

ISMAIL RAJI AL-FARUQI, ED. ATAULLAH SIDDIQUI, *ISLAM AND OTHER FAITHS*

The Islamic Foundation and the International Institute of Islamic Thought, Leicester, U.K., pp. 370.

REVIEWED BY MARYAM JAMEELAH, Sant Nagar, Lahore.

One of the most active and dedicated workers for *Da'wah* and inter-faith dialogue in America during the late 20th century before his brutal murder in 1986, was the well-known Palestinian-American scholar and author, Prof. Ismail Raji al-Faruqi. Born in Jaffa, Palestine in 1921, he grew up in a prosperous highly-educated family. After graduation from the American University of Beirut in 1941, he became the District Governor of Galilee in Palestine under the British mandate. The 1948 Palestine War left him and his family homeless refugees. Seeking refuge in the U.S.A., he earned two Masters degrees in Philosophy at Indiana and Harvard Universities. Seeking his roots, he studied at Al-Azhar University from 1954-1958. At the invitation of Dr. Wilfred Cantwell Smith he returned to America where he studied Judaism and Christianity at the Faculty of Divinity at McGill University 1959-61. He began his professional career as Professor of Islamic Studies at the Central Institute for Islamic Research, Karachi, (1961-1963) followed by a year (1964) as visiting Professor of the History of Religions at Chicago University. Then he joined the faculty of Syracuse University and in 1968 became Professor of Islamic Studies and History of Religions at Temple University, a post he held until his death in 1986.

Not long after al-Faruqi successfully established his academic career in America, he experienced an acute identity crisis.

There was a time in my life.....when all I cared about was proving to myself that I could win my physical and intellectual existence from the West. But when I won it, it became meaningless. I asked myself; Who am I? A Palestinian? A Philosopher? A liberal humanist? My answer was: I am a Muslim:

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M. TARIQ QURAIISHI, *Ismail R. Faruqi: An Enduring Legacy*, Muslim Students Association, Plainfield, Indiana, 1987, p.9.

REVIEWED BY MARYAM JAMEELAH, Sant Nagar, Lahore.

The book under review is a well-edited anthology of Professor al-Faruqi's most representative essays and articles, written over a span of two decades of studies in comparative religion, focusing mainly on Christian/Muslim relations and *Da'wah*.

Dr. Faruqi began his intellectual life deeply influenced by Arab secular nationalism and modern western philosophy. The loss of his homeland in the 1948 Palestine War left an indelible scar on his soul for the rest of his life which plainly shows in his vehement hatred against the modern Zionism movement throughout this book. Nevertheless, he is always careful to distinguish between Judaism and Zionism and never indiscriminately condemns all Jews. His innate powerful faith in Islam increasingly made him turn away from secularism and devote his later life to inter-faith dialogue and *Da'wah* with the zeal of a crusader.

Although Prof. Al Faruqi readily concedes that all the major world religions, particularly the Abrahamic faiths, share common ground with Islam, he never makes the mistake of treating them all as equally valid. Throughout this book, he is unshakably convinced of the absolute supremacy of Islam. He bases his entire inter-faith dialogue on his conviction that Christianity is closer to Islam than any other religion. The reviewer would beg to differ. Despite its nationalistic exclusivism, Orthodox Judaism is closer to Islam than Christianity, not only due to its much purer monotheism, but even more, on the fact that it reveres the authority of the *Halakah* or its unchanging all-embracing code of Divine law as Muslims do their *Shari'at*, resulting in many similar practices of Orthodox Jews and Muslims, totally absent in Christianity. Lacking any comprehensive code of Divine law, Christianity had to take over pagan Roman law, thus compromising from the outset with secularism.

Likewise, al-Faruqi is hopeful about the ultimate consequences of Vatican II for better relations with Christianity which he thinks can bring it closer to Islam. He also regards the Protestant Reformation in a positive light. Based

on evolutionism and progassivism. Modernism has nearly destroyed Christianity in the West by Vatican II, (1962-1965) followed by a mass exodus from the Church. Rather than trying to change the doctrines and rituals of other religions, Dialogue should seek, above all, to defend traditional orthodoxy. To defend absolute transcendental values and orthodoxy in all religions is to defend orthodoxy in Islam itself. Unfortunately, the author does not seem to realize this.

Throughout this book, Professor al-Faruqi strongly condemns the modern West for its colonialism and imperialism, sexual promiseuity, family breakdown, crime, druges, alfoholism, subjectivism, exaggerated individualism, relativism and nihilism. Yet at the same time on the other hand, he regards the Renaissance, Enlightenment, French and American revolutions, scientific, technological and industrial progress and unrestricted economic growth in a positive light, repeatedly pointing out “medieval” Islam contributions to modern western civilization. In other words, he attacks and condemns all the effects and results of the modern West but not the root-causes. He never rejects modernism or Humanism themselves but only other abuses and excesses.

To be effective, *Da'wah* must accept the entire historical and cultural legacy of Islam. Tragically, this the author fails to do.

His works contain certain theses which would not be acceptable to many Muslim scholars, traditional of modern. Dr. Ismail R. al-Faruqi's espousal of a certain kind of what one might call neo-Wahabi/Salafism – emphasizing the teachings of Ibn Taimiya and Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahab and their students which preached only the transcendence of God at the expense of His nearness and immanence, caused him to reject the whole tradition of Islamic philosophy as well as opposing most of the religious thought of Sufism....

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SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR, *The Essence of Dr. Faruqi's Life Work*, Islamic Horizons, Plainfield, Indiana, August-September 1986, p-26.

REVIEWED BY MARYAM JAMEELAH, Sant Nagar, Lahore.

Indeed in his earlier book, *Islam*, (Argus Communications, Niles, Illinois, 1979. pp. 77-80), Dr. Faruqi openly blames Sufism for Muslim decline. He never appeared to realize that if one rejects classic Muslim scholars, thinkers and saints of the past, what else can fill the void except the atheism and materialism of modern western thought?

Despite these shortcomings, this book highlights the significant contributions of an important 20th century Muslim scholar to inter-faith dialogue and the development of Islamic studies in American colleges and universities today.

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SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR, PHOTO, ALI KAZUYESHI NOMACHI, *Mecca the Blessed, Medina the Radiant: the Holiest Cities of Islam*. Aperture Foundation, New York, 1997, pp. 192.

REVIEWED BY MARYAM JAMEELAH, Sant Nagar, Lahore

After Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries climaxed by the abolition of the Khilafate in 1924, many western politicians and orientalists believed that Islam would completely disappear within their lifetimes. Islam was then studied in the West as a cultural phenomenon that should be carefully recorded for posterity before it vanished. During the 19th century the number of Hajjis was decreasing every year. In 1814 it was only 70,000 and already down to 30,000 in 1860 the 19th century adventurers and explorers – Burkhardt, Richard Burton and Christian Hongronje, meticulously recorded their observations of Haj before they supposed it would soon disappear without a trace.

As most of the culture of traditional Islamic civilization has indeed been destroyed during the last two centuries by colonialism and post-colonialism, the recent revival of Haj is amazing and mercy from Almighty Allah. Today the great *Haram* in Mecca is always full and *Çamçaf* round the holy Ka'aba is constant during every hour of the day and night.

The book under review with its magnificent colour photography of all the Holy Places is certainly the most beautiful on *Haj* to day to appear in

English. The moving essays by Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, director of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, Washington D.C., reverently convey to the non-Muslim reader, not only the historical background of these sacred cities, but also the meaning and precise spiritual significance of the *Hajj* rituals to the Muslim.

Photos depicting the sacred shrines today under Saudi rule are contrasted with archival pictures of the same places under the Ottoman Turks a century ago. What has been gained in magnificence, splendour and grandiosity of the present Saudi shrines has utterly lost their humble modesty to the human scale characteristic of the Ottoman structures which was certainly more pleasing to the Almighty. The greatly expanded Prophet's mosque in its newest sections more closely resembles the palace of the monarch than a place of worship. While the Ottoman Turks always scrupulously preserved the sanctity of all the Holy Places, the expansion of the *Haram* at Mecca and the Prophet's mosque at Medina was accomplished at the cost of massive demolitions of nearly all the traditional historic architecture of the Holy Cities, including the callous destruction of numerous irreplaceable sites associated with the life of the Holy Prophet, the *Ahl-i-Bait* of his family and the *Āṣāḥab* (his Companions). Worst of all, inappropriate, imported technology has been allowed to run rampant, including hideous fly-overs, billboards, neon lights, traffic jams, smog, suffocating tunnels and even escalators within the precincts of the sacred *Haram*, all mercifully excluded from the pages of this book.

Despite so much desecration and defilement of Arabia in the last few decades, it is a miracle that the rites of the *Hajj* survive unchanged and the worshippers' fervour, depicted so movingly in this book, undaunted.

These photos show Hajjis of all races, nationalities and stations of life patiently enduring the rigours of *Hajj* and *Ummrah* during Ramadan together solely for the pleasure of Almighty Allah, thus negating the artificiality of the colonial secular state and vigorously affirming the universality of the *Ummah* and its message to the modern world.

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