

# Foreword

*Genuine understanding of Islam, the religion, will reveal ... that Islam is a later moment of that very consciousness which produced Judaism and Christianity; that Islam, the culture, is as much a source of the Western civilization of the present millennium as classical Greece and Rome ... that Islam's anti-clericalism made it the first "Protestant" revolution, that its rationalism made it the first "Enlightenment," that its pragmatism made it the first "technocracy," and that its law of war and peace made it the first "United Nations."*

So writes Professor Isma'īl Rājī al Fārūqī, Palestinian-American philosopher, visionary, an authority in comparative religion and one of the great Muslim scholars of the 20th century. In this study al Fārūqī presents the meaning and message of Islam to the wider world community. Key elements of the faith are summarised and explained in an overall theme of seven parts consisting of 21 chapters in total. Yet the chapters represent far more than a simple description of Muslim peoples and orthodox practice. Al Fārūqī was a great thinker and relished intellectual engagement on every level, particularly when it came to Islam and other Faiths. And it is this unique reasoning process that is reflected in this work, al Fārūqī's signature contribution, which not only expounds on Islam as spiritual faith and action, but also on Islam *the great experience*.

Murdered in 1986 the legacy of his thought and action continue to inform and impress the discourse on Islam, Islamic reform and its institutions throughout the world. Al Fārūqī also laid the foundation for a new interpretation and analysis of *tawhīd* (the unity of God) and its relevance to knowledge, life, and thought. His rigorously intellectual approach and formidable logic raised the standard of Islamic scholarship to new and higher levels. Al Fārūqī played a central and ideational role in devising a model for a contemporary Islamic university, making

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intellectual contributions to curriculum development and designing the research programmes of Islamic universities in several countries. Al Fārūqī also broke new grounds in establishing university-level Islamic studies programs in the West. He was, and remains, a brilliant intellectual, whose remarkable legacy of reform and scholastic efforts still resonate today.

This work is the resurrection of a manuscript completed in the mid-seventies by al Fārūqī, exploring and explaining the many key dimensions that make up the Islamic faith. Aside from minor typos the work has been largely left unrevised and unedited, faithful to the author's original rendering. In addition, chapter headings have been retained as originally composed. No doubt there is a need to 'know' Islam as never before, and this book – timely as the day it was written – attempts to generate this complete understanding. As al Fārūqī remarks in his Preface, readers are invited, in a spirit of "fellowship", to enter the world of Islam and become familiar with its integral components and the way it is lived on a daily basis.

Where dates are cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) they are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered contemporary. The exception being al Fārūqī, whose name has been written according to his own preference.

The IIIT, established in 1981, has served as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts based on Islamic vision, values and principles. The Institute's programs of research, seminars and conferences during the last thirty years have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred titles both in English, Arabic and other major languages.

IIIT LONDON OFFICE  
SEPTEMBER 2012

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF

### *Ismaʿīl Rājī al Fārūqī*

(1921–1986)

PROFESSOR Ismaʿīl Rājī al Fārūqī was born in Jaffa, Palestine. He was a great contemporary scholar of Islam and his scholarship encompassed the whole spectrum of Islamic Studies covering areas such as the study of religion, Islamic thought, approaches to knowledge, history, culture, education, interfaith dialogue, aesthetics, ethics, politics, economics, science and women's issues. It is no exaggeration to say that his was indeed a remarkably encyclopedic mind, and that he himself was a rare personality among contemporary Muslim scholars.

Al Fārūqī at first emigrated to Beirut, Lebanon, where he studied at the American University of Beirut, enrolling the following year at Indiana University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, to obtain an M.A. in philosophy in 1949. He was then accepted for entry into Harvard University's department of philosophy where he was awarded a second M.A. in philosophy in March 1951. However, he decided to return to Indiana University where he submitted his Ph.D thesis to the department of philosophy obtaining his doctorate in September 1952. The title of his thesis was, "Justifying the Good: Metaphysics and Epistemology of Value".

Al Fārūqī then studied Islam in Cairo and other centers of Muslim learning, and Christianity at the Faculty of Divinity, McGill University. He taught at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University; the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi; the Institute of Higher Arabic Studies of the League of Arab States, Cairo University; Al-Azhar University, Cairo; and at Syracuse University, USA, where he held the position of Associate Professor of Religion between 1964 and 1968, developing a program of Islamic Studies.

In the Fall of 1968 Al Fārūqī became professor of Islamic studies and history of religions in the Department of Religion, Temple University, a position he held until his tragic death in 1986.

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*But do not think of those that have been slain in God's cause as dead. Nay, they are alive! With their Sustainer have they their sustenance. (Qur'an 3:169)*

*For, they who have attained to faith in God and His Apostle – it is they, they who uphold the truth, and they who bear witness [thereto] before God: [and so] they shall have their reward and their light! But as for those who are bent on denying the truth and on giving the lie to Our messages – it is they who are destined for the blazing fire! (Qur'an 57:19)*

PROFESSOR Isma'īl Rājī al Fārūqī was a trailblazer of Islamics or Islamic Studies in the modern age. Since the 1960s onwards, al Fārūqī, along with Professor Fazlur Rahman of the University of Chicago and Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University, were the most prominent scholars of Islamics in north America, when Islamics was making an appearance as a discipline of study, research and discourse at the universities. Each of them made their special contributions – Fazlur Rahman in Islamic thought, Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Islamic mysticism and Isma'īl al Fārūqī in the study of Islam within the academic study of religion and Islamization of Knowledge.

Al Fārūqī wrote several books and chapters of introduction to Islam viz., chapters on Islam in Wing T. Chan, (ed.) *Great Asian Religions: An Anthology*, (Macmillan, 1969); and also in his own book *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (Macmillan, 1975) which he co-edited with David E. Sopher. He also wrote a lengthy introduction to Islam in a book titled, *Islam* (Argus Communications, 1979, current editions published by Amana Publications) and Isma'īl al Fārūqī, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam*, (Macmillan, 1986) published posthumously.

I discovered the manuscript of this book “Introduction to Islam” as a finished work in Isma'īl al Fārūqī's papers at the International Institute of Islamic Thought, (IIIT) Herndon, VA, USA in 2010.

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In the years, 2009–2010, I was appointed as a visiting associate professor and the Malaysia Chair for Islam in Southeast Asia at the Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., USA. This appointment came as a God given opportunity to fulfill my dream of contributing towards making the scholarship and memory of al Fārūqī a continuing legacy for our and future generations. I was glad to be given the opportunity to access the Fārūqī papers at the IIIT. I remain grateful to Dr. Jamal Barzinji, Dr. Hisham Altalib, Dr. Iqbal Unus and Dr. Abu Baker al-Shingieti for giving me access and for trusting in my ambition to contribute towards making al Fārūqī's contribution a living heritage. I went through the Fārūqī papers covering his academic career between the years 1961 and 1986, which gave me a unique insight into the personality, mind and contributions of one of the great scholars of Islam. These papers are a mine of resources, containing al Fārūqī's published and unpublished works and activities covering various topics and areas of knowledge, thought, and research in the life of a Muslim intellectual. It would take a lifetime to work on them as a field of research. I have decided to work only on published and unpublished works of al Fārūqī in the area of study of religion and Islam, which is the area of my academic research interest. *Inshā' Allāh*, I hope to complete this during my lifetime.

My association with Isma'īl al Fārūqī began in 1984 when he offered me a scholarship to pursue my doctoral studies at the Department of Religion, Temple University, Philadelphia, USA. I was fortunate to study with al Fārūqī courses such as Ancient Near Texts, Qur'an, Islam and Art, Introduction to Muslim and Christian Theology through the Study of Abul Ala Maududi and Karl Barth, and History of Religions. From the deep knowledge we received from al Fārūqī, and his insistence that we pursue high standards of academic study and research with rigorous methodology, we – his students – were forged to perform up to his high expectations and pursue a high standard of scholarship. For us, he was a walking encyclopedia, full of intellectual energy, academic enthusiasm, and a great scholar with deep knowledge of Islam and world religions – a rare combination of intellect and accomplishment by a contemporary Muslim scholar.

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Al Fārūqī probably finished writing this manuscript in 1975. Why 1975? In the original dated manuscript which I have now updated, al Fārūqī mentions in chapter 9, titled Hajj, that Muslims have performed the Hajj 1395 times until 1975. Hence my conclusion that this manuscript was written in 1975.

In spite of being a 36 years old manuscript, the contents of this book are as fresh as ever. I have not changed its main theme or contents except for some corrections following the remarks al Fārūqī had made on the sidelines of the manuscript, which he did not incorporate. I have updated the statistical information contained in the manuscript, bringing them up to date to current times.

This insider introduction to Islam is written by al Fārūqī within the parameters of his methodological approach to the study of Islam and religion. Al Fārūqī's approach to the study and presentation of Islam is based on three methods viz., history of religion and the phenomenological approach towards Islam combined with a Fārūqīan view of interreligious dialogue from an Islamic perspective.

Employing the history of religions approach from a Muslim perspective based on the study and knowledge of historical critical research of Ancient Near Eastern history and text, al Fārūqī proposes a non-nationalistic view of *‘urūbah* – Arabism as a monotheistic worldview and source of Muslim civilization. For al Fārūqī, the Arabs are the founders of monotheism in the history of religions and the monotheistic conception of *dīn*. This had appeared in the form of Arab religious humanism expressed in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim forms of monotheism, i.e. religion in the Arab mind.

*‘Urūbah* is an integral part of Arab consciousness; it is an Arab view of the world formed on the basis of a monotheistic view of religion. The emergence of monotheism through poetic reflections and religious meditation of Arab *ḥanīfs* – monotheists and prophets – transformed the Arabs from a tribal culture to a world religious community. Monotheism integrated the Arabs.

Al Fārūqī commented that all Arabs are monotheists, “All those who have inhabited the Near East, whether permanently or transiently, were Arabs. All of them have contributed to the legacy which the

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Arabs proudly call their own.”<sup>1</sup> As per al Fārūqī, the Arabs have been the carriers of the divine message of monotheism in the history of religion.

Using an innovative and modern scholarly approach toward the study of Islam and its civilization, al Fārūqī addressed the concept of *dīn* identified with the theology of *tawhīd* – unity of God both historically and ideationally. This is evidenced in al Fārūqī’s early works such as ‘*Urūbah and Religion* where he asserted that ‘*urūbah* when interpreted in its non-Arab nationalist notion contains the core of Muslim religious consciousness, its faith and its values. And this has been recognized by both the Arabs and non-Arabs who became the members of the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This approach to Islamic religion and civilization is al Fārūqī’s academically solid foundational approach to Islam which reverberates again and again in this book. This Fārūqīan non-nationalistic view of Islam should not unnerve the non-Arab Muslims, who through their historical encounter, cultural experience and religious creativity imbibed the Arab view of *dīn* based on *tawhīd* – monotheism – in their various geographic environments, thereby contributing towards the flowering of Islam as a worldwide universal civilization. In fact, as a universal religion Islam asserts that *tawhīd* as belief in One, Universal God is not the sole property of a geographic community such as the Arabs. It does not belong to the Arab in a nationalistic or racist sense. God bequeathed the notion of *tawhīd* to the Arabs as a part of humanity since pre-historic times and they shared it with the rest of humanity with the emergence of Islam. Before the Muslims, Judaism and Christianity too contained the concept of monotheism but the Jews made it exclusive to themselves turning monotheism into a nationalistic ideology. And the Christians split over defining monotheism as seen through the Christological debates engaged in by the ante-Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers<sup>2</sup> as well as Arabian and Western Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Isma’il al-Faruqi, ‘*Urūbah and Religion* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1962), p. 9.

2 Alexander Roberts et al., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. 10 volumes (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994). Alexander Roberts et al., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. 14 volumes (Hendrickson Publishers, 1994). W. H. C. Friend, *Rise of Christianity* (Fortress Press, 1986).

3 Isma’il al-Faruqi, ‘*Urūbah and Religion*, p. 101.

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Adopting the phenomenological approach towards Islam, al Fārūqī presents knowledge about Islam as it appears to the consciousness without bracketing it through Muslim cultural prejudices and biases. In this sense, al Fārūqī was the foremost Muslim phenomenologist of religion of the modern age, following in the earlier Muslim tradition of phenomenology of religion evidenced in the works of al-Bayrūnī (973-1048) and Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064) whose works he admired tremendously.

Al Fārūqī was a pioneer and active participant in Islam's dialogue with other religions in the West. As a citizen and resident in the West, al Fārūqī engaged actively in the interreligious dialogue movement which in the 1960s was in its early stages in the West, following the dialogue initiatives of the World Council of Churches and the II Vatican Council. In this book one feels the presence of the dialogical aspect of al Fārūqī's intellectual engagement as he presents the meaning and message of Islam to the wider world community. In this endeavor he adapts Muslim epistemology to changing times.

Al Fārūqī laid the foundation for a new interpretation and analysis of the quintessence of the Islamic religious principle of *tawḥīd* and its relevance to different dimensions of human life, thought and practice. In fact, his various academic contributions raised the level of Islamic scholarship to a new higher intellectual stage whose relevance continues until today.

Al Fārūqī has left behind a school of thought known as the school of 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.

As a former student of al Fārūqī, whose inspiration continues to shape my personal and academic life, I dedicate my effort in editing and updating this book to my teacher and mentor. Indeed, I have felt al Fārūqī's presence beside me during the process of working on the manuscript.

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May Allah (SWT)\* bless Professor al Fārūqī and his wife Dr. Lois Lamyā al Fārūqī (1926-1986), whose lives and tragic deaths have become a part of our memory, everyday life, thought and practice. I will always remain their student.

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MARCH 2011

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\* (SWT) – *Subhānahu wa Ta‘ālā*: May He be praised and may His transcendence be affirmed. Said when referring to God.



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WHEN ISLAM AROSE in the seventh century CE, it spread across continents with shocking speed. Its political power eclipsed and brought down the two formidable empires of the world, Persia and Byzantium. The convincing logic of its theological claim, the ennobling uplift of its pietism and morality, the pragmatic efficiency of its law, the appealing universality of its brotherhood, and the moving commitment and liberality of its adherents – all these disarmed the millions and persuaded them to join its ranks. For a thousand years it was unparalleled in its world power, affluence, high civilization and culture. For a thousand years it was the only challenger of Europe, and it came close to a conquest of that continent. Europe put up a fight with it in a dozen crusades, all of which came to naught. Another campaign launched by Christendom in Spain succeeded and brought to an end seven centuries of Islamic dominion in the Iberian Peninsula. It was only in modern times, i.e., in the last two centuries, that Europe succeeded in conquering the Muslim World, and subjecting it to colonial fragmentation and rule. Even then, the religion of Islam continued to spread in Asia and Africa, and to do so at a greater pace than Christianity, despite the support its missionaries received from the colonial power.

This long history of confrontation and conflict gave rise to countless rumors and fabrications designed to place Islam and its adherents in a bad light. Together with misunderstandings of a religion and culture that are different from one's own, the antagonistic allegations became built-in prejudices, hard to shake off. A very special care is therefore needed by the student of Islam to remain open minded, and a very special effort is called for to empathize with the data, if he is to understand them as they are.

The reward for such exertion is great. Genuine understanding of Islam, the religion, will reveal to the student that Islam is a later

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moment of that very consciousness which produced Judaism and Christianity; that Islam, the culture, is as much a source of the Western civilization of the present millennium as classical Greece and Rome. He will discover that Islam's anti-clericalism made it the first "Protestant" revolution, that its rationalism made it the first "Enlightenment," that its pragmatism made it the first "technocracy," and that its law of war and peace made it the first "United Nations."

Once this vision is achieved, it becomes easy to relate oneself to the sixth of humanity in understanding and fellowship. That is what you are here invited to achieve.

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

C. 1975