

## Book Reviews

*Islam and Knowledge: Al Faruqi's Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought*, Edited by Imtiyaz Yusuf (London and NY: I B Tauris; in association with IIIT: 2012).

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A vanguard of “Islamic studies” (Islamic studies) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Prof Isma‘il Raji al-Faruqi (1921-86) was a distinguished scholar of Islam and religion and one of the most prolific and influential Muslim scholars of the modern age. From 1960s, al Faquri, Fazlur Rahman and Seyyed H Nasr were the “first three prominent scholars of Islamic studies in the West” – a time when Islamic studies was making “an appearance as a field of study, research and discourse at the universities” (p.3).

Prof al Faruqi made a lasting contribution to the study of Islam and religion relevant to the contemporary times. Although his scholarship covered the entire spectrum of Islamic studies and religion, including the study of phenomenology of religion, Islamic thought, and approaches to knowledge, history, culture, education, interfaith dialogue, aesthetics, ethics, politics, economics, science and women’s issues” (p.1), but his contribution to academia – which played an important role in the creation of Islamic Studies programs at university level in the USA and across the Muslim world – mainly lay in four major areas vis-à-vis Islamic studies: “the history of religions, phenomenology of religion, the Islamic educational movement in the modern age, and interreligious dialogue” (p.4).

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Prof. Al Faruqi has been described as a “scholar-activist” but not much has been written about his “personality, thought, style, pedagogy, and modern vision”, and for Imtiyaz Yusuf (the editor of the work under review), this is largely because Prof al Faquri has been viewed from “an ideological perspective and because his views about his homeland of Palestine attracted more attention and comment” (p.4).

The edited work under review, a “Festschrift” honoring al Faruqi – a great, prolific, and influential Muslim scholar, is the result of the papers presented in a two-day international seminar held at the University of Westminster, London, UK, in June 2010, entitled “Isma‘il Raji Al Faruqi: An Expose of the Legacy of a Mujtahid in the Modern Age” (see p.12). Preceded by an “Introduction” (pp. 1-18) by the editor, Imtiyaz Yusuf – who is the Program Director, Department of Religion, Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion, Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand (and is one of the first students of Prof al Faruqi) – and notes on the “Contributors” (pp. vii-xv) and followed by Appendices, Bibliography, and Index, this Festschrift is divided into two parts: Part 1, “Memorials” (chapters 1-9); Part 2, “Academic Papers by Students of Isma‘il al Faruqi” (chapters 10-20). The contents of this volume highlight the intellectual legacy of Prof al Faruqi in the form of continuity of his thought and the institutions he established. Al Faruqi was – and remains – a brilliant intellectual “whose legacy of reform and scholastic efforts still reverberate today and will continue to do so” (p.13). In the introduction, the editor presents a biographical sketch of Prof al Faruqi and throws light on his thought and contribution and, among others, focuses on the four main academic areas of al Faruqi, viz. Islamics, history of religion and phenomenology of religion, Islamic educational movement, and interreligious dialogue (see pp. 5-11).

The part 1 begins with the remembrance piece by Prof John L Esposito – the first student to complete his Ph.D. under the supervision of Prof al Faruqi, in which he mentions how he came to study Islam, which is now, from last four decades, Esposito’s “profession and vocation” and his academic career, which he regards as the indebtedness to Prof al Faruqi. For Esposito, al-Faruqi’s untimely murder was a “senseless tragedy, an indescribable loss for their children and family as well as for Islamic Studies and the Muslim world” (p.29). In chapter 2, Prof Khurshid Ahmad of Pakistan, recollects about the transformation of al Faruqi from modernist to Muslim activist, while retaining the characters of both. For him, al Faruqi – who made his mark “as a scholar, a teacher, a thought leader, a man with a vision and mission” – is one of the “architects of contemporary Muslim resurgence, particularly in America and the West” (p.31). For Prof Ahmad, he was indeed a great visionary, who was engaged in a sustained and multi-dimensional effort “to project his ideas, galvanize support for the change he aspired for, awaken the Muslims from their slumber, and mobilize all sources at the command of the Ummah” (p.40). Seyyed

Hossein Nasr, a prominent figure in Western academia, expresses his thoughts on the scholarly accomplishments of al Faruqi, and claims that his works remain “to challenge all those concerned with the future of the Islamic world” (p.44). Calling al Faruqi as the precursor to and “parcel of civilization dialogue” (p.49), Anwar Ibrahim of Malaysia recollects his acquaintance with al Faruqi beginning in 1974, and how the two developed a close relationship and how the later became his mentor, advising him on political, educational and other issues. In the next chapter, John Raines, commenting on the effects of academic companionship with al Faruqi at Temple University, regards him as a valued and “a valuable heritage as a colleague and religious mentor” (p.59).

Similarly, Richard C. Martin discusses the pioneering role al Faruqi played in setting up the Islamic Studies groups in the American Academy of Religion (AAR), and revisits their conversation and views about Islamic studies. Martin learned from al Faruqi that “scholars can disagree over fundamental matters in ways that make the academy we serve an honorable and high-minded institution” (p.66). Gerard Sloyan, one of al Faruqi’s first colloquies at Temple University, remembers their friendship and collegiality. For him, al Faruqi was always “cheerful and upbeat, totally cooperative in any department enterprise, and ever ready for intelligent corridor conversation on any topics of current interest” (p.72). Muddathir Abd al-Rahim recollects his memories of al Faruqi and his influence on the teaching of Islamic thought and civilization. For him, two “profoundly traumatic experiences” seem to have been uppermost in shaping al Faruqi’s outlook and lifestyle: (i) al-Nakba (the Catastrophe) – the “cataclysmically tragic loss of Palestine to Zionists in 1948” (p.79); and (ii) the condition of the Muslim Ummah around the globe (p.80). James Zogby speaks of Al Faruqi’s intellectual inspiration on personnel development. For him al Faruqi – who was more than his supervisor and dissertation advisor: “a mentor and tough taskmaster, an inspiration” and a person who changed his life (p.87) – was not only a brilliant and disciplined academician but also a “visionary institutional builder” (p.89).

In sum, this part explores the various dimensions and facets of the personality and academic carrier of al Faruqi, and his place and the regard these people have for him – as a colleague, companion, academician and as a professor of “Islamicism”.

Part II, consisting of 11 essays/papers (chapters 10-20), makes discussions on the thought and legacy of al Faruqi: from his interpretation of the concepts of *Din* (Religion), *Tawhid*, *Ijtihad*, Arabism, to his contribution to, such topics and themes as, interfaith dialogue, world peace, theory of values / Islamic humanism, aesthetics, and visual art, etc.

Part II begins with Imtiyaz Yusuf’s essay (chapter 10, pp. 93-110), on al Faruqi’s interpretation of the concept of *din*/Religion through his analysis of the Arabian history of monotheism and its Judaic, Christian and Islamic periods. For Al Faruqi, argues Yusuf, a

“Muslim ‘monotheistic’ ethical vision rooted in the Qur’anic view of *din* based on the principles of monotheism, universalism, tolerance, and life affirmation and ethno-religious conflicts. It will facilitate Muslim partnering in the dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations” (p.107). For Anis Ahmad (chapter 11, pp. 111-25), the primary objective of Islamization of Knowledge movement has been to let social sciences evolve on an Islamic epistemological paradigm. For Ahmad, Islamization of Knowledge, an *Ijtihad* – a dynamic creative intellectual process” (p.115), as a movement, with its global ethical paradigm, can offer a “better basis for the unity of mankind, plurality of culture, dignity of man, and realization of a just political, social, and economic order” (p.123).

In “Isma‘il Al Faruqi and *Ijtihad*” (chapter 12, pp. 127-36), Yushau Sodiq argues that al Faruqi regarded *ijtihad* as constituting the dynamism of Islam, and *Tawhid* as the being the ultimate essence of Islam. Sodiq, who considers al Faruqi as “a mujtahid par excellence and an imam without borders”, argues that his *ijtihad* helped him in modifying his ideas and his diverse “intellectual works attest to his *ijtihad* in various spheres of life” (p.136). Abul Fadl Moohsin Ibrahim addresses the “Ethics of Fertility Treatment” (chapter 13, pp. 139-55) with special reference to the case of Nedyia Suleman in the light of Islamic medical jurisprudence. Ibrahim reaches the conclusion – in the context of *Tawhid* as expounded by al Faruqi, whose view of *Tawhid* signifies “the elimination of any power operative in nature besides God” (p.140) – that the action of Nedyia was “not done with the aim of fulfilling the purpose of God in procreation of human species, but rather for herself interest” (p.153).

Charles Fletcher (chapter 14, pp. 157-76) approaches al Faruqi’s theoretical model for an Islamic interfaith dialogue, claiming that al Faruqi’s greatest contribution to interfaith engagement was “not only his ideas, but the man himself and the example of his commitment to interfaith engagement” (p.172). Fletcher presents a brief summary and critique of al Faruqi’s dialogical system with the objective of “building upon his interfaith contributions and furthering the course of Muslim interfaith study and dialogue” (p.158). Md. Salleh Yaapar (chapter 15, pp. 177-93), throws light on the involvement of al Faruqi, both in theory and practice, in interfaith dialogue (especially) in North America, and argues that among dialogue partners, al Faruqi, advocated an attitude of equality and candid respect, for he strongly believed in “cultural encounter and religious engagement” (p.177).

Aminah Beverly McCloud throws personal reflections on “Islamization of the Social Sciences” (chapter 16, pp. 195-204), demonstrating that the object of social science is “to form policies that ensure regulated, welfare-concerned, healthy Muslim living” (p.204). In “Isma‘il Al Faruqi’s Theory of Value” (chapter 17, pp. 205-29), Ibrahim Zein, focusing on al Faruqi’s understanding of humanism and its relationship to the ethical discourse, argues that al Faruqi

places “humanity as an ethical concept in the hierarchy of values in the Islamic worldview” (p.226). Gisela Webb focuses on al Faruqi’s critique of art history discourses in the West and the nature, function, and value of Islamic arts (see p.232) in her essay “*Tawhid* and Aesthetics” (chapter 18, pp. 231-41). she concludes that al Faruqi’s approach to the arts was “timely and unique”, for his work provided “a critique of, and alternative to, certain ‘Oriental’s’ approaches” (p.240). Kamar O Kamruzaman (chapter 19, pp. 243-68), looks into al Faruqi’s contribution to interfaith engagement, ranking him among the chief contributors, while looking into the salient features of al Faruqi’s works like *Christian Ethics* and *Islam and Other Faiths*. Kamruzaman stresses, by way of conclusion that what is necessary now is the continuation of al Faruqi’s legacy for he has given purview of how urgent the need is for “an amiable co-existence, not only between people, but also with the environment” (p. 265). Finally, Vivienne SM. Angeles, in “Visualizing Art: The Art, Architecture, and Functions of Philippine Mosques” (chapter 20, pp. 267- 306) focuses, as the title itself reveals, on the art and architecture of Philippine mosques. She discusses that the mosque is an example both of “Islamic architecture” as well as a symbol of “Muslim community identity” (p. 270).

Thus, Part 2 of this Festschrift highlights the academic contribution and intellectual legacy of Prof al Faruqi in the form of continuity and of his thought and the institutions he established such as IIIT and AMSS. It is followed by two appendices, “Scheme for a Faculty of Islamic Learning at Karachi University” prepared by Prof al Faruqi (pp. 307-14), “A Memorandum on Methods of Creating a Modern effective Islamic Ideology”(pp. 315-8), “Bibliography” of the works of, and about, al Faruqi (pp.318-28), and finally with an “Index” (pp. 329-36).

All in all, all these essays of this edited volume, divided into two parts, explore various dimensions and facets of the personality and academic career of Prof Isma‘il Raji al Faruqi. In part 1 many great scholars, which include al Faruqi’s students, colleagues, and friends, express their experiences and highlight al Faruqi’s place and position and the respect and reverence this intellectual galaxy has for him – as a colleague, as a leader, as a companion, as an academician and as a professor of “Islamicism”. While as, Part 2 of this Festschrift highlights the academic contribution – to various branches of knowledge and to various aspects and dimensions of Islamic history and civilization, to the history of religions, to humanism, to ethics, to interfaith dialogue, and to visual arts, etc. – and intellectual legacy of Prof al Faruqi in the form of continuity and of his thought and the institutions he established. Thus, in sum, the volume highlights the intellectual legacy of Prof al Faruqi, who was – and still remains – a brilliant intellectual whose legacy of reform and scholastic efforts resound and reverberate even today

and will continue to do so in the future as well. The work is indeed a real tribute to this great legendary and prominent figure of 20<sup>th</sup> century.