representation of him as "fallen," as existentially miserable. By calling him to exercise his God-given prerogatives, Islamic *da'wah* rehabilitates him and reestablishes his sanity, innocence

and dignity. His moral vocation is the road to his *falah*. Certainly the Muslim is called to a new theocentrism; but it is one in which man’s cosmic dignity is applauded by Allah and His Angels.

Man, as Islam defines him, is not an object of salvation, but its subject. Through his agency alone the moral part, which is the higher part of the will of God, enters, and is fulfilled in, creation. In a sense, therefore, man is God’s partner, but a partner worthy of God because he is trustworthy as His *khalifah*, not because he is pitifully helpless and needs to be “saved.”

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Ismail al Faruqi, “On the Nature of Islamic Da‘wah,” *International Review of Mission* 65, no. 260 (October 1976): 397-400.

### ***Da‘wah and World Order***

There have been empires before the Hijrah; and many emperors sought to bring the world under their dominion. The pre-Hijrah empire-builders had an idea of world order which brought mankind and the four corners of the world under the sway of one power system. They may also have thought of converting mankind to one religion—their own. The process by which the world empire was to be built was conquest; and religious conversion was then to proceed by force and intolerance. The concept of world order in which various human groups are constituent members was not born. Nor was the idea known that there could exist a law to govern relations between human groups. Pre-Hijrah history has known numerous cases of one group imposing its law upon other groups as it imposed its gods, customs and power. The scions of the West point proudly to the

seventeenth-century Dutch thinker Grotius (1583-1645) who laid down the humblest beginnings of Western international law. Their pride blinds them to the fact that “their” Grotius was inspired by the same seventeenth-century Rationalism—the forerunner of the Enlightenment—which benefited deeply from the epistemology of Islam. And they are utterly ignorant that the Hijrah had created in 622 CE the first world order and based it upon an immutable law, beyond the tampering of all emperors and power seekers.

The Islamic state which Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ founded at the Hijrah was not only a state, but a world order. The political systems which the world had known until then were known to him. The empire model was embodied in Byzantium and Persia; and the tribal model throughout Arabia. Beyond them, seafarers and travelers must have brought accounts of other states living in isolation from the rest of the world. The Prophet sought a new definition of man and citizen that neither the empire nor tribal model presented. To define man by reference to the political power structure under which he lives, or to the tribe into which he is born, or to the land in which he and his parents grew up, is to insult and to degrade him. Far more becoming and dignified for a human is to be identified through the religion or ideology he keeps. Rulers, blood relations, skin color and property all have their relevance, but that relevance should never figure in the human’s definition. Man is greater than any or all of these elements. It is his vision of reality, his philosophy of life, his perception of the world and history that ought to define and identify him.

First, the Covenant of Madinah founded the Islamic

community as a multitribal, multiracial society of free individuals who deliberately decided to join it as an organization for mutual help, social order and cooperative pursuit for the benefit of all.

Second, the same Covenant founded the Islamic state as consisting of a Muslim community and a Jewish community, each of which is autonomous as regards its internal affairs, free to order the lives of its members according to its own religious, social and political tradition. It bound both communities to the Islamic state whose security they must honor in return for the Islamic state's guaranteeing of the community's security against its enemies. Because the overarching state is Islamic, the non-Muslim community members are not obliged to serve in its forces or wage its wars, but are exempt. Should any one of them desire to do so his services cannot be rejected and he must be refunded the jizyah tax he paid for the security of the community guaranteed by the state. This does not mean that the non-Muslim community is not to be called to Islam. But it does mean that, should its members reject the option of Islam, their decision must be honored and respected by the Islamic state and the Muslim community. Undoubtedly, the Prophet called the Jews of Madinah to Islam before and on the day of the Hijrah. Those who accepted the call became *ipso facto* equal members of the Muslim community. Those who rejected the call—and they were the majority—were constituted by him into a community constitutive of the Islamic state, and free to live as Jews, to enforce the Torah—their law, and to perpetuate their culture under the protection of the Islamic state. This was a tremendous step forward for them; for they existed in Arabia only as clients of Arab tribes, and hence as second-

class citizens. Overnight, they became as Jews full citizens of the Islamic state.

Third, the Covenant of Madinah founded a new world order. This was not a mere treaty or convention between states, nations or tribes; but a superstate, with a head, a government, an army, a permanent law and polity. Indeed, that was the Islamic state, functioning as the instrument of world order. At birth on the first day of the Hijrah, it had two constituents: The Muslim *ummah* and the Jewish *ummah*. Eight years later, it added a third constituent, the Christian *ummah* composed of the Christians of Najran. That same year, according to some reports, it welcomed a fourth *ummah*, the Sabaean Persians. Following the conquests of Persia, India and Central Asia, the Hindu and Buddhist communities were admitted as separate *ummahs* enjoying the same privileges of membership as the original Muslim and Jewish members. Obviously, the Islamic state was conceived to be the world state entrusted with the task of establishing world peace and maintaining universal order. Islam furnished the law under which world peace and an order of freedom and justice were to be maintained. Though furnished by Islam, this law of nations is not the law of the Muslim community imposed on everyone, but the rational mechanism for an international order of peace, equality and justice. Unlike modern international law, which recognizes only sovereign states and is impotent to enforce itself, Islamic international law recognizes sovereign states as well as human groups and individuals. Anybody can be a plaintiff or a defendant under it, and justice is without cost so that everyone has access to it.

The world order Islam envisages is one in which humans, wealth and ideas move freely everywhere, in peace. Life,

property and the power to decide one’s own identity and one’s own fate, are sacred, inviolable rights of all. And everybody may choose the *ummah* to which he belongs, the place of his residence and the work he wishes to do. By virtue of his humanity, everybody may contend in the matter of truth; everybody may join the argument, may convince and be convinced by others as to the truth and value of life and reality. As long as this right is exercised in peace, with decorum and mutual respect, and the exercise is absolutely free of immorality, it is universal and no power may interfere in its course. But if the exercise is immoral—*i.e.*, if it involves bribes or threats of any kind, if any element other than the purely ideational is permitted to influence the deciding process of the mind, it becomes vitiated. In that case, it may and should be stopped by the authority responsible for defending society against subversion. No nation has the right to isolate itself from the rest of humanity; and if it did, it would violate international order and law and expose itself to forceful action by the world state. To build around any group of humans an iron curtain and to isolate it from mankind is an offence against humanity.

To celebrate the Hijrah today is indeed to make it alive for the present, to *vergegenwärtigung* it. Nothing could be more needed, more appropriate and more salutary to this whole world of ours—sick by any standard because of international competition for the rape of nature and subjugation of mankind—than the world order Prophet Muḥammad founded fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, *iqamat al-Hijrah* today would mean nothing unless the Muslim possessed with the vision of Islam began in earnest to call his fellow Muslims first, and mankind second, to

join the ranks of those who seek a new world order of peace and justice, of piety and virtue. Allah commands action by argument and by example. May we all prove worthy of His revelation!

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 247-351.

## Islam and Art

*Aesthetics which displays the sacred or the supernatural in the forms of calligraphy, architecture and music or in the material forms of objects or places is an important dimension of human religious experience.*

*Muslims have always been baffled by the question of the relation between Islam and art. Professor Ismail al Faruqi addressed this question in several of his writings by explaining how the Qur'an is not opposed to the arts. Rather, the adhan (call to prayer), the recitation of the Qur'an, Qur'anic calligraphy, mosque architecture etc. represent the expression of the aesthetic values of Islam. They represent the artistic unity of Islam and Muslims produced out of the most diverse assemblage of cultures.*

*The Islamic experience of aesthetics is expressed by employing the method of muqarnas—i.e., composing Islamic 3D manifestations of 2D geometric designs and the methods of stylization and denaturalization. Such aesthetic expressions of Islam mark a breakthrough in the field of art dominated by naturalism.*

## The Islamic Breakthrough in Aesthetics

It is idle to dispute the unity of Islamic art. Although the historian will recognize a large variety of motifs, of materials, of styles differentiated geographically or chronologically, the overwhelming fact of all Islamic art is its unity of purpose and form. From Cordova to Mindanao, the arts of these lands once converted to Islam betrayed the same constitutive characteristics, avoidance of naturalism, of characterization and development; and preference for stylization, for formalism generative of movement, for limitlessness. All Islamic art has resorted to and used the highly emotive words of the Qur'an and the Hadith, of Arabic or Persian poetry, or of the Islamic wisdom literature, and rendered them in Arabic calligraphy. Likewise, all Muslims across the ages have responded with the deepest emotion to the chanting recitation of the Qur'an and of the *adhan*, even when they understood little or nothing of the Arabic meanings involved. In such cases, their discursive reason and understanding were not at work, but their sensory and intuitive faculties went into full play, apprehending the aesthetic values in evidence.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 81.

Such was the power of the aesthetic values of Islam and such was the artistic unity they produced out of the most diverse assemblage of cultures, that the traveler who moved from the eastern shores of the Atlantic to the western shores of the Pacific did so in territory made familiar by its Islamic architecture, decorated with arabesques and Arabic calligraphy. In the daily lives of men of different race, color,

language and lifestyle, he could behold an identical sensitivity to the literary and musical values Islam had brought. And yet, how banal the studies have been of those who addressed themselves to the problem of the nature of Islamic art! How poor the results achieved in the matter of defining the relation between Islam and the work of art!

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 82.

Decades of fastidious scholarship and analysis of meticulous reconstruction, identification and classification of Islamic artworks have well earned for the Western historians of Islamic art the deepest gratitude of the world of scholarship as well as of the Muslim world. But their interpretation of the artworks as expressions of Muslim culture were blunders at which intelligence blushes. Except for minor flashes of vision by Titus Burckhardt and Louis Massignon, and the cool self-restraint of Ernst Kuhnel on matters of interpretation, the historians of Islamic art have unanimously judged that art by standards of Western aesthetics. Every one of them stood before the absence of figures, of drama, of naturalism, in utter bewilderment. No reader of their works could miss their confusion at not finding something of Western art with which they can relate, or the spiritual revulsion with which they passed their prejudgment of Islamic art.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 83.

The essence of Greek art is naturalism. However, this is not to be understood as naive, photographic imitation of

nature, but as sensory representation of an *a priori* idea which nature seeks to embody forth, but hardly ever succeeds, in each of its creatures, an idea akin to the *arété* of ancient Greek *paideia*. Human portraiture in stone is, according to this theory, the highest art. The idea of man is nature's richest, highest and most complex entelechy. Its depth and inner diversity constitute an infinite mine for the artist to probe, to explore and to represent. For this reason, man was "the measure of all things"; he was the crown of creation, the carrier and concretizer of all values, the highest and the lowest. For this reason divinity itself was conceived in his image, religion was humanism, and worship of divinity became a contemplation of the infinite depth and diversity of man's inmost nature.

The Near East presents us with a diametrically opposite tradition. Here, man is only an instrument of divinity, created by the latter to serve. Man is never an end in himself and certainly not the measure of anything. It is divinity that furnishes the standard.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 84.

True to that Semitic consciousness of which it was the offspring the first truth Islam asserted was an untruth which it categorically denied. "There is no god but God" meant that reality is dual-transcendent and natural. The first is God and God alone. It is a realm which has one and only one member. Everything else is of a different, totally-other realm, the realm of nature. It is absolute and autonomous, spiritual and infinite, numinous and holy. It is the first and the last, the only source of all truth, goodness and beauty. It is transcendent in the fullest sense

of the term. "Nothing is like unto Him"; for He is neither in space nor in time.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 88.

### ***Al-Qur'an al-Karim: The First Work of Art in Islam***

It was this Arab consciousness which served as substrate and matrix of Islam. The Islamic revelation, al-Qur'an al-Karim, came as the chef d'oeuvre, the sublime realization of that consciousness. The Muslim claims that its content is divine and so is its form.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 95.

If anything is art, the Qur'an certainly is. If the mind of the Muslim has been affected by anything, it was certainly affected by the Qur'an. If this affecting was anywhere deep enough to become constitutive, it was so in aesthetics. There is no Muslim whom the Qur'an's cadences, rhymes and facets of eloquence (*awjuh al-balaghah*) have not shaken to the very depth of his being; there is no Muslim whose norms and standards of beauty the Qur'an has not reknaded and made in its own image.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 97.

### **Aesthetic Realization in the Visual Arts**

Islamic visual art was not interested in human nature, but in divine nature. Since its purpose was not to express new

facets of human nature, it did not aesthetically discuss the human figure, *i.e.*, it did not portray the infinitesimal shifts in human appearance expressive of human nature. Human character, the *a priori* idea of man analyzable into a million details revelatory of another depth or height in the human personality—all this was for the Muslim artist just beside the point.

First, since stylization produced a denaturalization of nature, the first Arab Muslims pushed that device to its conclusion.

Further, stylization means the absence of variation, and of development from trunk to branch and leaf extremities as occurs in the vegetal kingdom.

Finally, the deathblow to naturalism is repetition. By repeating the stalk, leaf and flower over and over again, and making them proceed one from another indefinitely in a manner impossible in nature, all idea of nature is banished. Repetition produces this effect so assuredly and unmistakably that it even tolerates its own enemy—*i.e.*, development—provided what has developed within a portion of the work of art is repeated in the work of art as a whole. Thus, nature is annihilated from consciousness, and un-nature is presented.

Finally, if repetition is subjected to symmetry, so that it extends equidistantly in all directions, then the work of art becomes in essence an infinite field of vision.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 99-100.

## Painting and Decoration in Islamic Art

That in all painting and decoration in Islamic art there is movement, indeed compelling movement from one unit in a design to another, and then from one design to another, indeed, from one whole field of vision to another as in the great portals, facades or walls, is beyond question. But there is no work of Islamic art where such movement is conclusive. It is of the essence that the vision of the spectator continue; that it see the production of the continuation in the imagination; that the mind set itself in motion requesting to behold infinity. Mass, volume, space, enclosure, gravity, cohesion, tension—all these are *facta* of nature to be done away with if an intuition of un-nature is to be gained. Only a design, a momentum-generating pattern will surround the Muslim lover of beauty, bursting into infinite space in all directions. This puts him in the contemplative mood requisite for an intuition of the divine presence. Not only the design on the cover of a book, an illuminated page he is reading, the carpet under his feet, the ceiling, front, inside and outside walls of his house, but its floor plan as well constitute such an arabesque where the garden, patio, vestibule and every chamber is an autonomous center with its own arabesque generating its own momentum.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 101.

## The Arabesque

Arabesques are floral or geometric, depending on whether they use the stalk-leaf-flower (*tawriq*), or the geometric figure (*rasm*) as artistic medium. The geometric figure can be linear (*khatt*) if it uses straight and broken lines, or trajectory (*ramy*) if it uses multi-centered curved ones. It may also combine all these together and be called then *rakhwi*. Arabesques are planar if they have two dimensions, as most decorative ones on walls, doors, ceilings, furniture, cloth and carpets, book covers and pages have. They can also be spatial, or three-dimensional, constructed with pillars and arches and the ribs of domes. This kind is the distinguished specialty of architecture in Maghrib and Andalusia, and has reached its highest exemplification in the Great Mosque of Cordoba and Alhambra Palace in Granada.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 102-103.

## Arabic Calligraphy:

### The Ultimate Art of the Consciousness of Transcendence

So possessed has Muslim consciousness been with transcendent divinity that it desired to see it expressed everywhere; and so anxious has that consciousness been to find ways and means of proclaiming the divine Presence that its genius broke forth with the greatest effervescence of pattern-making mankind has ever known.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 103.

## The Islamic Art—History and Contents

The Arabic word of God was written in the cursive *naskh* inherited from the Nabatean script or in the angular Kufic inherited from Aramaic through the Syriac. The signification was logical and discursive throughout as in any other language, perhaps even more so as the Near Eastern peoples knew hardly anything worthy of the name “calligraphy.”

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Ismail al Faruqi, “Islam and Art,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 104.

Gradually, but within the space of two generations, the Islamic artist transformed the Arabic word into a visual work of art, carrying an aesthetic signification given to sensory intuition totally other than the discursive meaning given to the discursive faculty, to the understanding. Like the rest of the arts, this new art was subject to the overall purpose of Islamic consciousness. Its visual capacities were developed so as to constitute an arabesque. In the Nabatean and Syriac scripts the letters were detached from one another, as in the Greek and Latin scripts. The Arab artist joined them so that instead of seeing a letter, the eye could at one glance and with one sensory intuition see the whole word, and indeed, the whole phrase or line. Second, the Arab artist plasticized the letters so that he could now stretch them, prolong, contract, incline, spread, straighten, bend, divide, thicken, narrow down, enlarge in part or in whole, as he pleased. The alphabet became an obedient artistic materiel, ready to embody and execute any aesthetic scheme or idea the calligrapher might entertain. Third, he pressed into service all that had already been learnt in the

art of the arabesque, especially floriation and geometrization, not only the better to decorate the writing, but to make of writing itself an arabesque in its own right. Arabic writing thus became a freely undulating line, capable of bursting here and there into floriated designs, autonomous and complete in themselves, whether symmetrically arranged or widely scattered. The newly acquired plasticity of the alphabet enabled the calligrapher to do it in either way or both ways following the aesthetic over plan he sought to develop. Finally, he “opened up” the alphabet so as not only to receive the arabesque decorations but to merge with it in constituting one large arabesque. He made it possible for the other arabesques to emerge out of the writing, or for the writing to emerge out of them. The essential character of the letters which gave them their legibility was preserved, and it constituted in writing what metric patterns constitute in poetry and geometrical and flowery forms constitute in the planar arabesques. The rendering of the legible shapes gave them their momentum. As an arabesque, Arabic writing transformed the ultimate medium of the discursive understanding, namely the alphabet or logical symbol, into a sensory art material, an aesthetic medium, productive of an aesthetic intuition sui generis. This was a triumph for human art as such to overcome the last domain of discursive reason, to annex and to integrate it into the realm of the sensory aesthetic. It was Islam’s highest and ultimate artistic victory.

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Ismail al Faruqi, “Islam and Art,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 105-106.

Islam holds the word of God to be ideationally the nearest approximation of Him, the most immediate expression of

His will. Since as transcendent being He is forever impossible to know or to perceive, His will has been communicated in revelation through His word. The word of the Qur'an is then God-*in-percipi* and ought to be accorded the utmost in respect as well as beautification. Its writing is then the aesthetic sublime in Islam, par excellence. All the more reason, therefore, for Arabic calligraphy to be developed so as to bring about a sensory intuition of the divine by realizing to the full, divine inexpressibility and unrepresentability in consciousness. Since Arabic writing has become an arabesque, it can enter any work of art and stand there *de jure*, regardless of its ideational content. Or, it can invade any work of art and ennoble it by complementing its aesthetic momentum or value, whether the writing is integrated with that work or otherwise. With the reverence accorded by all Muslims to holy scripture, the art of writing spread quickly, mobilized the greatest amount of talent and entered every moment of the Muslim's life. In stone, stucco or wood, on paper, skin or cloth, in house, office, shop and mosque, on every wall and ceiling, Arabic writing became the public art of Islam. So pervasive was its influence and presence that no city or village through the centuries could fail to produce masters of this art by the dozen.

No wonder then that Arabic writing, especially the calligraphic copying of the Qur'an, became the most popular art in the Muslim world across the centuries. Kings and plebeians entertained one supreme hope for their whole lives: to be able to copy a whole Qur'an—and die!

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Islam and Art," *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 106-107.

Many scholars of the Middle Ages who have acquired great names in the humanities, such as Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, Muhammad Amin, Ibn al-Athir, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Qalqashandi etc., recognized what had been done by their fellow Muslims in the field of writing. They took pride in the fact that Arabic writing has been more developed than any other; that it has reached heights of beauty, expression and glory which are absolutely without parallel; and finally, that it has been invested with the supreme value—the religious value—as the vehicle and expression of divine wisdom. Even the Qur’an, they maintained with satisfaction and final conviction of the correctness of their esteem, has hallowed writing in a verse which opens with an adjuration by the pen and writing.

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Ismail al Faruqi, “Islam and Art,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 108

While all art exercises an ennobling and humanizing influence on those who appreciate it, Greek and Renaissance art enhanced man’s esteem of himself and inspired his imagination and will to greater heights of self-realization. It did so by teaching him a nobler and deeper humanness, a humanness so great that in his consciousness it merged with the divine, the ultimate standard and hope. In Islam, art attempted and achieved the same task of ennoblement, humanization and self-realization. But it did so by putting man constantly in the divine presence. The divine Being, being something unhuman and transcendent, the idealism Islamic art generated was never Promethean, boastful or defiant. Human as it was, it disciplined itself through consciousness of its own non-transcendence. Is this a limitation? Certainly! But it is a limitation by

transcendent values which, by definition, begin at infinity; by values which are better “seen” and “appropriated” by standing squarely in front of them than by “confusion” with them. Since both realms of value are *a priori*, no “confusion” with them by man is possible *ex hypothesi*; and Prometheus is forever a complacent man! The greatness of Islamic art is identically that of the religion of Islam itself, namely, *always to strive after and ever to keep the distance from the supreme, transcendent Reality.*

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Ismail al Faruqi, “Islam and Art,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 37 (1973): 108-109.

A very prominent and visible aspect of universal occurrence among Muslims consists in Arabic calligraphy and arabesque decoration, found in all places where Muslims congregate, especially in the houses of worship. Equally ubiquitous are various architectural features of those buildings, whether inside, as in the case of the Qur’an’s verses rendered in beautiful calligraphy, or outside, such as the minarets, from which five times a day, the *mu’adhdhin* chants the call to worship in Arabic. This call to prayer, as well as the chanting of the Qur’an, constitute aural features of universal occurrence in the Muslim world. Certainly, there are other features binding the Muslim world together, but they are not as conspicuous. They reveal themselves to the investigator, if not to the casual tourist.

## Rights of Non-Muslims under Islam —Islam’s View of the Followers of Other Religions

*There is a general opinion that Islam does not recognize the rights of non-Muslims living in Muslim societies. Professor Ismail al Faruqi stresses that Islam recognizes the religious dimension of human beings as being a natural human disposition described as *din al-fitrah*—*religio naturalis*—and that the religious differentiations are rooted in the outcome of history, not natural religiosity. Thus, Islam holds the believer and the non-believer as equal partakers of the religion of God. Islam’s recognition of universality of religions is rooted in the Qur’anic teaching that*

*“there is no people but that God has sent them a prophet or warner” and that “no prophet was sent but to convey the same divine message, namely to teach that God is God and that man ought to serve Him”.*

Qur’an, Fāṭir 35:24, al-Naḥl 16:36

Islam has acknowledged the non-believer on three distinct levels:

The first is that of humanism. Islam introduced the concept of *din al-fitrah (religio naturalis)* to express its judgment that all men are endowed at birth by God with a religion that is true and valid for all time.

In so far as they are humans, this claim would be true of them that they all have a *sensus communis* by the free exercise of which they can arrive at the essence of all religious truth. Without this natural endowment, man would not be man at all. The universalism of this aspect of Islamic doctrine knows no exception whatever. On this basis of *religio naturalis* Islam has based its universal humanism. All men are ontologically the creatures of God, and all of them are equal in their creatureliness as well as in their natural ability to recognize God and His law. Nobody may even be excused from not knowing God, his Creator, for each and every one has been equipped at birth with the means required for such knowledge.

By this concept Islam differentiates between natural religion and the religions of history. The latter are either derivations from this most basic endowment; or they come from other sources such as revelation or human passion, illusion and prejudice. If this kind of religion divides mankind, natural religion unites them all, and puts all their adherents on one level. As the Prophet ﷺ has said, "All men are born Muslims (in the sense of endowed *religio naturalis*). It is their parents (tradition, history, culture, nurture as opposed to nature) that turn them into Christians and Jews." On this level of nature, Islam holds the believer and non-believer as equal partakers of the

religion of God.

The second is the level of revelational universalism. Islam holds that “*there is no people but that God has sent them a prophet or warner*” and that “*no prophet was sent but to convey the same divine message, namely to teach that God is God and that man ought to serve Him*” (Qur’an, Fāṭir 35:24, al-Naḥl 16:36).

As if what man has been given by nature is not enough, Islam now adds the contribution of history. In history, every people has been sent a messenger “*to teach them in their own language*” (Qur’an, Ibrāhīm 14:4) and “*none has been sent in vain*” (Qur’an, al-Nisā’ 4:63). Each messenger conveyed and made understood identically one and the same message from God, *i.e.*, as Creator, Lord, Master and Judge, and the service of Him through adoration and obedience. All men, therefore are recognized as possessors of divine revelations, each fitting its context of history and language, but all identical in their essential religious content.

On a third level, Islam identified itself with much of the historical revelation of Judaism and Christianity. It acknowledged the prophets of the two religions as genuine prophets of God, and accepted them as Islam’s own. It taught its adherents to honor their names and memories. True, this does not affect the relationship of Islam with the adherents of non-Semitic religions. But with these—and they constitute a significant segment of mankind—Islam erected further bridges of rapprochement.

Evidently, Islam acknowledges the non-believer religiously. On the religious plane, it grants every non-Muslim in the world a double religious privilege and religious dignity by

virtue of his sharing of natural religions and divine revelation in history. If he happens to be a Jew or a Christian, he is granted a third privilege and dignity, namely, that of sharing in the tradition of Islam itself. This third privilege, granted by God in the Qur'an to the Jews, Christians and Sabians was extended by the Muslim to the Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists and adherents of other religions as they came into contact with them.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Rights of Non-Muslims under Islam: Social and Cultural Aspects," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1979): 92-93.

Religion does not only give us access to ultimate values, it also introduces us to ultimate truth about our life and existence, about Heaven and earth. It convinces us of these truths, for it presents them not as one opinion among others, but as the truth. Some religions hold a relativist theory of truth, maintaining that their truth is theirs and need not be necessarily the view of others. Such position is held by tribalist or ethnic religions which hardly ever spread beyond the confines of the tribe or ethnic entity. Other religions—and they are the majority—are exclusivist. Their claim is not merely that their thesis is true but that all other theses are false. Religious exclusivism, however, is of two kinds: dogmatic and rational. The former variety, including Christianity and Buddhism, present us with a version of truth—their version—and ask us to acquiesce to it uncritically. Their thesis is that while religious truth is absolute, valid for all time and space, it cannot be contended. It must be either taken or rejected, but not subjected to critical analysis, to argument and the rigors of counter-evidence.

Islam shares with Christianity and Buddhism their exclusivism. It presents its claim as the only true one; but it does not do so dogmatically. Its claim is subject to critique. It is absolute as well as rational or critical, open to counter-evidence, to counter-argument. It is the nature of all rational claims to present themselves with defiance. Argument makes them clearer and strengthens their foundation. Obviously, the rational claim wants to be known, and cannot be ignored except at the risk of proving one either incompetent or inane.

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Ismail al Faruqi, "Rights of Non-Muslims under Islam: Social and Cultural Aspects," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1979): 94.

## The Concept of *Din* (Religion)

*The Qur'anic meaning of the term din is far from the common meaning of the word religion, which means "private, internal or apolitical faith."<sup>1</sup> The term din in Islam means a "corpus of obligatory prescriptions given by God, to which one must submit,"<sup>2</sup> i.e., belief in one, unseen, monotheistic understanding of God with no associated partners—of human, natural or supernatural types.*

*Monotheism or non-associationism with God is the exclusive gift of Arab religious consciousness to the history of religions. This understanding of din—monotheism—has been the bedrock of Islamic belief, thought, practice, culture and civilization for the last 1,400 years as illustrated across the diverse Muslim culturo-*

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<sup>1</sup> Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*, reprint ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 42.

<sup>2</sup> Gardet, L., "Dīn," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., eds. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, October 9, 2020, [http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0168](http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0168).

*linguistic zones around the world.*

Monotheism is exclusively an Arab thought, a reality of Arab consciousness alone. Its ethical equivalent did not begin to stir the imagination of any other known culture except centuries and, perhaps, millennia after it had taken hold of Arab consciousness. In it the Arab spirit expressed and saw itself. By establishing monotheism as a category of consciousness, the Arab spirit legislated the cardinal rule of moral action—namely, that the good is the same for all men, that all men stand to the good in the same relation and that in this they are brethren, children of the one Master in Heaven, unto Whom they yearn. All men are equal under the moral law, equally obliged to realize the good in the person of the other, of all others, since the good of all, like God, is absolutely one.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *On Arabism: 'Urubah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), 12-13.

Insofar as the guiding principles of their religion and ethic were the principles of *'urubah*, that is to say, insofar as they were guided, in their ethic and world view, by pure monotheism, ethical universalism, ethical asceticism and rationalism ... All of them held Christological views which although varied in their explanation of the nature of prophecy, were all agreed that Jesus was not identical with God, and that his being was radically different from that of God.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *On Arabism: 'Urubah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), 39.

That God is one, is the Arab way of saying that value is one,

THE CONCEPT OF *DIN* (RELIGION)

absolute, the same for all men, rather than relative to individuals, groups, times or places. That God has revealed Himself or His will is the Arab way of saying that it is man's duty to seek value everywhere, in the persons of all men. The monotheistic thesis is not purely a metaphysical one, discovered by or revealed to the investigator and seeker of the cause of all causes. It is the thesis of the moral observer and sufferer whose ethical striving had brought him to a new realm of value of which his Arab consciousness had taught him to conceive only in terms of a relation between himself and the Supreme Being.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *On Arabism: 'Urubah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), 12.

## ‘*Urubah*—Arabism and Islam

*I*slam, which regards reality as dual—made up of **1.** nature, which is material, changing, ephemeral, including the human, a creature among countless creaturely beings and **2.** God or Ultimate Reality, immaterial, eternal, Master and Creator of the world—is the substratum of Arab identity, which is a geographic, ethnic, linguistic and religious in its character.

Arabism, or the pursuit of ‘*urubah*, is not Arab nationalism. As a reality of Western European political life in the last two hundred years, nationalism has been and still is the conscious will of a sovereign people, who conceive their identity as distinguished from all other peoples, to pursue their communal interest and give it precedence over that of any other people with whom they may enter in conflicting relation. Modern times do not know of any Arab nationalism answering to this definition. The modern Arab states have achieved full independence and sovereignty only very recently and those which enjoyed a fair measure of autonomy before World War II can hardly be said to have any relations with the outside world.

Western type nationalism is also unknown to Arab history. Although there may have been instances where some Arab government did behave “nationalistically,” no such behavior can be rightly ascribed to the people who, for the most part, submitted passively to rulers who cultivate and pursued ends of their own making. This in no way absolves the people from the responsibility of submission to the rulers; nor is it meant as a defense of their position. The point we are making is simply that the so called “nationalistic” action was in no case “the conscious will of a sovereign people.”

Arab consciousness never conceived of a *separatist* identity, closed to all but the select few who already belong to it. The Arabs have always regarded theirs an “open” society, a community which any human being regardless of race, color or sect can enter and to excel in which, every human being stands prepared by virtue of nature’s endowment to him of reason and moral sense. The Prophet’s hadith “No Arab has any precedence over a non-Arab except in piety” is a candid expression of an unshakeable determinant of Arab ethos throughout the ages ... They have nothing to do with race, color or geography, which can in no way alter. Hence, no candidate human being may be rejected *a priori*. Whereas the idea of Anglicization or the Germanization of a billion colored people would be revulsive to the English or German nationalist, the idea of Arabization of the universe would fill the heart of the Arab nationalist with joy.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *On Arabism: 'Urubah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), 1-2.

## Islam—Religion, Practice, Culture and World Order

*In this section, Professor Ismail al Faruqi defines some of the important topics regarding the meaning and definition of being a Muslim as the vicegerent or representative of God in the cosmos, the relation between Islam and the other Semitic religions of Arabia. And the role Prophet Muḥammad played as a prophet and a statesman in building an Islamic polity during his lifetime as a model worthy of emulation for the succeeding Muslim generations around the world.*

### **What is a Muslim?**

The Muslim, therefore, is a person who, as his solemn witnessing has indicated, believes that only God is God and Muḥammad is His prophet. That only God is God makes of him at once the humblest and proudest creature. He is humble, and rubs his proud forehead against the ground in prostration, before God. God is to him, the One Creator, Provider, Ruler, Forgiver and Judge, the First Cause and

the Final End of everything, the Ultimate Reality. He is the object of adoration and praise, of thanks and worship, the One Master to Whom all one's life is devoted in dedication and service. The Muslim is the proudest of people precisely because of this loyalty to God. Besides God, no thing and no man is worthy of his loyalty, of his service and work. The Muslim may not submit to any ruler, and much less to any tyrant, because his submission is all due to the One Master. Some Muslims indeed do submit to rulers and tyrants; but they do so at the cost of violating their very definition as Muslims. In this submission to God, the Muslim places himself on a par with the whole of mankind, which he regards as equally obliged to recognize the Creator of all. He is touched by a feeling of strongest brotherhood to any person so submitting himself to the divine Sovereign; for vis-à-vis the Creator, there is no perspective or category, no bond or definition, mightier and more proper than that of creatureliness. Here all human beings stand absolutely identical.

The Muslim believes that God has created man and the world not in sport, and certainly not in vain, but for a purpose. This purpose is that man may fulfill his ethical vocation; that he may do the good deeds. The scripture of Islam pictures the life of *man* in the world as a free competition among men for doing the better, the nobler, the greater deeds. On this account, it called man "*khalifah*" or vicegerent of God, *i.e.*, he who acts and fulfills, on behalf of God. The world God created is one which fits this moral vocation of man, one in which man is efficacious, where the realization of goodness, truth and beauty is actually possible.

To be a *khalifah*, or vicegerent of God on earth, is no little burden. First, the task the position imposes is worldwide. Everything in creation is object of improvement. This means that the task involves the turning of every corner of the earth into all that it ought to be, namely, into a Paradise. Equally, it means that upon the Muslim falls the task of educating and transforming mankind, not only himself, his children, next of kin or compatriots, and to arrange for them the fulfillment by each of all his personal potential. All the problems of mankind are hence the Muslim's problems. To accept them, to seek morally worthy solutions of them and to work out these solutions in history, is the Muslim's obligation and destiny—as well as his pride. Islam wants man to confront these problems head-on, and assures him that God will grant merit, and hence reward and felicity, in direct proportion to man's commitment to the task, to his engagement in the job, to his success in achieving the divine purpose of creation—namely, the universal and highest good of all men, of all peoples, of all things.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 7-8.

### **Why is the Muslim a Muslim?**

Islam teaches that man is born innocent, and remains so until he makes himself guilty by his own deed. It does not believe in “original sin”; *and* its scripture interprets Adam's disobedience as his own personal misdeed; a misdeed for which he repented and which God had forgiven.

Rather than demoralize man by declaring him born with necessary, in escapable sin, Islam reassures him, that God

Who does not work in vain has created him fitted for the job of vicegerent. He has given him his eyes and ears, his senses of touch and taste and smell, his discerning heart and mind, his imagination and memory, all to the end of discovering and understanding the divine pattern in creation. He has built him as He did, with grasping fingers, hurrying feet, springing muscles and supporting bones, to the end that he may manufacture, grasp or produce what he needs. He placed him on an earth receptive to his efficacy, where he can get things done. Finally, he gave him mastery over the whole of creation, for He made everything subservient to man. Even the sun, the moon and the millions of far away stars were created expressly for his benefit. Instead of being damned before he walks on earth, Islam teaches that man is blessed with all these “perfections,” with life and mastery over all things, and is hence all the more expected to fulfill the divine will in his life.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 11-12.

### ***‘Urubah and Religion***

Within the Semitic family of nations in which Islam was born, the Jews have admirably preserved the revealed teaching that God is transcendent and One. However, Islam charged them with misunderstanding divine transcendence when they thought of God as related to themselves in a way other than He is related to all other creatures. Their teaching of a doctrine of divine election which put them ahead of all men in receiving God’s favors, Islam found objectionable. They held themselves to be

God's children and elect regardless of their deeds. In so doing they were object of Islam's castigation and chastisement. Islam regarded itself as the religion of Abraham, Jacob, Moses and David as each of them conveyed the revealed message in its pure and unadulterated form. In consequence, the Muslim identified himself with the Jews as worshipper and servant of one and the same transcendent God and regarded his own religious doctrine as Judaism purged of all ethnocentrism and especially, of the doctrines of election and of the "remnant." As far as Jewish law and ethics are concerned, Islam confirmed the revelation of Jesus insofar as it removed the yoke of literalism and legalism which the Jewish tradition had spun around the Law of Moses, and revoked the laws which the rabbis had added to it.

Religious authority, Islam held, belongs only to God. As tyrants are condemned and men are enjoined to shake off their tyranny, the road to God should be an open and free highway, admission to which has only one requisite, namely creatureliness. Away, therefore, Islam taught, with priesthood and all its orders and men. The tasks of teaching the truth, of guiding the young and counseling the erring, will last as long as man. But they constitute universal duties equally incumbent on all men. Prestige in the discharge of these tasks belongs to whoever has acquired the most and highest learning which is itself accessible to all. The ages-long occupation of priests as intermediaries between God and man has in Islam come to an end. God is the forgiver, punisher, judge and master, not the priest. He does not delegate these functions to any creature because that would violate His transcendence and role as sole governor and judge of men. He is close, near, fully responsive to every

man's prayer. His mercy and care for mankind, along with His omnipotence, demand that all men address themselves directly to Him. God needs no bureaucracy.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 13-14.

## Islamic Polity

Upon arrival in Madinah, Muḥammad integrated the Muslims of all tribes into one solid body, and integrated this body with the Jews of Madinah into an Islamic polity. He gave it its constitution and assumed its leadership. The revelations continued to come providing guidance in the social, political, economic and judicial affairs with which Muḥammad had to deal. The war with Makkah began with skirmishes, which were followed by two main rounds of battle, one of which was gained by each party, but neither of which was conclusive enough to enable the victor to put a final end to the hostility. A truce followed, before and during which Islam won the adherence of thousands. When allies of Makkah violated the truce, the Muslims mobilized and marched on Makkah, conquering it without a fight. In a magnanimous gesture, Muḥammad forgave the Makkans; and they converted to Islam en masse. The Prophet entered the Ka'bah, the house which Abraham and his son Ishmael built for worship of the One God and which had by then become filled with idols. He destroyed the idols and images, cleansed and reconsecrated the House to God.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 18-19.

Moreover, what left the worldwide audience of the Islamic call utterly armless and won their hearts to Islam without resistance was the fact that the Muslims really practiced what they taught. There was no splitting of personality, no double conscience, no hypocrisy, no racist inequality however camouflaged. The Muslim readily intermarried with the citizens of other lands even before their conversion to Islam, a measure which raised the vanquished to the status of in-laws of the conqueror. Muslim rationalism and pragmatism knew few bounds, as Muslims pursued knowledge and wisdom at the feet of non-Muslim masters without shame or self-conceit. They paid double attention to prove their faith true, that is, that Islam indeed gives its adherents two happinesses, here and in the hereafter. (Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:201)

This avid pursuit of the two happinesses resulted in worldly wisdom and success for the Muslims as well as moral felicity. It caused Muslim science, engineering, arts and letters to prosper and flourish; their empire to succeed; and their moral record to remain, on the whole impeccable. This instilled in the hearts of non-Muslims a deep sense of respect and admiration for Islam's followers, and a yearning to emulate or join them. When a decision to join was voiced by any non-Muslim, of however lowly an origin or status, to enter Islam, he was instantly raised to the highest level, declared a brother to all the believers, intermarried with them, and received with open arms in genuine brotherhood. For these reasons, the state income from the jizyah, the poll tax all able, lay, adult, male non-Muslims paid to the Islamic state in lieu of the zakah tax and military service imposed on all Muslims, dwindled in the first fifty years after the conquests from numerous

millions of dinars to a trifle—because of these massive conversions to Islam!

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 20-21.

## Muslim Religious Life

*Islam is made up of five important religious pillars derived from the Qur'an and practiced unanimously around the Muslim world: the shahadah (confession of faith), salah (worship, prayer), zakah (wealth sharing), sawm (fasting) and hajj (pilgrimage). This chapter comprises the definitions and the meanings of these main pillars that make up the house of Islam. It also delves into the significance of the Qur'an and certain important events in the life of Prophet Muḥammad as celebrated by the Muslims.*

### **The Shahadah (Confession of Faith)**

The Muslim confesses that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the Prophet of God. This confession is called *shahadah* (witness). It is not only his legal passport into the Muslim community; it is the quintessence of his faith and expression of his identity, which he recites many times a day on many different occasions. Besides the principles its first half implies (justification by works, humility and submission to God, defiance of tyrants and

other Gods, vicegerency of man on earth and self-fulfillment ...), the *shahadah* asserts the prophethood of Muḥammad. This means that the witness accepts what Muḥammad has conveyed from Heaven as truly what God has sent down. These revelations collected together in the order the Prophet himself has directed them to be recited, constitute the Holy Qur'an, the scripture of Islam. To witness that Muḥammad is the Prophet of God is tantamount to witnessing that the Qur'an is the holy word of God, complete, verbatim and in the order it has been collected; that its commandments and directives are normative, incumbent on the Muslim as God's ever-present pronouncement.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 25.

### **The Qur'an as an *Ipissima Verba* Text**

Believing that he is reciting the *ipissima verba* (the exact language) of God, the Muslim gave his recitation and his copying of the Qur'anic text absolutely the greatest care. Even the very act of worship, the formal prayer, which may not be interrupted for any reason—not even by a threat to the worshipper's security—because in prayer the Muslim is supposed to stand in the presence of God, may be interrupted and the worship or leader corrected aloud by anyone listening, whenever a fault occurs in the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Finally, at the very time Caliph 'Uthman (644-656 C.E.) was collecting and promulgating the present text of the Qur'an as a book, internal strife and contest for power split the community asunder. For decades and centuries since, the factions continued their

bloody strife, each justifying its case with arguments and quotations from the Holy Book. Never has anyone claimed or accused the other of tampering with the text. This was a final test of fire which the Qur'anic text has passed with flying colors. That is why Sir William Muir reported von Hammer's scholarly judgment approvingly that, "we [scholars] are as certain that the Qur'an is the historical word of Muḥammad as the Muslim is certain it is the word of God."

This is why Islam never had a religious synod or council or church empowered with the right of *magisterium*, the right to make *ex cathedra* pronouncements about Islam. In Islam, religious truth is a matter of argument and conviction, a cause in which everybody is entitled to contend and everybody is entitled to convince and be convinced. To witness that Muḥammad is the Prophet of God means in final analysis that one is convinced of the truth and viability of the claim that religious truth is critical, arguable and self-convincing. This categorically affects the first part of the *shahadah*, namely, "There is no god but God." It tells us that this is a rational claim; and we can convince ourselves of its truth neither by authority nor coercion. We have to reason, to think and consider all the evidence, in seriousness and responsibility. Even if we were tentatively to deny it, we can do so only under the proviso that truth is possible to know, that it is, like God, one and not many. But isn't God the truth?

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 26-28.

**Salah (Worship, Prayer)**

*Salah* is preceded by ablution. This is both real and symbolic, and both levels of meaning are required in Islam. The Muslim may not approach the divine Presence, as he does in *salah*, with a dirty body or appearance. Just as the place where he prays is required to be clean (and hence the ubiquitous “prayer” rug throughout the world of Islam, so his clothing and body must be equally clean. Soiled clothes have to be changed. Hands, mouth and teeth, nose, face, head, neck and ears, arms to the elbows and feet to the ankle, have to be washed in clean, preferably running, water. The whole operation must be preceded with a silent declaration of intention to oneself that one is entering into it for the sake of God.

*Salah* can be performed anywhere; for wherever the Muslim stands, there is God present. No ground is holy; and the mosque is only a place dedicated for worship, but not “consecrated.” *Salah* can be performed by the worshipper alone, since there is no sacrament and no priesthood in Islam. Performing it with one’s fellows is desirable, not obligatory; but obligatory is the Muslim’s performance of congregational *salah* on Friday (*jum’ah*). The congregational *salah* is led by an imam (leader) whose function is to synchronize the movements of beginning and ending, of genuflection and prostration. Any Muslim may lead the *salah*, provided his recitation of the Qur’an is correct. On Friday, the imam delivers a *khutbah* (sermon), in addition to these duties. The subject of the sermon should be a living issue in Muslim life; and the imam should try to relate the relevant passages of the Qur’an and Hadith to the issue at hand.

*Salah* is a discipline. Its ablution, its form, its movement, timing and number of genuflections and prostrations—all these constitute exercises in self-attunement to the call of God. The Qur'an says that *salah* is futile unless it conduces to moral action. The fact is that *salah* properly performed does conduce to moral action and self-exertion in the greater cause, the cause of God. It does not only remind man of God. For its duration, five times a day, it causes man to live for a time face to face, as it were, with his Lord, Master and Creator. There can be no greater or more direct route to righteousness.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 29-31.

### ***Zakah* (Wealth Sharing)**

Literally, *zakah* means “the sweetening.” The idea it expresses is that it consists in justification, or making *halal* (legitimate, innocent, good) that which it is supposed to affect. The term can be used with a human being as object, in which case it means recommendation or acclamation. When used with wealth as its object—and that is the greater usage—it means making that wealth just, legitimate, innocent, good and worthy. Obviously, the worth *zakah* adds to wealth is not utilitarian, but moral.

Thus, Islam sought to preserve the moral value of charity, and to add to it the equally moral value of wealth-sharing or *zakah*. Its purpose was dual: to convince the wealthy that the title to his very wealth is mitigated by the title of his fellow man to life and subsistence, and to assure the needy that his fellow men will not passively see him suffer his misfortune. A bond of humanity, of fellowship, of

brotherhood binds both the wealthy and the poor together. The Prophet said, “Men are like the organs of a body. When an organ suffers the whole body responds to repel the cause of suffering.” The Qur’an went as far as to quote the consciousness of the need for altruistic self-exertion with religion itself.

*“Who is the denier of religion itself? It is he who repulses the orphan, who does not enjoin the feeding of the poor. Woe to those who observe the rituals of religion but are insensitive to the moral side of those rituals, and hence to the need of the miserable for assistance”*

Qur’an, al-Mā’un 107:1-7

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 32, 34.

### **Sawm (Fasting)**

Long before Islam, the month of Ramadan was regarded by the Arabs a holy month. Its occasion imposed upon them the proscription of wax and hunting, and brought about an uninterrupted peace during which travel and movement of goods across the desert were safe from attack by anyone or tribe. The Arabs reckoned Ramadan as the month of spiritual stocktaking. Throughout its duration, they were especially keen to please, to settle old debts and disputes, to do good to their neighbors. The more morally sensitive natures among them underwent a retreat within the temple, or into their homes, in order not to disturb their concentration and meditation. Before his commission as Prophet Muḥammad was in the habit of retreating during

Ramadan to Hira', a cave outside of Makkah, where he would spend several days in meditation. His wife used to send him a daily provision with a servant, knowing that her husband was devoting himself exclusively to worship.

Self-discipline through fasting is a religiously novel idea. Food and sex, which are the pivotal instincts of life, and whose satisfaction is a capital requirement of any social order, are precisely the most sensitive areas of human life. No threat to any other area could be more central or dangerous, more prone to alert man's consciousness in full, except the threat of death itself. Prohibition of food and sex does constitute such threat, the former to individual life and the latter to group life. Deliberate abstinence from food and sex stirs up the consciousness of imminent death to both the individual and the group, and provides ample opportunity to mobilize consciousness and launch it into combat, in defense of life.

For these reasons, Islam looks upon fasting as the best exercise in the art of self-mastery and discipline. To make the exercise pedagogically fruitful, Islam prescribed that the fast be broken promptly at sunset, even before the performance of the sunset salt. That is why Islam regarded every day in Ramadan as a fresh exercise or trial which, if carried successfully to sunset, may be ended with celebration, food and joy, that the abstinence and hence the exercise—may be started all over again at dawn, the next day. A little indulgence at night, the Legislator seems to have thought, might even make the daytime abstinence more effective as an exercise in self-mastery than continuous denial which can quickly become habitual and hence of diluted effect. The alternation of abstinence and indulgence every day and night is far more forceful and

effective.

This philosophy of fasting in Islam illustrates Islam's humanism and world-affirmation. Fasting, the art of self-denial par excellence, practiced by the ascetics of all religions, has here been transformed into an instrument of self-mastery, the better to conduct human life in its will and striving for the world and for life, but raised to higher levels of nobility and righteousness. The bitterness of denial, the morbidity of self-mortification, the antagonism to life, to space, to time and this world of men and women, of food and sex, are all wiped out in the Islamic experience. From his fast, the Muslim emerges refined and cleansed, the better to immerse himself in the discharge of his vicegerency in God's creation.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 35-39.

### ***Hajj (Pilgrimage)***

Since the pilgrim's affirmation of his recognition of God's Creatorship is at once his affirmation of all men's creatureliness and hence equality before God, the pilgrimage is the greatest and most eloquent embodiment of Islam's egalitarianism and universalism. Presently, every year nearly 2 million Muslims perform the pilgrimage. 1,432 times since Muḥammad's farewell pilgrimage, Muslims have gathered for the same rituals from the four corners of the earth. Here, in their naked human creatureliness before God, Muslims come from all races, classes, cultures, peoples, ways of life to reaffirm and renew their obedient and affirmative response to God's call. No religious event anywhere, has ever been so spectacular as

Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah. None has attracted as many people; and none has expressed its religious meanings so obviously and so successfully. It was this sight that convinced Malcolm X that his black racialism was not the answer to white racialism; that a black identity asserting itself in contradistinction from Anglo-Saxon Christianity remained empty until it included the positive submission to God and to His will, to the Shari‘ah (law).

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 42.

### **The Prophet’s Birthday**

The humanness of Muḥammad is not a drawback, but an enhancement of his great merit. As a human, he received the revelation of God; and as a human he conveyed it to mankind. As a human, he understood the revelation, interpreted and exemplified it in his life. The revelation being the will of God. Muḥammad’s career would not be instructive had he been divine. Men would then have to struggle with the translation of divine conduct into something humanly possible, capable of human actualization. The preservation of Muḥammad’s humanity is the making normative of his actualization of the religious and moral imperative. For this, the Muslim is ever so grateful. Ambiguity and error have been man’s most pernicious religious enemies. God has always been known by man, from Adam down. He has always recognized something he called “religion” or “morality,” an “ought” which he regarded worthy of actualizing and being. But ever did he stumble and struggle and miss the exact application of this divine ought to ease his day to day

problems!

Muḥammad was not therefore merely the messenger who conveyed the message of his Lord verbatim. He concretized, particularized, specified and prescriptivized the divine message. God has prepared him for the task, and his people never knew of a single flaw in his character. That is why God said in the Qur'an that in Muḥammad's conduct stands par excellence the example for Muslim emulation. Two singular merits are therefore his by divine arrangement, namely, verbatim delivery of the message and its concretization in life. Both meanings are remembered, articulated de novo, and celebrated on his birthday.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 45, 47.

### **The *Hijrah***

It was 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph (12-22 AH/634-644 CE) who established the Islamic calendar as beginning on the day of the Prophet's Hijrah (July 16, 622 C.E.), *i.e.*, his emigration to Madinah. The reasoning was precise and clear. Islam was not only a divine dispensation, nor one to be observed merely by man as an individual person, but one to constitute total guidance for the community, the state and world order. It is meant to be an ideology for a comprehensive movement issuing from Makkah and enveloping the earth and mankind. When did it launch itself on this cosmic career? Not on Muḥammad's birthday! Nor on the first day of revelation when the Prophet himself was not yet quite sure of what was happening! Nor on the emigration of some of the Prophet's companions to Ethiopia, for their flight was one of

refugees! But on the emigration of the Prophet, or really the day after, when he proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic state and launched Islam as a world movement and a cosmic mission.

So with religion as such, in its totality. Islam is not a personalist, subjective religion like Christianity had been understood to be in the majority of cases over most of its twenty centuries of history. It is, rather, a mobilization of man to enter history, to interfere in its processes, to reorient its forces and therewith, men and nature, toward rekneading the cosmos and remolding it after the pattern God has revealed. The Muslim sees his vocation precisely in this: to enter history and therein to reshape the world.

All this is implicit in the Muslim's celebration of the Hijrah. It is a reminder to him of another year past and another to begin. It is a moment of stocktaking, not in the domain of personal life, but in that of public life where the subject is Islam as world movement, as world state. How close is the world movement the Prophet had launched in Madinah to realizing its God-given objective? How fax is it from including and mobilizing humanity? From transforming that humanity into monuments of genius, heroism and saintliness? From transforming nature into paradise?

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 51-52.

***Isra' and Mi'raj***

*Isra' and Mi'raj* celebrates this discovery by Islam of itself as one with Judaism and Christianity, represented in the story by Jerusalem which the Prophet has visited miraculously in a single night's journey, and by his discourse with the prophets of God when he was lifted from Jerusalem to Heaven on that same night. Obviously, a night journey to any distant city would have been equally miraculous. Heaven could, on the other hand, be reached from any locality on earth. Why then was Jerusalem chosen? Evidently because that city was the religious capital of Judaism and Christianity, and the abode of the prophets, with which Islam sought to identify itself. Already, the Muslims were turning north to Jerusalem in prayer.

The tradition has brought down the details of the event as told by the Prophet. He was awakened at night by the angel who on many earlier occasions had brought down the revelation to him. The angel brought to him a special steed which he mounted. The steed then flew across space, not without enabling the Prophet to recognize the travelers on the road and their caravans. Once in Jerusalem, the Prophet tethered his steed to the "wailing wall" adjoining al-Aqsa and from the rock now under "the Dome of the Rock" ascended to heaven where he led all the Prophets assembled to meet him, in prayer and praise to God. God instructed His Prophet to institute *salah* in Islam. He was then taken on a tour of heaven and hell, Muslim reports of which have become the source for many romantic and speculative accounts of Heaven in Islam and the West. We should note here that Dante's *Divina Comedia* was a Christian adaptation of this Muslim theme.

In celebrating Isra' and Mi'raj Muslims celebrate the great unity of all the Prophets, and consequently, of all the religions, notably those associated with Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. A very special place among the Prophets is accorded to Abraham, Moses and Jesus, founders of the three main streams of the Semitic family of religions.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 55-56.

## The Muslim Family

*Islam is well known for its stress on the importance of family as the basis of society, while it is much scorned by the uninformed for its treatment of women. Professor al Faruqi succinctly clarifies the status of woman and family in the Qur'an, thereby highlighting the yardstick by which one must measure the difference between the teaching and practice concerning the status of family and woman in Muslim societies around the world.*

### **Woman**

Woman, in Islam, is not the source of evil. She did not tempt Adam; nor did the devil, or death, whether physical or moral come to the world through her. The Qur'anic story of Adam and Eve does not even mention Eve in the act of disobedience. The disobedient act was not sexual; nor did it have anything to do with the "tree of knowledge." Pursuit of knowledge is in Islam a paramount duty, not an evil. The Qur'an does say that both Adam and Eve were chased out of Paradise; but it adds that they repented and that God had forgiven them. Hence, there is no "fall" in

Islam, and no resultant “original sin” in any form. St. Paul’s condemnation of woman as the vehicle through which death’) came into the world, whether physical or moral, is totally absent in Islam.

Woman, therefore, is innocent. She is a positive good, a consoler, a source of happiness and fulfillment to man, as man is to her. For Muslims sex is no problem at all; it is natural like food and drink, growth and death. It is God-created, God-blessed, God-instituted. It is not ridden with guilt; but, like woman herself, innocent. Indeed, sex is highly desirable. The Qur’an has prohibited celibacy for His sake, and the Prophet has ennobled marriage by making it his sunnah, or example, and hence normative for every Muslim male and female. Like everything else pertinent to life on earth, Islam made sexual gratification of men and women a piece of piety, of virtue and felicity.

Since woman is no more a chattel but a full legal personality, sexual intercourse with her cannot be a random affair but must be done, first with her consent, and second in responsibility. The latter does not fall only upon man, but upon woman as well. Sexual promiscuity is condemned vehemently because, by definition it is a violation of responsibility by either party.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 59.

## Marriage

Marriage in Islam is not a sacrament. It is not a bond made in heaven, but right here on earth. Like all human bonds it is dissoluble. It is a pledge or contract by which the partners regulate their mutual relations. Like any other contract, it has a few constituents, or necessary provisions. If these are satisfied, the contract may contain any other provisions the two partners agree to include therein. There must be two adults consenting in total freedom to marry each other. The minor may be married by his or her parents but he or she has the full right, upon reaching adulthood, to consummate the marriage contract or to reject it. Even if the marriage had already been consummated, Islam gives the right to either partner, upon reaching adulthood, to dissolve it if they wish.

Islam does permit divorce. Divorce can take place by solemn repudiation by the husband. But the law requires that such repudiation be made three times to be effective. It demands that after the first and second repudiations, marriage counseling and arbitration by near relatives or others nominated by the husband and wife deal with the dispute and restore domestic harmony. On the third repudiation, divorce becomes final, though God called it "most hateful." In order to prevent entering into it nonchalantly and irresponsibly by the husband, Islam decreed that no man may take back in marriage his wife whom he had divorced unless that woman had married another man and been divorced by him. Such marriage constitutes a terrible humiliation for both; and its scepter acts as a second deterrent, after the second dowry. A wife may divorce her husband by court decision, not by repudiation. In this case she would have to establish in court one of the

legal reasons justifying divorce such as contagious sickness, prolonged absence, impotence, cruelty, adultery etc. A divorce granted by the court is always final.

Islam also permits polygyny. A man may marry more than one wife. There are situations in personal human affairs where the best solution may well be a polygynous arrangement. And there may be situations in human society where an excess of women over men, where widowed or divorced women, oft with child and devoid of support, would find polygynous arrangements far more conducive to happiness than fending on their own. The plural marriages of the Prophet in Madinah, after the death of his first wife who gave him all his children and kept him happy for over a quarter of a century, were of this kind. A refugee widow with five children whom nobody wanted, a divorced wife of a former slave whom everybody was too proud to approach, an old matron whose relatives the Prophet wanted to reconcile, etc. such were the women he married in his later life. Having given woman full legal personality and all civil rights, having endowed her with the full freedom to dictate the terms of her marriage, and having provided her with an “insurance policy” against divorce whose “blank lines” she alone would fill, Islam may well be called the best “friend” woman ever had.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 61-63.

## The Life Mission of a Muslim

*The life mission of a Muslim is to live in harmony with nature and living a balanced way of life that leads to happiness and justice. The knowledge and praxis of human felicity or happiness is attained through pursuing the path of knowledge, scientific investigation and experimentation.*

The human being as a *Khalifah* as an agent has the ability to design or redesignable nature to serve man's happiness and lead to his felicity. Islam is not an enemy of nature. The purpose of knowledge in Islam is to uncover the secrets and laws of nature through scientific investigation and experimentation.

Secondly, from the perspective of socio-economic justice Islam is against the hoarding of wealth. Islam favors a market system where the combined forces of nature, of human labor and accumulated science and wealth may be used to the full possible extent without harm to the others. Islam lays stress on work and is anti-poverty, the human is responsible for his/her own poverty, yet if one suffers from Islam offers a way of compassion and charity to help uplift

the poor and the needy out of poverty to become self-reliance.

### **The Muslim Worker-Stewardship of Nature**

It has been said earlier that man was created to be God's *khalifah* or vicegerent on earth; that this means that he is expected to transform the world from what it is into what it ought to be. We also said that the will of God in nature is being fulfilled necessarily through the workings of natural law. Finally, let us remember that in the Qur'an, God declared everything in creation is designed and/or redesignable to serve man's happiness and lead to his felicity.

From this it follows that nature is not an enemy. It is not a demonic force challenging man and inciting him to conquer and subdue it. Such a view belongs to those religions whose cosmogonies make the world itself a god, whether good or bad and more often the latter. Such gods, or chthonic forces, must be appeased, if not subdued or manipulated so as to work for man's advantage. Islam regards nature as inert and neutral, a great positive blessing at best, whose joys are advance payments on the rewards of Paradise. It is an orderly cosmos created by God as the theater where man is to do his good deeds, perfectly fitted and equipped by the Creator according to the best measurement, the best form, the best pattern, and is hence absolutely free of any flaws.

Muslims have looked upon nature, following these principles, as an open book, a second revelation from God, which anybody could read who has cultivated the requisite knowledge and discipline. The Qur'an, they maintained is

easier to read. Its statement of the will of God is direct and eloquent. Nature, on the other hand has to be “treated” to uncover her secret, her law, by scientific investigation and experimentation. But with some preparation, its truth is as public as that of the Qur’an.

Nature, we may conclude, is pliable and capable of change. Man is capable to steward its forms to what ought to be. Agriculture, horticulture, engineering and architecture, in short, civilization itself consists precisely in such stewardship. But no alteration performed in vengeance or resentment against nature or without responsibility to the Creator of nature, can remain innocent for long. For if nature is not used as a gift from God given for a moral purpose, its abuse is certain. If the moral purpose of God is denied, may it not be abused? raped, as modern man has done? In Islam, no such souring of the quest or usufruct of nature is possible. For, for the Muslim, the secret working of nature is God’s pattern and will; and the utility of nature is a divine gift meant solely for fulfillment of the moral law.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 68, 70-71.

## Wealth

There is no limit in Islam to man’s usufruct of nature except the limits of the moral law. This law prohibits such use of nature as may hurt the neighbor which the universalism of Islam identifies with all men present and future. Within the limits of this requirement, man may draw from nature as much as he desires. This means that Islam favors a market system where the combined forces of nature, of human labor and accumulated science and

wealth may be used to the full possible extent without harm to the others. Islam is definitely anti-poverty, which it declares to be the work of the devil. Man is responsible for his poverty, though when he suffers from poverty he is worthy of compassion and charity.

Islam is against the hoarding of wealth. To discourage it, it has instituted the zakah, which if consistently applied to a hoarded wealth, would “eat it up” in one generation, the years needed for a tax of 22 per cent to exhaust the stationary capital. Such wealth ought to be in production, *i.e.*, invested in productive undertakings which increase the general wealth of mankind, in enterprises which provide jobs for more people and bring the earth closer to paradise. To ply wealth back into production is one of the good effects of zakah. To insure this fructification of wealth and hence more employment and more production of real wealth, *i.e.*, of goods and services, Islam prohibits interest. Interest implies the accumulation of profit without taking risk, this being carried entirely by the borrower. In a sense, the lender too is commonly said to take a risk in lending his money.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 72-74.

## The Islamic World Order—*Pax Islamica*

*The world of Islam is a world of pax Islamica or the ummah in which all human beings constitute a fraternity irrespective of their racial origins, religions or nationalities enjoy equal status. This is best illustrated in the model city polity of Madinah established by Prophet Muḥammad during his own lifetime, in which the rights of each person and community were based on a unanimously agreed Mithaq al-Madinah (Constitution of Madinah). It flowered into the first example of Convivencia—peaceful coexistence between Muslims, Christians and Jews, including the non-Muslim tribes.*

*The path toward the revival of pax Islamica lies through islah (reform or learning) from the religious, social, economic and political practices of the first three generations of Muslims and the later scholars of Islam, which includes the imams of all the madhahib (schools of jurisprudence) and the Muslim reformers of the modern age.*

## **The Universal Brotherhood under the Law**

Islamic universalism holds all human beings to be entitled by nature to full membership of any human corporate body. For every one is at once subject and object of the one and same moral law. The unity of God is inseparable from the unity of His will which is the moral law. Under this one law, Islam seeks to rally the whole of mankind on equal terms. It does not have nor tolerates any one to hold a doctrine of election. Nobody, it asserts, has been predestined to any station. Such would contradict the moral nature of man and the divine plan which is the purpose of creation, namely, that man—every man—may fulfill the moral law and achieve felicity. Nor does Islam approve of any “doctrine of the remnant” which affirms that although some or most of the members of an ethnic group may do wrong, go astray or fall off from the state of election, there will always be a remnant that will not, and thus, will justify the ethnic group remaining the elect it claims to be.

This universalism of Islam does not preclude it from differentiating between human beings on the basis of their moral endeavor and achievement. Such would be equally contrary to the moral law which assigns “height” or “moral worth” in direct proportion to men’s moral accomplishment. Indeed, such discrimination is not only well founded and tolerable, it is obligatory. This is what it means to honor the man of knowledge above the ignorant, the wise above the foolish, the virtuous above the vicious, the pious above the atheist or rebel, the just, loving and merciful neighbor above the unjust, hating, resentful etc. Such discrimination is not only legitimate; it has the

positive quality of contributing to general moral felicity by enticing men to excel in the deed. To excel in the deed is the purpose of creation itself. It is all that matters.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 77-78.

### **The Islamic State and the *Pax Islamica***

The Islamic state derives its constitution from the Covenant of Madinah which the Prophet granted to the city upon his emigration thither in 622 CE. The spirit of that covenant determined every Islamic state in history. It provided that the Muslims, regardless of their origins (they belonged to different tribes and nations) are one *ummah*. That is to say, they constitute one corporate entity regulated by Islamic law. It has its own institutions, courts of law, schools for the education of its children in contradistinction from all others. The *ummah's* governance with a view to self-realization, to the full measure of its religion, its genius, its laws, its ethic and culture is guaranteed. So is its perpetuity. For an *ummah* ought to have the freedom to pass on to its offspring its legacy of religion and culture whole, if not enriched. The *ummah*, then, by definition, is a community living up to its own ideals, or at least seeking to do so in perfect freedom.

Besides recognizing and establishing the Muslims as an *ummah*, and hence wiping out their racial and tribal differences with the universalism of Islam, the Covenant of Madinah recognized and established the Jews as another *ummah*, on equal par with the Muslim *ummah*. They too constitute a community that ought to be given full freedom

to realize itself according to its own legacy and genius. It should have its religion, social institutions, its own laws and courts to administer them, its own language and culture, its own ambiance and schools in which to bring up its children according to its own genius. It should enjoy all that is necessary to perpetuate itself.

The Islamic state is therefore not really a state but a world order, a *pax Islamica* with a government, a court, a constitution and an army, a sort of “United Nations” with “body” and “teeth.” To enter it is to decide on peaceful intercourse with one’s fellow humans and to renounce war between the *ummahs* once and for all. Evidently, not to enter it, to remain outside of it, is to assert the contrary; and hence to mean either national apartheid (isolation) or war and aggression. That is why Muslim theorists have called the Islamic state “the House of Peace,” a real world order or *pax Islamica*.

Force is not to be in the hands of any *ummah*, not even the Muslim *ummah*. It is to be used for putting down rebellion within any *ummah* against its established institutions and authority; to restore to any *ummah* any rights, privileges or properties which any other *ummah* might have violated; and finally, to defend the world order itself against its enemies. No other use of power is legitimate. Truly, then, the world order Islam envisages is an ideal order of national and international relations, one which constitutes the only answer to the continuing malaise of the world situation. By comparison to it, a world peace based on atomic terror, on the balance of power or on the imperial tyranny of any *ummah* over the others, is nothing short of Satanic.

The army of the Islamic state is Muslim since the duty of Jihad or defensive war, is a religious duty falling on Muslims alone. Others may join if they wish to, in which case they would be exempted from the *jizyah*, and would be treated in exactly the same manner as Muslims. But they may not be conscripted by the government into military service. Their enlistment has to be entirely voluntary.

The Islamic state does not have to be a monolithic system where one and only one law, style of living, culture, religion and worldview obtain. This requirement has been relegated to the *ummah*, and it is the latter which acculturates, integrates and assimilates all elements into the Islamic unit and preserves its Islamic existence. Other *ummahs* render the same services to their non-Islamic members. That is why the Islamic state can afford to be liberal and pluralistic. In fact, its constitution is the only one which enables it to be genuinely pluralistic, without attempt on its part to wipe out the differences between the *ummahs* under the pretext of “national integration” and “national unity.”

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 80, 83-84.

## Islamic Culture

The system within the *ummah* is quite monolithic, but with built-in mechanisms for creative self-renewal and reform. Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It is relevant for every aspect of life, for every deed. It is no wonder then that the *ummah* would make itself felt in all walks of personal and public (corporate) life. Islam seeks to put itself in evidence in the style of life, at home, in the public building, on the street, in the institutions, the city—everywhere.

Islam teaches that God is indeed our Lord and Master. Consciousness of Him is the first and last requisite. For to know Him as God, *i.e.*, as Creator, Lord and Master, as end of everything is more than half the battle of existence and well-being. To know God as God is to love and honor Him; it is to lay oneself open to determination by His will. For only that is *islam* (submission). It is natural therefore that awareness of God be the objective of every endeavor; that the Muslim surround himself with all that reminds him of God; that within the *ummah*, everything be theocentric, God-oriented.

Naturalism, or the perception of ultimate reality in nature, the assumption that nature is its own norm and measure, that the good, the true and the beautiful are in and of nature, is the antithesis of Islam. Islam resists taking nature for God and thus reducing His transcendence. Nature is the strongest contender for the place of God. Its position has been ever rising in the consciousness of western man since the Renaissance which in this sense, may be said to have dethroned God. Instead of God being the end and measure of all things, it installed man, as crown of nature; for he, it deemed, was the one destined to play the role of “measure unto all things.”

It is therefore not by accident that the Muslim surrounds himself with objects of art which all tell the same theme: “There is no god but God,” whether discursively through calligraphy, or aesthetically (*i.e.*, as given to sense) through the Arabesque. His house, its facade, location, skyline, floor plan, interior and exterior decoration, all emphatically deny nature saying, as it were, nothing in nature is God or even a vehicle for God. Where they have been invested with

Islamic beauty and hence, with Arabesque designs generating a momentum toward infinity, their expressiveness becomes all the more eloquent. What the Muslim loves to hear, likewise, be it instrumental or vocal music, the chanting of the Qur'an or the recitation of poetry, embody the same principles and express the same vision of the one transcendent God. Calligraphy, the supreme art of Islam, doubles its effect by adding to the sensory expression of infinity and inexpressibility of transcendent reality, by its Arabesque undulating patterns of lines and decoration, the direct discursive expression of God, His will and deeds, and man's place in the divine order of creation.

That is why the mosque, the supreme public expression of Islam, is an empty building, whose walls deny mass, weight, opaqueness and hence enclosure of space. Instead of enclosure, the mosque walls give the airy feeling of transparent screens of floating patterns which join the mosque to infinite space. The carpet which covers its floor, the capital which heads its pillar, the decorated panel into which all its surfaces are covered whether in wood, masonry, stucco or carved marble, the crenellated skyline—everything expresses the same theme of infinity and transcendence with one voice. Lastly, the bands, panels and rosettes of Arabic calligraphy reproducing verses from the Qur'an, as the chanting of the Qur'an usually reverberating between its walls, repeat the same theme explicitly and immediately.

Transcendence, or Ultimate Reality, namely Allah, touches every aspect of the Muslims life, as it pervades every product of his culture, as it dominates every corner of his

consciousness. Both he and the modern western Christian are obsessed with great obsessions: the latter is obsessed with God-in-man, the Muslim is obsessed with God-in-God alone.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 86-87, 89-90.

Underlying and undergirding all manifestations of culture and religion in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia was a core of first principles. Because they determined all culture and religion, these principles may properly be regarded as the base from which emerged all manifestations of the religious phenomenon in the Arab theatre. These first principles are four: First: Reality is dual and consists of two utterly distinct and separate beings, Creator or God, and creature or nature. The former is absolute and transcendent; the latter relative and phenomenal. Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece on one side, and Hinduism and Taoism on the other, identified God with nature and properly deserved description as idolatrous. While recognizing God as creator and transcendent, ancient Arabs (Semites) associated with Him many of His creatures and they were rightly called “Associationists” (*mushrikun*). But many others resisted such aberration and stood firmly behind the absolute unity and transcendence of the divine Being. These were the ancient *hanifs* who served as a springboard for the religious reform (revelation) of the succeeding cycle.

Second: God, the Creator, communicates with His creatures through revelation. The content of revelation is the Law, or His will, which is the ought-to-be and ought-to-do of the creature. If the creature was created, it must

have been so for a purpose entertained by its Creator. This purpose cannot be anything but the fulfillment of His will and this must be built into the creature precisely because it is creature.

Third: The creature would not be a creation of the purposive Creator if it were impossible for it to fulfill the Creator's purpose from its creation. Since it is His creature, He must have built into it the capacity to realize His purpose and placed it in a theatre—the universe—which is equally His creation and where such fulfillment is indeed possible. Both the creature and its environment must in themselves be good, for the Creator cannot be conceived to have started the world in deficiency, weakness or with an ulterior motive which assumes Him to be in debt or liability to any other being.

Fourth: Since all creatures have the will of their Creator which is His purpose and their *raison d'être* embedded within them, they must be equipped with the ontological efficacy required for its fulfillment. This efficacy constitutes the laws of nature, whose validity is universal but whose necessity cannot go beyond or override the divine will.

These four principles are the core and essence of Arab (Semitic) religiosity, of Arab (Semitic) *Ur-Religion*, clearly discernible in every moment in the Arab (Semitic) Stream and every great movement that sprang from it. It is what united all these moments and movements into one stream, and distinguished the stream as a whole from other streams, notably the Ancient Egyptian, the Indian and the Chinese. It is the base which unites Judaism, Christianity and Islam and makes of them one great movement in human (global) history, despite all their differences. For

these are indeed the work of history, of provincial and particularistic determinants which the core can and should overarch, and in terms of which all of them may and should be composed.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 214-215.

## Islamic History

Islam was born in Arabia. In a sense it had to. Being the crystallization of ancient Mesopotamian (Semitic) religion and wisdom, it could be reborn only in Arabia for two reasons. First, Arabia was the only corner of the ancient world which continued the legacy without falling under the influence of Egyptian, Greek and Zoroastrian culture. Whatever influence of this kind had reached Arabia was slight and in the periphery only, in Petra and Palmyra in the north, in Yemen in the south. The center remained unaffected.

Secondly, whatever was left of the Mesopotamian legacy in Arabia was assisted, bolstered and preserved not so much in the religious practices of the Pre-Islamic Arabs, but in their language and poetry. Here, their consciousness of transcendence was mirrored unconsciously. Their language was itself an Arabesque in its lexicography, syntax, grammar and literary aesthetics. Their poetry was the *non plus ultra* of symmetry, repetition, nondevelopment and momentum long before Islam. Nothing could have fitted the Islamic message better than the Arabic literary medium. Perfect correspondence between them is the inevitable conclusion of any student with the minimum

perceptiveness. Nowhere else was any such consciousness mirrored in any language. When Islam came, it built its whole case on the literary sublime character of its revelations—the medium which the Arabs (and only the Arabs) could readily and perfectly appreciate. They knew what is and what is not miraculous or sublime in that medium. Even the enemies of Islam among the Makkans immediately recognized the *mysterium* in the revelation of Muḥammad. Their vested interests and shock delayed them, but only for a very short while, in acclaiming it as divine.

The religious vision of Islam was complete in the revelation, the Qur'an. That is why Islam does not have a religious history, that is a history of its formation as a religion. Such "history" is limited to the biography of the Prophet, the last 22 or so years of his life during which the revelation of the Qur'an was completed. Caught by this vision of Islam, the Muslims plunged themselves into implementation and concretization, into translating the normative principles of Islam into prescriptive directions for human conduct, in developing and establishing a viable methodology for such translation. It is here on this front that Islamic genius poured itself forth. In the realms of personal status, procedure, torts and contracts, international relations, crime and punishment, the *Shari'ah* (Islamic law) remains to this day absolutely without parallel, and its bases in juristic thought unmatched.

Being avidly anxious to discover the will of God in nature, the Muslims quickly learned and assimilated the legacy of antiquity and moved far beyond it. Al-Biruni measured the earth's perimeter within inches of the most exact measurements of our day; Ibn Sina's *Canon of Medicine*

and al-Razi's *Ad Almansorem* and *On Small Pox and Measles* remained the standard textbooks of the medical profession until the 18th century; Ibn al-Baytar's pharmacopia, *Simplicia*, was being printed in the main European languages as late as 1866. Arabic numerals moved arithmetic, and al-Jabr (Algebra) moved formal mathematics, to new realms of advance and achievement.

Everywhere the Qur'an was chanted in its original Arabic. Everywhere, its verses decorated every room and house and punctuated every conversation and every treatise. Everywhere, mosques, madrasahs (schools) and other public buildings were erected realizing the Arabesque in ever new forms, in marble, stucco, brick or paint. Everywhere, the aural Arabesque of the call of the *mu'adhdhin* on the minarets to the faithful to rise for the ritual prayers punctuated the day of millions. During the month of Ramadan (fasting) the whole tempo of life changed following the timing and practices of the fast. When either of the two 'Ids came, only the largest open field of the district could hold the multitudes who came in their best and new clothing to kneel and prostrate themselves together in worship of the one transcendent God, in the beautiful Arabic verses of the Qur'an.

Cities sprang under the influence of Islam which were the model of town planning, utility, cleanliness and integration. Colleges and schools, public libraries, public baths, recreation areas and gardens, running water and draining systems, to make even our modern cities poor, if not hopeless, comparisons. And all this in the 9th and 10th centuries when Europe's cities, the heirs of classical antiquity could hardly boast of one paved street, or of one public night light other than the moon.

In the eleventh century, Muslim spirituality began to take a different turn. Prodded by an over enthusiastic love of God as expressed in Arabic poetry by the famous mystical poetess Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah, converts from Gnostic Christianity and Judaism, from Upanishadic Hindu mysticism and Buddhism, began to interpret Islam in mystical terms, shifting its emphasis from the actual where the divine will is to be concretized to the spiritual as such. The bridge which connected Islam to history, to space and time, and kept the Muslim's feet on the ground, snapped. Psychic and introspective analysis took the place of legal and juristic study. Alchemy, astrology and numerology slowly replaced chemistry, astronomy and mathematics. Even the social health of the Islamic family gave way to the withdrawing, resigning surrender of the mystical brotherhood. Engagement in the affairs of society and state so expressive of the Muslim's consciousness of vicegerency was slowly abandoned for contemplative bliss and mystical experience of the individualist and personalist. The state was left to whosoever desired to grab it, and the caliphs became the puppets of powerful but fissiparous army generals. When the gathering storm arrived in the Mongol (Tatar) invasion of Genghis Khan, the Muslim World fell like a ripe plum. One after another, its jewel cities were put to the torch, and its people to death or devastation.

The fire that followed spread in many directions, China, India, Russia and South West Asia. In the latter the tide was arrested rested at 'Ayn Jalud in Palestine where Ibn Taymiyyah, the first and greatest Muslim reformer, managed to check the Mongol advance with an Egyptian army. In vain did he try many times earlier to awaken the Muslims to this peril. The forces of mysticism always

defeated him and connived with the authorities against him. Despite his military success at ‘Ayn Jalud, Ibn Taymiyyah fell again to the intrigues of the Sufis (mystics) and died in jail in Damascus.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 91-95.

### **Islamic Revival and Reform**

Ibn Taymiyyah’s hard work and death, however, were not in vain. He produced a whole library, over 300 works, in which he diagnosed the Muslim disease on every front of life. The major villain was of course mysticism which succeeded in reorienting the Muslim away from history, from the world, from reason and common sense, and delivered him to introspective meditation. Sufism dulled his realism, drew him away from society, from his business, even from his family. Instead of his pursuit of the will of God as law, Sufism taught the Muslim to run after the impossible dream of union with God in gnosis or “mystical experience.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s words were not heeded. And yet, the miracle happened. The Tatar hordes which brought the holocaust were Shamanists. In a generation or two, they were all converted to Islam, the religion and culture of the very peoples they vanquished. The conquerors settled en masse in Asia minor and, a generation later, they were ready to march again, this time under the banner of Islam. Still vibrant with the martial spirit with which they came from central Asia, the new converts to Islam now organized under the leadership of the house of ‘Uthman (hence, the name “Ottoman”), pressed ever forward in the direction of

Europe. The Byzantine and Russian Empires crumbled at their advance. Vienna was besieged by them until the last quarter of the 17th century. The Black and Caspian seas became Muslim lakes. Between Vienna and Constantinople (renamed Islampul, later corrupted to Istanbul) they planted many a Muslim community, many a Muslim city, and erected a new style of Islamic architecture on the foundations of the Byzantine.

It was only in the 18th century that their empire, the Ottoman Empire, began to decay from within for identically the same reasons which brought the downfall of the earlier Arab ('Abbasi) Empire. It was also in the 18th century that the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah revived, again mysteriously, in the very heart of Arabia, as yet untouched either by Ottoman decay or the West's ascendancy. The reform movement was led by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahab. Sufism was its *bete noire* against which it hurled its fury. On the positive side, the movement called itself *salafiyyah* (traditional). It had no object other than reestablishing the original vision of the fathers, before that vision was affected by Mysticism. Simultaneously or shortly afterwards, similar movements swept over the whole Muslim World. Western colonialism was then launched and the Muslim World fell again under alien dominion, was mercilessly fragmented and exploited, parts of it were settled by alien colonizers and their populations dispersed or were to be systematically destroyed.

Today colonialism is at an end; but not its vestiges, and influences. However, the Muslim peoples of the world are racing the clock to catch up with the rest of the world in economic and military power as well as in political awareness, unity and coordination. Their Islam remains

the strongest ideology they ever knew, ready to move them again, and the world with them, if they but open their minds to its wisdom and their hearts to its appeal.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam: Religion, Practice, Culture & World Order*, ed. Imtiyaz Yusuf (London: IIIT, 2012), 95-96.

## Islam and Christianity

*The Qur'an states,*

*“The nearest in affection to them (the Muslims) are those who say, ‘We are Christians.’ That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are free from pride. When they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears, because of the Truth they recognize”.*

Qur'an, al-Mā'idah 5:82-83

*Though Islam and Christianity share much, they also differ much, especially about the sonship and godhead/divine nature of Jesus, who, according to the Qur'an, was a prophet of God sent to the Children of Israel and not a son of God.*

*In spite of the commonness between Islam and Christianity, their relationship has been marred by unfortunate historical events, such as the Crusades, colonialism, mission and the rise of Christian Zionism.*

*In this section, Professor al Faruqi addresses the above mentioned issues including how to engage in Muslim-Christian cooperative endeavors plus themes and methodologies for Christian-Muslim dialogue.*

## **Common Bases between Islam and Christianity**

### **— Cooperative Endeavor**

There can be no cooperative endeavor without consciousness of the common base and shared purpose. This should not be restricted to the elite, if it is to bear fruit for history, but must become common heritage to all ranks of Christians and Muslims. Accordingly, the general awareness of Muslims and Christians ought to be developed, until the truthfulness of the common base and the moral desirability—nay, imperativeness—imperative endeavor are recognized. The themes of common essence should extend and necessary cooperation ought to be promoted, defended and elaborated on all mass media, as well as in learned publications. Vatican II has paved the road for some rehabilitation of the truth about Islam within the mind of Christians. Its spirit must be continued in the communications of the Christian Church to its members and to the world, which ought henceforth to carry this message of goodwill. Above all, the voices within Christendom which, as the allies of Zionism, continuously pour out a steady stream of anti-Islam, anti-Muslim and pro-Zionist propaganda that entices Christians to side with the Zionist-settler state, to reform Christian beliefs and attitudes so as to produce sympathy with that state, to reinterpret Christianity itself so as to make it better accord with the Zionist interpretation of Palestine's history, must

be stopped forthwith. Nothing is more offensive to our ears, whether Christian or Muslim, as well as to common sense and our sense of history, than the attempt by these voices and agencies to literalize (and thus to enlandize and materialize) the divine covenant ceding real estate to a race, the irrevocability of a covenant lifting a race above mankind, the blasphemous straight-jacketing of God by His own promise and His implied “doggedness” in face of the immoral conduct of His “elected people.” Nothing is more inimical to Christianity and to Islam than the tampering by these agents with Christian and Muslim understanding that Jesus was indeed the word of God, given to his virgin mother, Mary, to fulfill a divinely ordained mission on earth, namely, to liberate man from the chains of literalism, legalism, and particularism which Jewish leaders had imposed upon their people, and to open anew the gates of salvation and felicity; that he was indeed the Messiah promised by the earlier prophets. Those naive Christians who concede points to their Zionist neighbors, unwittingly undermine Christianity itself. For, if the Zionist understanding of God’s relation to the Jews is correct, the Messiahship of Jesus falls into question; and the Church cannot be the new Israel. And if, as the *Geschichtlich*-minded scholars allege, every significant idea that Jesus came with was already claimed by the rabbis, his mission would not appear as divine as Christian tradition had led Christians to believe.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 217-218.

## **The Question of Christian Colonialism**

It was Christendom, not Christianity, that was guilty of the two archenemies of the contemporary Muslim; colonialism and mission. Colonialism attacked the personal integrity of every man in the colonized territory. Through colonialism, Christendom, and not Christianity, robbed the Muslim of his liberty to express his thought, to assemble with his peers, to act in any field, including the education of himself and his own children. In many cases, it physically uprooted man from his land and dwelling and brought aliens to settle in his place. North Africa is littered with the remains of such colonial settlements, but the notorious example of the millennium is Palestine, where the human person has been trodden upon, his personal dignity and integrity torn into shreds—and he continues to be victimized before our eyes to this very day. Even his title to complain of the injustice and aggression which befell him has been denied the Palestinian, until he chose to wrest that title with blood. Christianity is opposed to all this by nature. In perpetrating such crimes, the Christian was unChristian, even if a Church prelate had blessed him or encouraged his venture.

It is morally and religiously imperative for Christians and Muslims to work together to lift this Satanic burden from its victims. Christianity is here the Muslim's true ally and friend. Against colonialism, Christianity teaches that man's personal freedom and integrity are inviolable and ought to be restored. It teaches that the works of colonialism, whether in its settler form (Palestine, the Arabian Gulf, Rhodesia, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia, Indonesia, Cyprus), or in its neocolonialist form where it acts from behind its Quislings and puppets, must be stopped, pulled down and reversed. The Christian-Muslim dialogue ought

to mobilize Christians and Muslims around the world to condemn and, where possible, to resist the colonialist acts of their governments or fellow-Christians in the name of Christianity. An unequivocal call to this effect from His Holiness the Pope would have great effect toward stirring Christian conscience to resist the Machiavellian, Satanic operations of Christendom's governments, to pool resources and concert efforts of all truthful Christians to help the victims, re-assert their rights and regain their lost dignity as humans. The individual Christian cannot absolve himself of responsibility on the grounds that his religion is personal and politics and governments are the realms of Caesar. Fortunately, Christian thought freed itself from its old extremist individualism after the Industrial Revolution. *Pacem in Terris* and *Popularum Progresso*, the Pontifical statements of 1962 and 1970, stand as great monuments of Christianity's involvement in the processes of society and history. If Christianity successfully moves man to seek justice for and safeguard the personal integrity of Christian persons in European factories and cities, that mind would function as well vis-à-vis Muslims in Asia and Africa. Otherwise, the Christian would deserve in addition to the indictment of racism that of insincerity, indeed of blasphemy.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 220-222.

### **The Question of Christian Mission**

The second front on which Christendom, and not Christianity, sinned against human integrity is that of mission. In itself mission is morally and religiously

imperative because it is the effort by man to enable other men to benefit from the supreme wisdom, the religious truth, appropriated by the missionary. It follows from the very nature of truth and religion—and hence of Christianity as much as of Islam—that it seeks to be known, to be believed in and observed by the greatest number. Mission is integral to *Ur-Religion*. Christianity and Islam are missionary par excellence to spiritual possessions because it knows them to be valid and good absolutely. The truth is always missionary; *i.e.*, it wants to be known.

As directed to Muslims, Christendom's mission has betrayed this noble ideal. The betrayal, however, is not the work of Christianity but of its human, fallible and often gullible representatives. In many instances, Christian missionaries were caught in the workings of the colonial power, and used by the latter to advantage. Where they deliberately cooperated with the colonialist and helped him achieve colonial objectives, they made themselves guilty in the eyes of Christianity as much as of Islam. After the colonial territory won its independence and repulsed the colonialist, such insincere missionary changed his garb, and returned as an expert in medicine, education, agriculture, social work or development planning. He exploited the acute need of the emergent world for such services, as well as the internal strains, dislocations and dissensions preceding and/or following national independence. In these cases, the missionary was not "seeking the Face of God." The Divine cause for him was a front, instrumental to the national politico-economic or cultural good which he deemed superior.

Unfortunately for Christianity, Christendom's missionary

effort in the Muslim World did not succeed in establishing any good intention. The inevitable connection with colonialism in the past, the persistent subversive machinations of neocolonialism at present, the fact that parts of the Muslim World, such as Palestine and the Gulf, are still subject to settler colonialism, make Christian missions in our generation utterly suspect and repugnant. This, together with the fact that the Muslim World is still largely underdeveloped, wanting in organization, national consciousness and integration, economic and political development, and is hence prone to subversion, the present missions are utterly out of tune with the realities of history and must be closed down and liquidated throughout the Muslim World. Their continued existence and activity constitute a terrible sore in Christian-Muslim understanding and cooperation. Christian mission, to be itself, will just have to postpone itself till another time. The overwhelming result of today's Christian missions in the Muslim World is what has been aptly called "the rice-Christian," a real offence against God. Those who speak for Christianity and run her missions ought to do this in order to dissociate Christianity, the religion of God, from Christendom's exploitation, abuse and blasphemy.

### **The Question of Christian Orientalism**

Christianity is also innocent of Orientalism, Christendom's effort to understand Islam and at the same time to undermine it. With the rise of European universities in the nineteenth century, many Jews, atheists and freethinkers, men at the farthest removed from Christianity, joined ranks with Christians in the study of the religion and culture of Islam. Orientalism is responsible for many

scholarly accomplishments, especially in the discovery, establishment and editing of classical Islamic texts. But as interpreter of Islam, Orientalism has only helped destroy the Muslim's confidence in Christendom. Barring rare exceptions, Orientalists had the double purpose of undermining Islam in the minds of its people and blackening its face in the minds of Christians. To achieve the first objective, Orientalism attacked the integrity of the Qur'an, the personal character of the Holy Prophet, the authenticity of the Hadith. It imputed to the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) the vile motives of vengeance, conquest for gain and power. It glorified factionalism among Muslims by defending the heresies and overemphasizing mysticism in which Islam lost its essence and became indistinguishable from other religions. Orientalists repudiated the greatness of Islamic civilization by explaining it away as a syncretistic copy of Byzantium and Persia; and, though they spared no effort to acquire, date, classify and exhibit the works of Islamic art in the museums of the West, they explained them vindictively as works produced in spite of Islam, or contemptuously as unoriginal adaptations from the pre-Islamic arts of the Muslim world. Whereas all these disservices and misdeeds are undeniably true, it is not correct to ascribe them to Christianity. But Christianity, and its honest and sincere adherents must come forward to denounce them. They must cooperate with the Muslims in their repudiation.

Whereas missions being financed and carried out by the Vatican State can be ordered stopped and liquidated, the works of Orientalists, being individual in nature and often financed by autonomous colleges and institutes, cannot be

commanded to stop. What can be done, however, is to elbow such works out of circulation by the production and wide dissemination of honest works interpreting Islam correctly and produced jointly by Muslim and Christian scholars. Such works would be a service to scholarship, to world-learning as *humanitas*, enriching to any culture and enhancing Muslim-Christian understanding, respect and cooperation. This would also help remove the prejudice against Islam planted and nursed by centuries of ill will, war and the misrepresentations of missionaries and Orientalists.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 222-223.

### **In the Realm of Public Human Affairs**

Islam and Christianity ... drawing its inspiration from their unique and single God, from their common pietism, their common ethics and humanism, would speak in the world for the ethico-spiritual base of all existence. It would defend the common man everywhere against injustice in all its forms, above all against aggression and colonialism, against the exploitations, subversions, brain-washing, puppetization or clientization of the common man. It would encourage the common man to respect himself, to take pride in and cultivate his legacy, to appreciate the role of both Islam and Christianity as civilizing forces. The work of such authority would naturally fall into departments answering the human need to solve ominous problems of modern times: Knowledge, Personal Ethics, the Family, Race, Materialism, Colonialism and National Competition and Nihilism.

Christianity and Islam are par excellence religions of hope, of optimism and good cheer. God did not create man to be miserable, to suffer in abjectness and despair. Even to the chronic sufferer and victim, each of them counseled endurance and perseverance as it announced “glad tidings,” divine help and victory. How they allowed modern man to fall into despair will always remain a mystery. But the challenge has touched both religions in the raw. That is why this conference has been called. That is why Christianity and Islam will emerge from it quickened, energized and re-invigorated.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 225, 235-236.

## **Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue**

### ***Precis***

The Qur’an set the doctrinal basis of Muslim-Christian relations which have varied in the past from very poor to excellent. The contemporary Christian missionaries fail to realize the strength of Jesus’s influence upon the Muslims. Christian missionaries have been influenced by many un-Christian ideas. Thus Western Christian missions to Muslims were not a mission of Jesus but only of a Western understanding of Jesus. The mission work has been a failure in almost every respect and should be called off.

Isolation of the two faiths is impossible. Exclusivism, so often a mark of religion, is as bad as proselytism. Both religions assert that they have *the* truth, which is logically impossible. Christianity and Islam must be interested in each other’s claims by means of dialogue, which is the

altruistic extension of both religions. Only through dialogue will the two religions ever be united in the religion of God (may He be Glorified and Exalted) and truth. Conversion to *the* truth is the aim of dialogue. This dialogue will enable understanding of values and sets of meanings in both religions.

The dialogue must follow these ground rules: **1.** no religious pronouncement is beyond the reach of criticism, **2.** internal coherence must exist, **3.** proper historical perspective must be maintained, **4.** correspondence with reality must exist, **5.** freedom from absolutized scriptural figurization and **6.** dialogue should be carried on in areas where there is a greater possibility of success, *e.g.*, the field of ethical duties.

Three themes for dialogue are discernible:

1. Contemporary Muslims and Christians are life-affirming in regard to God's creation and hold that man has a unique task to perfect this world. The theological usefulness of the notion of original, hereditary, collective and vicarious sin are gone. Sin is personal and based on free-will; it is primarily located in misperception and its solution is in education rather than forgiveness. Sin is not necessary nor is it predominant in human affairs. For modern Muslims and Christians, the way out of the predicament of sin is in human rather than divine hands. Salvation is achieved by continuous education and each person must educate himself.
2. An awareness of the imperative of doing the will of God exists. Former notions of justification are insufficient. Justification is a continuous process which does not

consist of confession to God, but of recognition of real values and the following of the long, hard road in reaching these values. Knowledge is virtue. Neither great sin nor serious repentance is typical of most people, hence the confession of faith has but mediocre value. Justification is a psychic release which may enable a man with determination to reach his goal, but is not a value in itself.

3. Every man has an equal imperative to fulfill his moral mission which is yet unfulfilled on a worldwide basis. Redemption is only being accomplished by man rather than already having taken place. Justification and redemption are but a prelude to the perception and pursuit of value (God's will). This is possible to all people and has to take place all the time.

These reconstructions of religious thought are compatible with both Islam and Christianity but it is unlikely that the latter will be willing to accept these tenets. Roman Catholics through Vatican II have made too few advances in that respect and are still too condescending toward Muslims. Protestants, who may be represented by Paul Tillich (1886-1965), also consider the Christian figurization of God in Jesus as normative which prevents fruitful dialogue with Muslims. Protestant acceptance of the above ground rules could lead to useful dialogue.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1968), 45-46.

## Issues in Muslim-Christian Dialogue

In the circumstances in which Muslims and Christians find themselves today, primacy belongs to the ethical questions, not the theological. When one compares the canonical figurization of Christianity with that of Islam, one is struck by the wide disparateness of the two traditions. While Christianity regards the Bible as endowed with supreme authority, especially as it is interpreted with “right reason”—that is to say, in loyalty to the central tenets of the figurization according to the Protestant school, or in loyalty to the tradition of the Church as understood by its present authorities, according to the Catholic—Islam regards the Bible as a record of the divine word but a record with which the human hand had tampered, with holy as well as unholy designs. Secondly, while Christianity regards God as man’s fellow, a person so moved by man’s failure that He goes to the length of sacrifice for his redemption, Islam regards God primarily as the Just Being whose absolute justice—with all the reward and doom for man that it enjoins—is not only sufficient mercy, but the only mercy coherent with divine nature. Whereas the God of Christianity *acts* in man’s salvation, the God of Islam *commands* him to do that which brings that salvation about. Thirdly, while Christianity regards Jesus as the second person of a triune God, Islam regards him as God’s human prophet and messenger. Fourthly, while Christianity regards space-time and history as hopelessly incapable of embodying God’s kingdom, Islam regards God’s kingdom as truly realizable—indeed as meaningful at all—only within the contexts of space-time and history. Fifthly, while Christianity regards the Church as the body of Christ endowed with ontic significance for ever and ever,

Islam regards the community of faith as an instrument mobilized for the realization of the divine pattern in the world, an instrument whose total value is dependent upon its fulfillment or otherwise of that task.

This list is far from complete. But it does show that the pursuit of dialogue on the level of theological doctrine is marred by such radical differences that no progress may be here expected without preliminary work in other areas. Since it is at any rate impossible for this generation of Muslims and Christians to confront one another regarding all facets of their ideologies at once, a choice of area for a meager start such as this is imperative. Priority certainly belongs to those aspects which are directly concerned with our lives as we live them in a world that has grown very small and is growing smaller still. The Muslim-Christian dialogue should seek at first to establish a mutual understanding, if not a community of conviction, of the Muslim and Christian answers to the fundamental ethical question, What ought I to do? If Muslims and Christians may not reach ready appreciation of each other's ideas or figurizations of divine nature, they may yet attempt to do the will of that nature, which they both hold to be one. To seek "God's way," *i.e.*, to understand, to know, to grasp its relevance for every occasion, to anticipate its judgment of every moral deed—that is the prerequisite whose satisfaction may put the parties to the dialogue closer to mutual self-understanding. Even if theories of God's nature, of His revelation, of His kingdom and of His plans for man's destiny were to be regarded as objects of faith beyond critique, certainly the ethical duties of man are subject to a rational approach. Neither Christianity nor Islam precludes a critical investigation of the ethical issues

confronting modern man in the world. The proximity of these issues to his life, his direct awareness of them as affecting his own life as well as that of mankind give immediacy to the investigation, and they assign the prerogatives of competence and jurisdiction to his personal and communal judgment in the matter. The relevance of the issues involved to world problems pressing him for an answer furnishes the investigation with a ready testing ground.

Moreover, ethical perceptions are different from the perceptions of theoretical consciousness where to miss is to perceive unreality. Difference in ethical perception is that of the brother who does not see as much, as far or as deep as the other. This is a situation which calls for the involved midwifery of ethical perception. Here, there is no question of error and falsehood, as every perception is one of value and difference consists in perceiving more or less of the same. Neither is the question one of an acquiescent profession of a propositional fact. It is rather one of determination of the perceiving subject by the value that is beheld; and for such perception to be itself, it must be the perception of the man, just as for his realization of the will of God to be itself, *i.e.*, moral, that realization has to be his own free and deliberate act. On the purely theological level, when the impulse to make others heretical is at work, tolerance can mean either contemptuous condescension, conversion or compromise with the truth. In ethical perception, on the other hand, disagreement is never banished or excommunicated; and heretication defeats its own purpose. Tolerance and midwifery—which are precisely what our small world needs—are the only answer. Their efforts are in the long run always successful; and, at

any rate, they are in the Muslim's opinion the better as well as the "Christian" view.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1968): 58-60.

## **Islam and Christianity: Interreligious Dialogue**

"Dialogue" then is a dimension of human consciousness (as long as that consciousness is not skeptical), a category of the ethical sense (as long as that sense is not cynical). It is the altruistic arm of Islam and of Christianity, their reach beyond themselves. Dialogue is education at its widest and noblest. It is the fulfillment of the command of reality to become known, to be compared and contrasted with other claims, to be acquiesced in if true, amended if inadequate and rejected if false. Dialogue is the removal of all barriers between men for a free intercourse of ideas where the categorical imperative is to let the sounder claim to the truth win. Dialogue disciplines our consciousness to recognize the truth inherent in realities and figurizations of realities beyond our usual ken and reach. If we are not fanatics, the consequence cannot be anything but enrichment to all concerned. Dialogue, in short, is the only kind of interhuman relationship worthy of man! Vouching for Islam and, unless my reading of Christianity has completely deceived me, for Christianity as well, dialogue is of the essence of the two faiths, the theatre of their eventual unity as the religion of God, the religion of truth.

We must say it boldly that the end of dialogue is conversion; not conversion to my, your or his religion, culture, mores or political regime, but to the truth. The conversion that is hateful to Islam or to Christianity is a

conversion forced, bought or cheated out of its unconscious subject. Conversion as conviction of the truth is not only legitimate but obligatory—indeed, the only alternative consistent with sanity, seriousness and dignity. Moreover, the mutual understanding between Islam and Christianity which we yearn for is not merely the conceptual, descriptive knowledge of Islamic texts and manuscripts achieved by the *Orientalistik* discipline, nor of the Christian tradition achieved by the Muslim and older discipline of “*al-milal wa al-nihal*” where the elements constitutive of Christianity are simply listed as in a series. It is primarily an understanding of the religion in the sense of faith and ethos, of apprehending the moving appeal of its categories and values, of their determining power. Religious facts may be studied scientifically like any specimens of geology. But to understand them religiously is to apprehend them as life-facts whose content is this power to move, to stir and to disturb, to command and to determine. But to apprehend this power is to be determined by it, and to do so is precisely to attain religious conviction—in short, conversion, however limited or temporary. To win all mankind to the truth is the highest and noblest ideal man has ever entertained. That history has known many travesties of this ideal, that man has inflicted tremendous sufferings upon his fellow men in the pursuit of it are arguments against man, not against the ideal. They are the reasons why dialogue must have rules. Dialogue according to rule is the only alternative becoming of man in an age where isolation—were it ever possible—implies being bypassed by history, and noncooperation spells general disaster. Granted, the rules must be critical and their presuppositions the fewest and simplest.

Ismail R. al Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1968): 53-54.

## **Methodology of Dialogue**

Granted then that dialogue is necessary and desirable, that its final effect should be the establishment of truth and its serious, free, candid and conscious acceptance by all men, we may now move on to the specific principles of methodology which guarantee its meaningfulness and guard against its degeneration into propaganda, brainwashing or soul-purchasing. These are the following:

1. No communication of any sort may be made ex cathedra, beyond critique. No man may speak with silencing authority. As for God, He may have spoken with silencing authority when man was an infant, and infant man may have accepted and submitted. To mature man, however, His command is not whimsical and peremptory. He argues for, explains and justifies His command, and is not offended if man asks for such justification. Divine revelation is authoritative, but not authoritarian; for God knows that the fulfillment of His command which issues from rational conviction of its intrinsic worth is superior to that which is blind. Fully aware of his moral freedom, modern man cannot be subjected; nor can he subject himself to any being without cause; nor can such cause be incomprehensible, irrational, esoteric or secret.
2. No communication may violate the laws of internal coherence mentioned earlier. Paradox is legitimate only when it is not final, and the principle overarching thesis and antithesis is given. Otherwise, discourse will issue in

unintelligible riddles.

3. No communication may violate the laws of external coherence; that is to say, man's religious history. The past may not be regarded as unknowable, and historiography assumed to stand on a par with either poetry or fiction. Historical reality is discoverable by empirical evidence, and it is man's duty and greatness to press ever forward toward the genuine understanding and reconstruction of his actual past. The limits of evidence are the only limits of historical knowledge.
4. No communication may violate the law of correspondence with reality, but should be open to corroboration or refutation by reality. If the laws of nature are not today what they were before Albert Einstein (1879-1955) or Copernicus (1473-1543), it is not because there are no laws to nature, nor because reality is unknowable, but because there is a knowable reality which corroborates the new insights. The physis, ethical and religious sensitivities of the people, of the age, are part of this reality; and man's knowledge of them is most relevant for the Muslim-Christian dialogue we are about to begin.
5. Dialogue presupposes an attitude of freedom vis-à-vis the canonical figurization. Jesus is a point at which the Christian has contact with God. Through him, God has sent down a revelation. Just as this revelation had to have its carrier in Jesus, it had to have a space-time circumstance in the historical development of Israel. Equally, Muḥammad, the Prophet, is a point at which the Muslim has contact with God Who sent a revelation through him. Muḥammad was the carrier of that

revelation, and Arab consciousness and history provided the space-time circumstance for its advent. Once the advent of these revelations was complete, and men began to put their faith there in numbers and confronted new problems calling for new solutions, there arose the need to put the revelation in concepts for the ready use of the understanding, in percepts for that of the intuitive faculties, and in legal notions and provisions for the guidance of behavior. The revelations were “figurized.” Simultaneously, as is natural in such cases, different minds created different figurizations because they had different perceptions of the same reality. This latter pluralism is not a variety of the object of faith, the content revealed *an sich*, but of that object or content in *percipi*, *i.e.*, as it became the object of a perception that is intellectual, discursive, intuitive and emotional all at once. Within each religion, the object of faith which is also the content of the revelation was, in itself, all one and the same. Although the figurizations of the revelation were many, that of which they were the figurization was one. Jesus is one; the God who sent him, and the divine revelation with which he was sent, each and every one of these was one, not many. When, as objects of human knowledge, they were conceptualized and perceptualized, they became many. The same is of course true in the case of the figurization of Islam.

The pluralistic variety of men, of their endowments and talents, their needs and aspirations, and the peculiarities of their varying environments and historical circumstances produced a great array of figurizations in both religions. Undoubtedly, some of them were, some others were not,

and still others were more or less inspired. There were differences in the accuracy of figurization, in the adequacy of conceptualization and perceptualization, and outrightly in the truthfulness and veracity of the representation. That is all too natural. Disputation and contention arose and lasted for many centuries; they continue to our present day. In the case of Christianity, it became evident that one of the figurizations surpassed in the mind of the majority all other figurizations. It must then be, the community concluded, an identical copy of the content revealed. Since this content is holy and is the truth, the thinkers of the community reasoned, all other figurizations are “heresies” inasmuch as any departure from the Holy is anathema, and any variance from the Truth is falsehood. Slowly but surely, the “other” figurizations were suppressed, and the chosen figurization stood as “the dogma,” “the catholic Truth.” In the case of Islam, the general religious and ethical principles revealed in the Qur’an were subjected to varying interpretations, and a large array of schools produced differing figurizations of law and ethics. As in the case of Jesus, the life of the Prophet was the subject of numerous figurizations. In order to bolster its authority and add to its faith in its own genuineness, each school projected its own thought onto his own person. Consensus finally eliminated the radical figurizations and preserved those which, in the judgment of the community, contained all the essentials. Later Muslims sanctified this figurization of the fathers, solemnly closed the gates of any creative interpretation however orthodox, and practically, though not theoretically, hereticated every departure from what they had made canonical.

Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1968): 54-57.

## **Themes for Muslim-Christian Dialogue**

Looking upon the contemporary ethical reality of Muslims and Christians, three dominant facts are discernible:

*Firstly, the modern Muslim and Christian regard themselves as standing in a state of innocence.* Whatever their past ideas and attitudes may have been, both of them agree that man's individuation is good, that his life of person and in society is good, that nature and cosmos are good. Fortunately, modern Christian theologians too have been rejoicing in their rediscovery of God's judgment of creation "that it was good." The ideological import of this rediscovery is tremendous. Man has rehabilitated himself in creation. He has found his place in it and re-presented his destiny to himself as one of engagement in its web of history. He is in God's image, the only creature with consciousness and spirit, unto whom the command of God has come, and upon whom the will of God on earth depends for realization as that will is, in itself, a will to a morally perfected world. Certainly, God could have created the world already perfect, or necessarily perfectible by the workings of natural law. But He created this world, "where rust and moth consume and where thieves break through and steal," *i.e.*, a world where His will, or value, is not yet realized, that in the free realization of it by man, the moral values may be realized which could not be realized otherwise. Hence, this world is good, despite its imperfection; and man occupies therein the especially significant—indeed cosmic—station of the bridge through which the ethical elements of divine will enter the realm of

creation. It is not surprising that a rediscovery of such momentum causes a great deal of joy, a feeling of self-confidence in the great task ahead. Gone are the sordid obsessions with the innate depravity, the intrinsic futility, the necessary fallenness and cynical vacuity of man and of the world. Modern man affirms his life and his world. Recognizing the imperativeness as well as the moving appeal of God's command, he accepts his destiny joyfully and presses forth upright into the thick of space-time where he is to make that will real and actual.

*Secondly, the modern Muslim and Christian are acutely aware of the necessity and importance of recognizing God's will, of recognizing His command.* This acknowledgement is the substance, the content or "meat" of their acknowledgement of God. "Recognition of God's command," "ethical perception" and "the act of faith" are mutually convertible and equivalent terms. Such acknowledgement is indubitably the first condition; for it is absurd to seek to realize the divine will in the world without a prior acknowledgement of its content, just as it is absurd to seek to realize what ought to be done without the prior recognition of what is valuable. How is one to recognize that which ought to be done in any given situation—which must be one among a number of possible alternatives—without the standard or norm with which the realizability in the alternatives of that which ought to be can be measured and ascertained? Indeed, if an axiology-free program of action could ever be envisaged, the agent thereof would not be a moral subject, but an automaton of duties. To be moral at all, the act must imply a free choice; and this is a choice in which consciousness of the value, or of its *matériel* as the spatio-temporal concretization

thereof, plays the crucial part. All this notwithstanding, and however absolutely indispensable and necessary the acknowledgement of God's command and will may be, it is only a condition, a *conditio sine qua non* to be sure, but still a condition. Philosophically stated, this principle is that of the priority of the study of values to duties, of axiology to deontology. The act of faith, of acknowledgement, recognition and acquiescence, is the first condition of piety, of virtue and felicity. But woe to man if he mistakes the condition of a thing for the thing itself! The act of faith neither justifies nor makes just. It is only an entrance ticket into the realm of ethical striving and doing. It does no more than let us into the realm of the moral life. There, to realize the divine imperative in the value-short world, to transfigure and to fill it with value, is man's prerogative as well as duty.

*Thirdly, the modern Muslim or Christian recognizes that the moral vocation or mission of man in this world has yet to be fulfilled, and by him; that the measure of his fulfillment thereof is the sole measure of his ethical worth; that in respect to this mission or vocation all men start out in this world with a carte blanche on which nothing is entered except what each individual earns with his own doing or not-doing. In the discharge of his mission in space-time, no man is privileged and every man is an equal conscript. For the command of the one God is also one, for all men without discrimination or election; and His justice is absolute.*

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "Islam and Christianity: Diatribe or Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 5, no. 1 (1968): 60-62.

## Islam in the West Today—The *Muhajirun*

*Since the 1960s, there has been a gradual migration of Muslims from different parts of the world to the West for academic, professional, political and economic reasons, and the trend continues. Before the modern era, several African Muslims were brought as slaves to America to work on its southern plantations.*

*The West, which has always been mono-racial, mono-cultural, mono-religious (Judeo-Christian and European), has both welcomed and also discriminated the presence of Muslims amidst it on racial, cultural and religious grounds.*

*The Muslim presence in and relations with the West are also affected by the state of international relations and political events, such as the nexus between the West and the state of Israel, the Oil Embargo of 1973-1974, the Cold War, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the 9/11 event, the Arab Spring, the proposed theory of Clash of Civilizations and the current rise of Islamophobia.*

*Meanwhile, over the last few decades there has also emerged the second and third generations of Western Muslims born and bred in*

*the West, and there are also Western converts to Islam who cannot be alienated from the shape and the future of the West.*

*As this saga continues to evolve, Western Muslims have to address their social role in the Western milieu as migrants who have now become natives are also converts to Islam. They also have to decipher the theological and cultural shape of Islam in the dominant Western atheist, materialist and Judeo-Christian environment.*

## **The Marvel of the Spread of Islam**

### **—The *Muhajir* and the Convert**

Nobody who has observed the spread of Islam in the non-Muslim World, especially in the West, and still more especially in America, the United Kingdom and Western Europe during the last thirty years, can fail to wonder at the marvel, or to discern the hand of the Almighty (may He be Glorified and Exalted) at work. The configuration of so many diverse forces, arising in such disparate corners of the earth, determined by such varied chains of historical conditions, all focusing upon the aforesaid Western countries is too much for any kind of planning except the divine. The causes of Muslim immigration thither are themselves the result of a tremendously complex development within the Muslim World. But, had these causes been restricted to the Muslim World, the Muslims seeking to immigrate would have never arrived in the West. They were inextricably interwoven with the relations those Muslims had with the West (colonialism, studentship and training, tourism, visits to relatives, fortune-seeking), as well as dependent upon the West's rise as industrial and political world leader, relating itself to the Muslim World

in a variety of ways.

On the other hand, the causes of the conversion of native Westerners to Islam have to do with the whole intellectual and spiritual development of the West, a development which in the last three or four decades seems to have prepared large segments of the population to be receptive to the Islamic message. The erosion of religious feeling, whether Christian or Jewish, the rise of the sciences of nature and technology under the aegis of a philosophy defiant of God and of everything supernatural; and the nihilism to which industry, urbanism and the whole structure of modern life had led all these seem like the unfolding of real salvation plans for a “*Heilsgeschichte*” aimed at the West. Another “fullness of time” seems to be in full bloom before our eyes, awaiting only the disposition of Islam to bring it to fulfillment. That is exactly the sort of grand design which only the divine Designer can bring about.

Two main forces are jointly responsible for this marvelous spread of Islam in the West: the spiritual bankruptcy of the West and Muslim *hijrah* or (emigration).

### **The New *Muhajirun* (Émigrés)**

Muslims from the Near East and other parts of the Muslim World began to emigrate to the West in the last quarter of the previous century. Their purpose was similar to that of other immigrants; namely, escape from undesirable conditions in the old country and search for fortune in the new. Among the oldest immigrants who lived in groups and succeeded in preserving their identity, are the Muslim communities of Cedar Rapids (Iowa), Detroit (Michigan),

Edmonton (Alberta) and London (Ontario), in North America; of London and Liverpool in the United Kingdom; of Paris, Marseilles, Rotterdam and Naples in Western Europe. Muslim communities established in England, France, Italy and the Netherlands a permanent presence of themselves as coming from countries suffering under the colonial yoke of these European states. The Balkans, where the Ottoman Empire was receding; Aden, which British rule had made an open roadstop to the ships of the world; and Syria-Lebanon, where political unrest and administrative instability were at their highest, were the other sources from which the immigrants to America and Western Europe came.

The period between the two world wars saw a large number of immigrants from every corner of the Muslim World to the imperial capitals and industrial towns of Europe. The same period witnessed considerable immigration to North America from Syria-Lebanon, the Balkans, South Russia, Caucasus and Turkey, where postwar conditions left much to be desired. Into Canada, there was an influx of Muslims from the British Commonwealth countries into which Muslims had first emigrated in pursuit of service with British forces. Very few Muslims came to study in America since domination of their homelands by Britain, France and Italy made it imperative for them to study in the colonizing countries.

It was after World War II that Muslim immigrants began to arrive in all Western countries in significant numbers. Independence from colonialism and ascendancy of Western culture attracted Muslim students from everywhere. Their protracted stay and free mixture with fellow students and community, and the opportunities for

study-cum-work programs, paved the way for them to change status or to return as immigrants if conditions at home proved to be less than expected. The failure of national governments to provide opportunities for employment and/or advancement, to solve chronic problems whether economic or political; and their tyrannical police oppression provided further impetus to professionals and to the educated to emigrate. The desire to improve the quality of life and the promise of good fortune in the West certainly played an important role. More important, however, was the near total bankruptcy of Muslim political regimes. That bankruptcy was evident at the moral, spiritual, civilizational, educational, economic, social and political levels. It is not surprising that most post-independence regimes in the Muslim World were caricatures of Western models, whether democratic or dictatorial; that their social, political and economic ideals were caricatures of democracy, national integration and social justice. One and all, these regimes were proper instruments of neocolonialism, whether deliberately or otherwise. Their essential disease was their separation from Islam, the only ideal capable of moving and inspiring the masses. Nationalism, secularism, democracy, socialism and communism are all impotent, and provide no “cause” worthy of the Muslim’s idealism.

### **The Lost-Found *Muhajirun*: The Afro-Americans**

If the origin of the Islamic presence in North America is still speculative, the settlement of African Muslims in North America in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries is certain. The fall of al-Andalus to European power was a cataclysm for millions of Muslims. It is indeed probable

that some of them who had fallen captive to Spanish power might have constituted the first human cargoes shipped to America. It is equally probable that those who were unable to cope with the cataclysm might have volunteered to travel to the unknown. Of such events we have not heard of any record. Later on, as sugar plantations in the Caribbean Basin and the Southern United States demanded more and more hands to work them, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the French, the English and finally the Americans, began a systematic raiding of the coasts of Africa south of the Sahara to hunt and seize humans for sale in the slave markets of the New World. There can be little doubt that some of these unfortunates were Muslims; for we know that by 1600 a large proportion of the populations of Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia and Guinea were Muslims.

The climate of slavery was not one in which the Muslim *muhajir-malgré lui* could perpetuate his religion or culture. A different religious practice by the slave would have been regarded by the slave master as a threat, as defiance and insubordination. That is why the masters systematically eradicated the cultural and religious inheritance of their slaves and implanted their own in them. They gave the slaves their own names, forced them into their own faith, and rejoiced in seeing in them the reflection of themselves. Little did it matter whether the slave was a replica or caricature. It was sufficient that his old identity was obliterated. As to the new identity, if he failed to realize it, the failure was, from the master's point of view, natural because the slave was an *Untermensch*. Unfortunately, nothing is known about these early Muslims in America. Perhaps, some of their practices might have survived in Afro-American traditions; or, having affected those

traditions, they may still be deducible from them.

There have been conversions to Islam among these “lost” *muhajirun* from West Africa prior to the thirties, when Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) launched his movement. Their numbers, however, were small; and their effect upon the Islamic presence in North America was scant. The first native American to bring significant change upon that presence was Elijah Muhammad. It was he who began in the thirties to call the Afro-Americans to abandon the identity imposed upon them as slaves and return to their original Muslim African identity. His call spread rapidly among them and assumed visible proportions in the big cities after World War II. The movement spread vigorously in the ghettos of American cities. The headquarters in Chicago became a beehive of administrators, public relations officers, business entrepreneurs and preachers. The appearance of Malcolm X (1925-1965) on the scene, his rebellion against Elijah Muhammad following his conversion to Sunni Islam in Makkah, and his assassination—all these helped the Islamic movement to grow. The demise of Elijah Muhammad and Sunni reforms of his son Warith al-Din Muhammad, have relaxed the discipline and done away with the paramilitary youth organization, “Fruit of Islam.” The vigor and enthusiasm are still the same, proportionate to the Muslims’ capacities, and to the challenges. If anything, the movement is growing in numbers, in consciousness, in understanding of, and attachment to, the genuine ideals of Islam.

Although no adequate statistics are available, native American Muslims number about two million. One and a half million belong to the World Community of Islam in the West (recently renamed “The American Muslim

Mission”). About half a million Afro-Americans are Muslims and belong to various other organizations, mostly Sunni. About 5,000 white native Americans have joined the ranks of Islam.

### ***Da‘wah: The Only Justification for Hijrah***

Whether temporary or permanent resident, highly educated or merely enterprising immigrant or native, black or white, the Muslim in America and Western Europe has but one justification—Islam! Without it, he is the most despicable of all. His material success avails him nothing in this regard.

To celebrate the *Hijrah* today is indeed to make it alive for the present, to *vergegenwärtigung* it. Nothing could be more needed, more appropriate and more salutary to this whole world of ours—sick by any standard because of international competition for the rape of nature and subjugation of mankind—than the world order the Prophet Muḥammad founded fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, *iqamat al-Hijrah* today would mean nothing unless the Muslim possessed with the vision of Islam began in earnest to call his fellow Muslims first, and mankind second, to join the ranks of those who seek a new world order of peace and justice, of piety and virtue.

Allah commands action by argument and by example. May we all prove worthy of His revelation!

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester, UK: Islamic Foundation, 1998), 319-320, 329-330, 336-338, 350-351.

## Meta-Religion according to Islam

*I*slam is not a new religion but rather a continuation of the original religion of Abraham, as expressed in the Qur'an:

*“They say (to the Muslims), ‘Become Jews or become Christians and find the right way.’ Answer them, ‘No. We follow the way of Abraham the upright, who was not an idolater.’ Say, ‘We believe in God and what has been sent down to us, and what was given to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and Jacob’s sons, and that which was given to Moses and Christ, and to (all) the (other) prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction among them, and we submit to God”*

Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:135-136

*Professor Ismail al Faruqi introduced a unique theological and philosophical concept of meta-religion rooted in the concept of din al-fitrah—primordial religion or primordial truth. Its task is to establish the primordial truth underlying all religions.*

*From the perspective of history of religions and Islam, Islam*

*alone acknowledges the plurality of laws as religiously and politically de jure. It calls the adherents of all religions, with wisdom and fair arguments, to consider rationally, critically and freely what their similarities and differences are. Thus, each religion is a path for seeking wisdom and not just implementing power. The concept of meta-religion calls for a re-understanding of the meanings of world religions by situating religion at the center of world history. It urges religions to unite under the banner of one religion. In other words, religion over religions.*

Religion has been defined as the experience of a reality that is assumed to be ultimate as well as personal thus making the experience an encounter. This modern definition is not without merit; for in religion, the object of experience is indeed regarded as ultimate and in most cases as a commanding person. It is inadequate, however, because it does not specify the experience. In order to fulfill the meaning of religion, one has to add that the ultimate reality experienced must be apprehended and understood, expressed and proclaimed, its commandments acquiesced and responded to with individual and collective action. As such religion therefore is the most important constituent of man's humanity. Firstly, it includes the vision of reality and the articulation of that vision, its expression in concepts for the understanding and percepts for the imagination, which constitute most of man's intellectual output throughout history. Secondly, it includes acquiescence to the commanding nature of Ultimate Reality and actualization of its commandments; hence most of man's subjective condition and personality values. Thirdly, the commandments have as their goal the actualization of the highest good, religion includes most or all of human action as it relates to himself, to other men and to nature.

Evidently, the study of man's religions is that of all humans, of their legacies of thought and action, of human history.

The fact that the object of experience is ultimate implies understanding of it as transcendent in both the theoretical (*i.e.*, metaphysical, and epistemological) and the practical (*i.e.*, valuational, ethical) senses. On the metaphysical level, Ultimate Reality is perceived as the first cause, or principal of sufficient reason, which explains all beings and all events. On the axiological, it is perceived as the last end, or principle, which justifies all beings and events. Its relevance therefore is total. All aspects of reality and history are understood as effects and instruments of the activity of a being perceived in experience as Ultimate Reality. Likewise, under these terms, religion is the very essence and core of culture. For the content of religion is the lens through which all understanding and thinking take place, the realm of meditation and contemplation, of admiration and adoration. Finally religion is the essence and core of civilization in that that it is the ultimate explanation of civilization with all its inventions and artifacts, its social, political and economic systems, its past and future promise in history. For it constitutes the spirit of which the facets of civilization are the concrete manifestations. Though in an earlier age religious ideas and/of practices were at the center of human activities, the realization that religion lies at the center of culture and civilization is recent. It came about only when an explanation of history as an integral unity of all its facets and constituents was sought, a need which did not arise before the modern period. And yet, it was in the modern period itself that religion and its role were subjected to the greatest misunderstanding.

Ismail R. al Faruqi, "Meta-Religion: Towards a Critical World Theology," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (September 1986): 13-14.

## **The Critical Methodology of Islam**

Let us ... review the characteristics of meta-religion according to Islam, those characteristics which make it rational, critical.

- A. Islamic meta-religion does not condemn *a priori* any religion. Indeed, it gives every religion the benefit of the doubt and more. Islamic meta-religion assumes that every religion is God-revealed, until it is historically proven beyond doubt that the constitutive elements of that religion are human made.
- B. Islamic meta-religion readily links the religions of history with the divine source on the ground that there is no people or group but God sent them a prophet to teach to them the same lessons of religion, of piety and virtue,
- C. Islamic meta-religion grants ready accreditation to all humans in their religious attempts to formulate and express religious truth. For it acknowledges all humans to have been born with all that is necessary to know God and His will, the moral law, to discriminate between good and evil.
- D. Islamic meta-religion is painfully aware of human passions, prejudices and deficiencies and their sinister influence upon what was revealed or discovered to be primordial religion (*din al fitrah*) or primordial truth. Thus it calls upon all humans, especially those in the

know, the '*ulama*' of each religion, to subject their religious traditions to rational, critical examination, to discard those elements which are proven to be human additions, emendations, or falsifications. In this task of historical criticism of all the religions of history, all humans are brothers and must cooperate to establish the primordial truth underlying all the religions.

- E. Islamic meta-religion honors human reason to the point of making it equivalent to revelation in the sense that neither can discard the other without imperiling itself. That is why in Islamic methodology, no contradiction, or non-correspondence with reality can be final or ultimate. The Islamic scholar of religion is therefore ever-tolerant, ever-open to evidence, ever-critical.
- F. Islamic meta-religion is humanistic par excellence in that it assumes all men to be innocent, not fallen or vitiated at birth, capable of discerning good and evil, free to choose according to their reason, conscience or best knowledge, and personally, *i.e.*, individually, responsible for their own deeds.
- G. Islamic meta-religion is a world—and life—affirmative, in that it assumes creation, life and history to be not in vain, not the work of blind force, or of a trickster-god, but ordered to lead to value. It acknowledges the critical principle that nature is incapable by itself to produce critical self-consciousness, and a trickster-god would be in foolish self-contradiction to create man and endow him with his critical faculties.
- H. Finally, Islamic meta-religion is an institution, not a mere theory, tested by fourteen centuries of continuous application, of success against tremendous odds. It

alone among the religions and ideologies of the world was large enough in heart, in spirit as well as in letter, to give mankind the gift of a pluralism of laws. It alone acknowledged such plurality of laws as religiously and politically *de jure*, while it called their adherents with wisdom and fair argument to consider rationally, critically and freely, they should unite under the banner of the one religion which is at once and the same time the one and only meta-religion.

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Ismail R. al Faruqi, "Meta-Religion: Towards a Critical World Theology," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (September 1986): 56-57.

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*“Essential Writings Ismail al Faruqi”* is an important tribute and insight into the scholarship and perspective of one of the major Muslim scholars and teachers of Islamic Studies in the late-twentieth century. Professor Faruqi established the robust program of Islamic Studies section within Temple University’s Department of Religion program. Most importantly, he was an indefatigable scholar and mentor to a generation of students both in the US and globally, many of whom he recruited and supported.”

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Professor Ismail al Faruqi (1921-1986) was a trailblazer of what he called Islamics or Islamic Studies in the modern age with a special focus on the study of Islam from the perspective of phenomenology and history of religions and interreligious dialogue. He is also well known in the Muslim world for his theory of Islamization of knowledge, which is only one of his many intellectual contributions to the relationship between Islam and knowledge.

This book is an introduction to Professor Ismail al Faruqi’s scholarly views, excerpted from his famous writings, concerning topics such as the pre-Hijrah sources of Islam, religious interdependence, religio naturalis and meta-religion.

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