

Religions As a “Life Fact”: Al Faruqi’s Impact on The International Islamic University Malaysia

by

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Abstract

This study addresses the teaching of religion at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The program was influenced by the thought and curricula developed along Faruqian lines. It is a program that delves into Faruqi’s view of meta-religion rooted in an ethical paradigm giving it universal perspective and approach toward the study of comparative religion. Actually, the establishment of IIUM and the religion study curriculum implemented at IIUM is a development of Faruqi’s earlier vision regarding the teaching of Islam as a civilization and worldview, which he had envisioned and hoped to apply to the academic program at the Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Pakistan during his professorship there in 1960s, but which was not realized.

Teaching religion in the West was mostly governed by the superiority of Christianity over other religions. The experience of the Department of Religion, at Temple University in the United States, perhaps, is a rare exception where other religions are taught by scholars who adhere to the tenets of the religion they teach.¹ It might be said that this was the situation in the sixties; and certainly since then, a number of institutions in the West followed the lead of Temple University in this regard. Most importantly, perhaps, is it possible for universities in the Muslim world to develop a discipline of teaching religions based on this principle or not. This is because the way

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we teach religion will determine the quality of religious sensibility, which governs the exchange of ideas or the parameters of inter-religious dialogue.

Teaching religion from the perspective of a “World Community Citizen”² will always be a real challenge, but it presents an opportunity of articulating the international dimension of monotheism. It is because the monotheistic understanding of divinity will degenerate into a monolatrous vision, if it does not uphold the principle of the universality of ethics. When the absolute transcendence of God is unambiguously emphasized, the universality of ethics will be both logically and practically maintained within a framework that combines both theory and practice in one unified system.

In this regard, teaching religion at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) reflects a sensibility that takes seriously the universal dimensions of Islam to their logical and practical conclusions. More seriously, these universal dimensions serve as an overarching principle for restructuring the curricula of Islamic-revealed knowledge and defining its content. Therefore, the criteria of Islamic-revealed knowledge serve as the sole principles for both understanding and evaluating the scholarly tradition of Islamic sciences. It should be remembered that this experience of teaching religion has been largely influenced by the works of Ismail R. al Faruqi’s work – especially *Christian Ethics*,³ *Islamization of Knowledge*,⁴ and *Cultural Atlas of Islam*.⁵

In this article I will focus on the experience of the IIUM. A considerable space will be devoted to the impact of al Faruqi’s legacy on both the academic agents and teaching materials.

The story of the establishment of the IIUM reflects the complexities of both the framework of the post-colonial state and the dynamics of the Ummah. It has been stated that the IIUM was established in response to the recommendations of the Makkah Conference on Islamic Education in 1977.⁶ But it is equally important to be reminded of the fact that the agenda of establishing an Islamic university in Malaysia was there for a long time before the conference in 1977. The concept paper, which was presented to the Malaysian government cabinet meeting, suggested that the Islamic university should focus on educating Muslim professionals rather than producing students of Islamic studies.⁷ When the IIUM was established in 1983, it had two *kulliyahs* (faculties): *Kulliyah of Laws* and *Kulliyah of Economics and Management*. In addition to these, a Centre for Fundamental Knowledge (CFK) was meant to provide service courses to these *kulliyahs*. Obviously, the graduates of these two *kulliyahs* were supposed to behave as Muslim professionals. For that objective, the CFK was to focus

on the spiritual and ethical aspects of education, while the conventional subjects in economics, management, and law were left to the *kulliyyahs*. Perhaps, the only difference between the *Kulliyyah* of Laws and the *Kulliyyah* of Economics and Management was that the Shar‘iah was taught in the *Kulliyyah* of Laws, within the framework of the common-law experience in Malaysia.

The main objective of the curricula of the CFK was to inculcate Islamic values. To this end, twenty-two credit hours were devoted to the students learning about the fundamentals of Islamic sciences, Islamic values, and relevant lessons from Islamic civilization. These academic subjects were supported by extra-curriculum activities, such as *ibadah* camps and others. It should be remarked that the CFK was meant to be the central nerve of the university, where the character of the student would be molded according to its criteria of the Muslim professional. Thus, the CFK played a vital role in both academic processes and character building. Evidently, the very definition of the Muslim professional was left to the CFK to decide on its components. Most importantly, perhaps, the rationale behind establishing the university was to produce Muslim professionals. Therefore, that distinctive feature of the graduate was supposed to be acquired during his academic and extra-curriculum activities organized by the CFK. Clearly, then, the principle of secular humanism in university education was completely abandoned. This was replaced by a set of universal Islamic principles, in which morality and religion were tied together. Most seriously, the Islamic worldview, which is based on *tawhid*, substituted a positivistic worldview. All these were done consciously in a manner that helped the students to systematize Islamic values and to see their relevancy to their respective professions. In this regard, Islam was presented as a comprehensive religion – and in perfect harmony with reason, science, and progressive values. Much emphasis was put on Islamic spirituality, the work ethic, and *wasatiyyah* (moderation).

It should be remembered that, during the eighties, al Faruqi was regularly visiting Malaysia. When the university was established, he visited the campus in Petaling Jaya and delivered a public lecture on the importance of managing time properly, discipline, and how a Muslim professional should systematize the values of work ethics.⁸ Quite obviously, al Faruqi saw in the establishment of the IIUM a great opportunity for implementing his ideas on Islamic education.⁹ Prior to this, he noticed that the experiment of the Chicago Islamic College was doomed to fail and it was quite unrealistic to develop the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) into

a postgraduate school of Islamic studies in North America. Thus, the only hope was embodied in this new institution of higher learning established in a country in which al Faruqi had a great trust in its political leadership.¹⁰ Most importantly, however, for al Faruqi, Malaysia unlike other Muslim countries created an atmosphere of mutual trust between the political leaders and Muslim scholars. That trust contributed to a healthy dialogue on Islamic issues at the national level. Few months before his tragic death in 1986, al Faruqi was ready to serve the Ummah by accepting the post of the rector of the IIUM. He had high regards for both Malaysian Muslim intellectuals and the political leadership of the country. It seemed that International Institute of Islamic Thought would be given the chance to implement their ideas about Islamic education and the IIUM would be the platform for such an experiment. This experiment was largely, although not entirely, dominated by the concept of Islamization of knowledge (IOK) and included some elements of traditional understanding of Islamic sciences as well as conventional scholarship on the social sciences.¹¹ It was inconceivable that the remnants of traditional learning and conventional social sciences would disappear and give way to the IOK enterprise. It was clear that the experiment would utilize the expertise of both traditional scholars and conventional Muslim social scientists. It was because IOK was defined as “a process toward a moving target,”¹² which meant that IOK is largely not a fixed agenda. More specifically, it did not have either a ready-made blueprint or qualified scholars who would carry out the project. The intellectual leaders of IOK, who assumed the leadership of the IIUM by 1988 – and to a limited but growing extent, the university professors of IIUM – were at last ready to embark on the project of reforming Islamic education according to the IOK vision. Although al Faruqi was not around, yet, his intellectual legacy was at the center of the process – through the presence of his students who were well represented in the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences.¹³ They have been given leading posts in the *kulliyah* and sat on an important committee at the university level. In addition to that, al Faruqi’s articulation of IOK influenced if not completely dominated the intellectual scene at the university. It might not be an overstatement to claim that al Faruqi’s presence was felt in every serious endeavor, both in scholarly debates and evaluational processes. This, however, should not be considered as though no other contribution was made by the rest of the scholars in the university, but rather to point to the fact that al Faruqi determined the quality of the process of IOK both at the formal and practical levels. The literature on Islamization of knowledge in

the eighties was rather limited, and al Faruqi served as the sole theoretician of the project. His understanding of the project and its demands that was reflected in the action plan provided guidance for the intellectual leaders for years to come. It might be said that it was because of the nature of the way IOK was perceived as a process, gave al Faruqi that special place at the beginning. Then, the very nature of the project made it possible to transcend al Faruqi's concerns at both the formal and practical levels. But it is equally important to remark that making al Faruqi's legacy the starting point, though it was an apt beginning for the implementation of IOK, made a complete departure from his legacy quite unlikely.

Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, when he was appointed the second rector of the IIUM, established the *Kulliyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) in 1990.¹⁴ This decision was meant among other things to reformulate the objective of an Islamic university, as it had been perceived by the concept paper that led to the establishment of the IIUM. It became very clear that the implementation of IOK could not be possible within the previous setup of the university, in which the CFK assumed the central position by only offering service courses. Moreover, this CFK was neither capable of doing the required reform of the Islamic sciences, nor providing a critical understanding of the social sciences. It was essentially meant to affect the behavioral aspect of a graduate who was perceived to be a Muslim professional. By being a Muslim professional, obviously he or she will be part of the workforce but with a distinct character. Evidently, this would neither reform education nor provide an Islamic alternative to secular humanism. It would at best change the university structure at the behavioral level and certainly would not be able to shake both the metaphysical or the axiological foundations of its system. It was because of this understanding, Abu Sulayman felt that the need for the establishment of this *kulliyah* to include the objectives of the CFK and ultimately to achieve the goals of IOK. Thus, the KIRKHS was established to serve the broad agenda of IOK, in addition to but not excluding the specific objectives of the CFK.

Some might rightly feel that the establishment of the KIRKHS changed the direction of the university from the simple objective of providing the market with Muslim professionals to the grand idea of attempting to reform Islamic education by implementing the concept of IOK. But it was certainly not to abandon the idea of producing Muslim professionals. That objective became part and parcel of the new agenda. Even some might argue that the best way to achieve that goal would be through integration of

knowledge. This became the main principle around which the *Kulliyyah* of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences was set up to facilitate the goal of integrating social sciences with Islamic Revealed Knowledge. Administratively speaking, the *kulliyyah* was to have two wings: social sciences departments and a large department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage. The integration was ultimately perceived to lead the way for a creative synthesis between Islamic heritage and contemporary knowledge within the Islamic worldview. It should be remarked that the beginning of this process was having a number of difficulties. The most direct one was the resistance it faced from some professors who were originally not convinced that such an undertaking is both possible or desirable. Obviously, for any process, the space of ambiguity might lead to confusion and consequently to misunderstanding. This was exactly the case with those professors, though they were convinced of the viability of project, yet they found it very difficult to see it as a process that was open to all possibilities. They would certainly feel comfortable with it without its fluid nature. This was because a religious program for them should be based on a fixed set of principles, which consequently lead to an already given objective. For them, if it is a process, then it must have both lucidity and a fixed objective at the end. Perhaps, those who emphasized that IOK should be seen as a process rather than a goal in itself were inhibited by the fact that *taqlid* (imitation) is so pervasive in works of the majority of professors in the university to the extent that any new idea can easily be misrepresented and consequently either completely absorbed within a wrong framework or rejected for the wrong reasons. Thus, the only alternative was to stress the importance of the process as a dynamic that is capable of creating a new capacity that in return will open new horizons. This process, by nature, cannot be fixed by any parameters other than what it generates throughout the process. Therefore, one cannot be able to predict the nature or these parameters beforehand. It might be suggested that the element of creativity in the synthesis is only governed by the Islamic framework as an overarching principle. This was seen as the only way of allowing new *ijtihad* to lead the process rather than being dominated by *taqlid*.¹⁵

The experiment was expected to produce university textbooks in different disciplines of both social sciences and Islamic Revealed Knowledge. These textbooks, however, were supposed to be based on the principle of the integration of knowledge. This was a much easier goal and more possible to bring about, rather than the lofty objective of IOK. The latter, per-

haps, was regarded as a grand idea for doing the reform of Islamic education, whereas the former was seen as a specific target.

Experiment of the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage

It seems from the name of the department itself, that it is neither a department of Islamic studies nor a department of traditional Islamic sciences.¹⁶ The main objective of the department is to emphasize the importance of the criteria of Islamic Revealed Knowledge in teaching Islamic sciences or Islamic civilization. If the CFK was by and large similar to centers of teaching Islamic sciences as service courses to students of conventional disciplines in most of universities in the Arab world, the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge was designed to attempt to reform Islamic sciences and also offer services courses to the university students. The service courses were considered as a package consisted of the essentials of Islamic knowledge that would provide the Islamic worldview and intellectual as well as ethical guidance for the students. The difference might be insignificant in terms of the information that had been provided, but the emphasis on the cognitive difference between Islamic sciences and social sciences would raise the students' awareness of their cultural identity.

Evidently, the beginning of the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge in 1990 was like all beginnings very modest. It did have around one hundred students and less than ten lecturers and professors.¹⁷ The new approach of integration of knowledge was reflected in the structure of the degree. It was agreed that students of social sciences should have a minor in Islamic Revealed Knowledge, whereas students of Islamic Revealed Knowledge should have their minor in one of the social sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, political science, etc. Students of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage were required to study a number of shared courses of Islamic sciences:

1. Sciences of the Qur'an I
2. Sciences of the Qur'an II
3. Sciences of Hadith I
4. Sciences of Hadith II
5. Biography of Prophet
6. Islamic *Dawah*

7. Islamic *Aqidah*
8. *Ilm al-Kalam*
9. Introduction to *Fiqh*
10. Introduction to *Usul al-Fiqh*
11. Research Methodology

These courses consisted of thirty-three credit hours. In addition to these, students was given a choice to select their appropriate concentration area, where they were required to study fifteen credit hours in one of these areas: *Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh, Aqidah* and *Ilm al-Kalam*, and *Dawah*. Then, the student was required to select another six credit hours from the rest of concentration areas in Islamic Revealed Knowledge. To cater to the integration agenda, the student was required to take twenty-seven credit hours in his minor, and eighteen credit hours would be devoted to the introductions of the social sciences. The rest of the credit hours were devoted to both English and Arabic languages. This made the student to graduate with a total of 129 credit hours. The student was required to work closely with his academic advisor in selecting the relevant courses.¹⁸

The general principle that guided the structure of the degree was to allow the student to take courses from different concentration areas in Islamic sciences, rather than to narrow down his or her area of specialization in Islamic sciences. To this end, students were encouraged to diversify their choices from the areas of concentrations in Islamic sciences. This was meant to emphasize the principle of unity of knowledge in general and in Islamic sciences in particular. With this attitude toward Islamic sciences and knowledge in general, it became quite obvious that the integration of knowledge as both a principle for understanding and an academic arrangement would be highly regarded by the students. Most importantly, the demarcation between religious sciences and secular sciences was not, at all, conducive for such understanding.

Although the principle of integration of knowledge was the focus of the whole process of IOK at this stage, yet a number of criticisms were leveled against it by both professors from the social sciences departments as well as the Islamic Revealed Knowledge department.¹⁹ It should be remembered that there was a general consensus among the faculty members about the need for attempting the reform of Islamic education. It was equally true that the principle of integration is far more desirable than mere comparisons between social sciences and Islamic sciences. And yet, these

criticisms of the experiment were essentially leveled against the structure of the degree. Most specifically, some concerns were voiced about the space that was left for the specialization – that is, whether it was adequate or not. A less significant observation was about the name of the degree, “Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage.” It was considered as an unusual nomenclature for Islamic sciences.

It was because of all these concerns, the administration of the *kulliyyah* decided to review the curricula of the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage. The decision was made prior to the graduation of the first batch of students in August 1993. Five academic committees were established:

1. *Usul al-Din* and Contemporary Islamic Thought Committee
2. Al-Qur’an and *al-Tafsir* Committee
3. *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh* Committee
4. Al-Hadith Committee
5. Comparative Religion Committee

Obviously, the rationale behind this classification of Islamic sciences is not consistent with what is known in traditional Islamic universities. Most seriously, it separates Hadith studies from Qur’anic studies and does the same thing between *usul al-din* and Comparative Religion. To its credit, it refocuses the subject matter of contemporary Islamic thought and adds it to *usul al-din*. After one year of intensive consultation and discussion, an academic workshop was held to focus on the principles that should guide the reform. It was viewed that the suggested reform should include both the structure of the degree and the teaching materials used for Islamic sciences. An attempt to reach a consensus on how to teach *aqidah* was enforced by the fact that the traditional way of teaching it was more controversial than constructive. Therefore, it became evident that the focus should be on the issues that are of concern to contemporary Muslims, rather than the dividing historical issues between Muslim sects. Most importantly, however, there was a dire need to develop an Islamic methodology based completely on Qur’anic and Sunnah principles, and then the presentation of the whole heritage would be reviewed in order to determine whether it was in line with these principles. Time and time again, the criteria of Islamic Revealed

Knowledge was emphasized in the discussions. As a result four units were established:

1. Contemporary Islamic Thought and Civilization
2. *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion
3. Qur'anic and Sunnah Studies
4. *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*

These units were designed to develop a curricula that would cover all the areas of Islamic sciences for both the objective of awarding degrees and offering Islamic sciences as university required courses. The coordinators of each unit, with the exception of Contemporary Islamic Thought and Civilization, were required to develop postgraduate programs. These three units – *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion, Qur'anic and Sunnah Studies, and *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh* – were supposed to work out their curricula within the framework of Islamic Revealed Knowledge. Consequently each unit was required to develop its degree structure within that framework. This way, the integration between Islamic sciences was meant to be an important element of the reform. Likewise, the postgraduate program for each unit was to follow the same formula of integration. By August 1994, the four units submitted their final reports to the *kulliyyah* administration. During this time, a heated debate was initiated partly by the coordinators of the units on the relevancy of IOK to the discipline of Islamic Revealed Knowledge. A few traditional scholars in the department completely rejected the idea of the relevancy of IOK to Islamic sciences such as *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*. For them, it was inconceivable, if not ridiculous, to apply the method of IOK to Islamic sciences. This was because, what needed to be reformed was not Islamic sciences, but rather social sciences. It was a contradiction in terms to Islamize *al-fiqh* or *usul al-fiqh*. Evidently, for them, the project of IOK was essentially directed to secular sciences, not religious sciences.

It should be remembered that the root cause of the confusion was based on the idea that IOK is not a methodology, but was rather subject matter. It was, by definition, that Islamic sciences were already Islamized as a subject matter. In Islamic sciences, a distinction was made between the human endeavor to understand the revealed text and the revealed text itself. While the former is changeable due to time space factor. The latter is eternal and not susceptible to change. The distinction between revealed knowledge in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the attempts by Muslim scholars throughout the ages to understand their meanings and percepts was made for an

appropriate understanding of Islamic sciences. In this regard, IOK as a method would focus on the changeable aspects of Islamic sciences. Clearly, the sources of Islamic sciences are the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but these sciences were developed by Muslim scholars in response to their social realities. As a result, the sources represent the infallible part, which is revelation, whereas the human understanding represents the historical aspect of these sciences. This distinction is essential in any learned discourse about the relevancy of IOK to Islamic sciences. This means that the subject matter of reform is not revelation, but its human understanding. Therefore, the relevancy of IOK to *al-fiqh* or *usul al-fiqh* will be on how to relate the *fiqh* to the social realities of the Muslims. It is certainly not enough to assume that the historical *fiqh* is necessary and sufficient to address contemporary problems. It should be noted that the dynamism of *fiqh* is closely connected with its inherent ability to grow through the methodology of practical analogical deduction (*istidlal mursal*) and not the formal one. The former one reduced that ability, because when *qiyas* was perceived as an analogy of a text over another text, then social realities were completely ignored.²⁰

These answers were given in the discussion that resulted in an emphasis on the importance of teaching the history of *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh* and *tarikh al-tashri'* (history of Islamic legislation) as prerequisites for this understanding of the relevancy. More important, however, the study of *fiqh* is meant to be connected with the problems of the society, and the processes of legislation in that society. Instead of studying the historical formations of *fiqh*, it is important to devote a considerable space for understanding the contemporary efforts of the codification of the Shar'iah.

Prior to 1996, the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage became the biggest department in the university. Even worse, it became bigger than some *kulliyahs* in the university, at that time, such as the *Kulliyah* of Laws, Economics and Management, and Engineering. While the number of the students in 1990 was 100 students, in 1996, the total number reached 878 students at the undergraduate level, 23 at the level of attaining a post-graduate diploma, and 74 at the Master level. In addition to these, the department was offering service courses to the rest of the university. Clearly, it was a nightmare for any attempt to provide an efficient academic management for such a huge department with seventy-four faculty members. Therefore, the top management of the university established four departments within an academic division known as Islamic Revealed Knowledge:

Department of Usul al-Din and Contemporary Religion

Department of Qur'anic and Sunnah Studies

Department of *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*

Department of General Studies

The three first departments were required to offer degree courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, whereas the department of General Studies was confined to service courses for the whole university.

It was noted that 75 percent of the students decided to register in the Department of *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*. In November 1996, when these departments were established, it was emphasized that this arrangement is much less an academic one than an administrative one.²¹ This was because the framework of Islamic Revealed Knowledge would provide the platform from which synthetic propositions could be made out of these sciences. Most seriously, if the framework of Islamic Revealed Knowledge were to be abandoned, the very idea of integration of knowledge could not be maintained. It should be remarked that during the experiment of the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage, seventy-four faculty members in various fields of Islamic sciences were active participants in the different processes and phases of the department. During this time, sixty-six courses were developed in different areas of Islamic studies. A number of new courses were initiated to suit the framework of Islamic Revealed Knowledge, however, the traditional Islamic sciences were kept to the minimum. For *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*, for instance, only nine courses were devoted to that specialization. Obviously, other specializations of traditional Islamic sciences were given far less attention.

Since the Department of *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh* became the focus of attention, I will point out the structure of its degree. A student in this department needs to take the following courses that will serve the need for integration of Islamic sciences:

1. Islamic Ethics
2. Methods of *Dawah*
3. Islamic *Aqidah*
4. Qur'an and Sunnah as Source of Knowledge
5. Sciences of the Qur'an
6. Sciences of Hadith
7. *Fiqh al-Sirah*

8. Study of the Qur’an (one credit hour for six semesters)
9. Introduction to *Fiqh*
10. Introduction to *Usul al-Fiqh*
11. Introduction to Research Methodology
12. History of Islamic Civilization

In addition to these required courses, the student of the Department of *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh* is required either to concentrate in *fiqh* or *usul al-fiqh*. The result of the student’s choice will require him or her to study all the *fiqh* courses for instance, if the choice was to concentrate on *fiqh*. In addition to that, another three courses on *usul al-fiqh* will be part of the student’s required courses. The followings are the *fiqh* courses:

1. *Fiqh al-Ibadat*
2. *Fiqh al-Usrah*
3. *Fiqh al-Muamalat*
4. *Fiqh al-Jinayat*
5. *Dirasat Fiqhiyyah Muasirah*
6. *Al-Qawaid al-Fiqhiyyah*
7. *Fiqh al-Siyar*
8. Research Methodology in *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*

The course for Usul al-Fiqh covers:

1. *Mabahath al-Hukum*
2. *Turuq Istnbat al-Hukum*
3. *Adillat al-Ahkam*
4. *Maqasid al-Shariah*
5. *Dirsat fi Masadir al-Usul*
6. *Qirat fi usul al-Fiqh I*
7. *Qirat fi usul al-Fiqh II*
8. Research Methodology in *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*²²

With the exception of Department of General Studies, the other three departments of the Division of Islamic Revealed Knowledge followed the

same structure. The Department of *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion had three areas of concentration instead of two.²³ In addition to *usul al-din* and comparative religion, philosophy was added to them, while the regulations that governed the distribution of the credit hours for the degree were the same as the Department of *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*. The Department of the Qur'an and Sunnah Studies mirrored the same structure of the degree in *Fiqh* and *Usul al-Fiqh*. Finally, the Department of General Studies was meant to be a service department for the whole university. The three degree departments in the Islamic Revealed Knowledge Division went through a regular revisions and developments along the principles of integration of knowledge and the "relevanzation"²⁴ of Islamic subjects to the Muslim Ummah and humanity at large. Since 1996, a number of committees were set up for this objective.

However, it should be noted that the major achievement of the restructuring of the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage in 1996 was to look into the discipline of teaching religion in general and Islam in particular from the perspective that regarded religion as a "life-fact." This meant among other things a complete departure from the discipline of the "history of religions." Most importantly of all, there was a total criticism of Orientalism and its legacy. And, of equal and great significance, it meant a vital reform of the traditional way of teaching Islam in Islamic universities. There was an emphasis on the distinction between the Qur'an and Sunnah and their historical interpretations – on the basis that the former is the eternal source of Islam, whereas the later is historically bound. Therefore, there is a constant need for new *ijtihad* that allows for an understanding the sources and also a building of a meaningful narrative of the historical interpretations. In this regard, the history of the traditional sciences is an integral part of the new *ijtihad*. More seriously, the teaching of traditional sciences is meant as a prerequisite for the new *ijtihad*. Ultimately, the new *ijtihad* will take its place in the traditional learning as a contribution to that living tradition. At the time of the generating the new *ijtihad*, it would have the capacity to transcend the tradition, and yet to be solely governed by the sources of Islam. Though this perspective of teaching Islam in a university setting would be regarded as a unique feature of IIUM, it dated back to the intellectual legacy of al-Afghani, Abduh, Iqbal and others. Obviously, al Faruqi, who claimed to be a significant contributor to that legacy, had a highly visible presence in the intellectual and academic climate of IIUM. This was because of his writing that were

used in IIUM as textbooks and his supervision of the postgraduate works of a number of leading professors at IIUM.²⁵

Since, in this article, I have focused on al Faruqi’s impact on the development of teaching Islam and other religions in a university curriculum, it would be meaningful to devote some space for information about teaching comparative religion within the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion. It should be remembered that the faculty members who taught comparative religion subjects were either the students of al Faruqi or the graduates of Temple University.²⁶ However, the new generation of the lecturers all graduated from department itself. This showed that it is inconceivable that al- Faruqi’s legacy was not the focus of the training of these newly appointed lecturers at the department. Most significantly, his books *Christian Ethics* and *Al-Tawhid* were considered as the main textbooks that cut across the three levels of studies – namely Bachelors, Masters, and Ph.D. Thus, it would be highly unlikely that whoever graduated from the department would not be familiar with al Faruqi’s principles of meta-religion.²⁷

Having said that about the presence of al Faruqi, it should be noted that the method of teaching him would not approach his legacy as a dogma. Evidently, students were told to deal with his writings in a critical manner. This was largely due to the influence of the main postulates of his legacy, which emphasized Islamic rationality and rebuked dogmatism. During this time, a new criticism emerged that was against some aspects of his legacy. Though some of these criticisms aspired to transcend al Faruqi’s position on teaching Islam, yet his main postulate that regarded religion as a “life-fact” was kept intact. It seemed the great achievement of al Faruqi had much less to do with the details of his analysis of both Islam and other religions; rather, it was to do with the fact that he challenged the discipline of the history of religions from within. Most importantly, perhaps, his challenge was developed within the main Islamic parameters of rationality. Moreover, al Faruqi equated these parameters with universal principles of rationality. Thus, his strategy encouraged Muslim scholars to engage others in a meaningful inter-religious dialogue, and not to be inhibited by the secular humanist restrictive agenda. One could argue that al Faruqi’s popularity among Muslim scholars was largely attributed to his usage of the canons of universal rationality to argue for both Islamic humanism and to level a total critique against secular humanism. Though his endeavor was met with little success in Western scholarship, nevertheless, his impact was considerably felt at IIUM.²⁸

It should be remarked that the Department of *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion played a significant role in the process of creating this new discipline of Islamic Revealed Knowledge. This was because the systematization of the postulates of the discipline was largely worked out by faculty members of that department. Most significantly, perhaps, the process of *islah* (reform) and *tajdid* (renewal) in *ulum al-ummah* (sciences of the Ummah) was mainly governed by the principles that were laid down by the scholars of the Department of *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion. This was because they inherited this tradition that regarded principles in this subject matter as the most highest principles. In addition to that, it could be argued that the legacy of al-Imam Abu al-Hassan al-Ashari that worked out the monotheistic metaphysics against the critique of other systems of metaphysics was the driving force behind al Faruqi's account on metaphysics. Al-Ashari's monumental work *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin* and the other volume on *Maqalat al-Mulhidin* ²⁹ would testify to that vision. This tradition that linked *usul al-din*, or the metaphysics of Islam, to the sensibilities of other religions, perhaps, was continued in the works of al Faruqi. It should be remembered that Malaysia is predominantly a Shafi'i-Asharite country. Thus, the link between *Kalam* (Islamic metaphysics) and the study of other religions is not at all alien to this tradition. In addition to that, though Islam is considered as the religion of the state, the presence of other religions in Malaysia is part of its national structure. In this regard, though al Faruqi was critical of the Asharite tradition and was in favor of Ibn Taymiyyah's position on most of the issues that disagreed with the Asharites, yet a close look into al Faruqi's legacy would reveal the fact that he was originally accepting the line of rationality that was established by this tradition.³⁰

Finally, throughout the time the body of knowledge, which was developed by the Division of Islamic Revealed Knowledge, benefited a great deal from al Faruqi's postulates. However, this did not mean that he was highly regarded and considered to be beyond criticism. Much of the criticism that was leveled against his writings was due to his lack of information in one area of Islamic learning or the other. But his method of understanding religious phenomena was invariably accepted across the board.³¹

Let it be remembered that al Faruqi's association with IIUM went through two phases. First, during the eighties when he used to come to IIUM and interact with its community. More seriously, he succeeded to convince some faculty members to come to Temple University for their postgraduate studies. Second, after his tragic death and the appointment of Abu Sulyman as the rector of IIUM, the nineties witnessed a new phase of

al Faruqi's impact on IIUM. This time, al Faruqi was introduced through his writings and ideas by Abu Sulyman. Evidently, Abu Sulyman made a significant impact by restructuring IIUM and developing it from a small university college to a comprehensive university with a clear vision and mission. And yet, Abu Sulyman's years of leading IIUM witnessed equally a new development in which al Faruqi was acknowledged as a leading scholar. Al Faruqi's books were distributed by the office of the International Institute of Islamic Thought in IIUM. In addition to that, a number of intellectual forums were organized to discuss his contribution to IOK.

Therefore, although al Faruqi was physically absent during the second phase, yet his impact was enormous and more significant. This was because his writings and ideas were appreciated and accepted on their own merits. His intellectual presence in IIUM was made visible by those who articulated his vision of reforming the Ummah sciences.

Teaching of Islamic Sciences as part of the Systematization of Human Values

It is always the case that Islam is a religion that emphasizes universality of ethics. More seriously, it establishes a necessary connection between the transcendence of God and universality of ethics. Al Faruqi, as a student of comparative ethics, points to the importance of this link and argues rightly in any learned discourse about religion and morality that this will always and almost be the focal point.³² In his different works, al Faruqi vehemently argues for the need to focus the discussion not on the metaphysical aspects of religion, but rather on the axiological aspects.³³ This shift in the discourse will make the disagreement on seeing less or more value rather than on being right or wrong. Obviously, it is not about truth and falsity. In this regard, those who are perceiving more value will educate those who fail to do so. Thus, the process of the systematization of values and the establishing the axiological hierarchy will be the work of all human beings who are sensitive to ethical concerns. This conclusion is mainly based on the major postulate that the religious phenomenon is a "life-fact." This postulate captures both descriptive and normative aspects of religion in a logical account. The emphasis on the discovery of values as an enterprise open for all human beings does not belittle the importance of metaphysical concerns about monotheism; rather, it is a strategic and inclusivist stand. As a result, for al Faruqi, the process of systematization of values will ultimately lead to monotheism in metaphysics.

Though al Faruqi skillfully devastated the positions of both relativists and naturalists, he provided a whole system of ethical theory, which was both morally desirable and logically sound.³⁴ His essay on meta-religion is widely read by students and professors at the IIUM. It should be remembered that his systematization of Islamic values are in his book *Urubah and Religion*; these values are divided into four categories: material being, mental being, metaphysical being, and axiological being.³⁵ Though both metaphysical and axiological beings are ideal, there is a sharp distinction between the metaphysical and the axiological that is based on the difference between ethics and theology. Understandably, they are interrelated, but it is equally important for participants in any reasonable discussion to see the difference.

This position of al Faruqi on the systematization of values was applied by him in his other works in a very informative way which contributed to both the possibility of teaching Islam from the perspective of the “World Community Citizen”³⁶ and attempting to reform Islamic education on the principle of universality of ethics. As al-Imam al-Ghazali, in his monumental work *Ihya Ulum al-Din*,³⁷ followed the strategy of renewing Islamic sciences by focusing on *fan al-fiqhiyyat*, al Faruqi repeated the same strategy by emphasizing the need for the systematization of Islamic values. Though both would agree that the starting point is *usul al-din*, which is regarded as *kuli al-kulliyat*—the universal of the universals. Then, this will lead to the intermediary science of *usul al-fiqh*, which is both *kulli* (universal) and *juzi* (particular), and finally to *fiqh*, which focuses on *juzi* and relates directly to human action. This human action is the focus of systematization; it either could be achieved under the principle of universality of ethics or degenerate into fragmentation and particularism.³⁸

Endnotes

1. Perhaps, the two articles written by Joseph M. Kitagawa and Wilfred Cantwell Smith pointed to some of the problems of the discipline of the history of religions. Although they showed some of the progress that was made during the fifties, yet the most significant development in this regard was at Temple University. It should be equally noted that the experiment at Temple University did have some other serious problems. This was largely due to the secular humanist framework. Joseph M. Kitagawa, “The History of Religions in America,” in *The History of Religions*, ed. Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959). Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why,” in *The History of Religions*, ed. Mircea

- Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959). It should be remarked that Wilfred Cantwell Smith had a great impact on al Ismail Faruqi’s intellectual development.
2. Ismail Raji A. al Faruqi, *Christian Ethics* (Montreal, Canada: McGill University Press, 1967), 3.
 3. Ibid.
 4. Ismail al Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*. Islamization of Knowledge Series, no. 1. (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982)
 5. Ismail Raji A. al Faruqi and Lois Lamy al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: McMillan, 1996). Though this was the last book published by al Faruqi and seemingly it reflected his final thoughts on all major problems of the discipline of Islamic sciences, yet it was the least to be quoted or used by scholars at the IIUM.
 6. See Syed Arabi Idid, ed. *IIUM at 25: The Path Travelled and the Way Forward* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: IIUM Press, 2009). This connection between the establishment of the IIUM and the conference held in Makkah in 1977, became one of the most important statements about the history of the university. It should be remembered that Professor M. Kamal Hassan, who wrote the concept paper for the establishment of the university for the Malaysian government attended that conference. See the paper presented at the First World Conference on Muslim Education (Jeddah, Saudi Arabia: King Abdul Aziz University, 1977), 52. It should be noted that al Faruqi played a significant role in that conference.
 7. Appendix 1.2 1982 Concept Paper, “Islamic University Malaysia: Concept and Rationale,” in Idid, ed., *IIUM at 25*, 31–34.
 8. I was told by Associate Professor Dr. Wan Sabri who was then a university student at IIUM that al Faruqi delivered the public lectures to the IIUM community.
 9. In more than one occasion during my stay at Temple University, al Faruqi passed favorable remarks about IIUM.
 10. See his interesting note in his pamphlet entitled *The Hijrah* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: ABIM, 1983): “Exception must be made of Malaysia which Allah had blessed with a government and a regime designed to serve the Muslim segment of its population. This coincidence of government design and people’s aspirations is the essential reason or base for harmonious relations between them. The Malaysian situation must be studied by all Islamic movement leaders for its uniqueness in post-colonial history...(91–92).” These comments and others showed how al Faruqi was impressed with the Malaysian experience.

11. The Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage had faculty members who had different backgrounds in terms of their training and the scholarship that they developed. It was equally true for the departments of social sciences. And yet, the majority of them were genuinely interested in the experiment of the Islamization of knowledge (IOK).
12. This definition was given by Abu Sulayman during his tenure as the rector of IIUM. He insisted on giving that definition and explaining the intellectual implication of that position in most of his public lectures at IIUM.
13. For example, Professor Anis Ahmad was the dean of the *kulliyah*, and there were some other professors.
14. Though the concept paper of the university, which was presented to the cabinet meeting, was against the formulation of this *kulliyah*.
15. This was the position of Abu Sulyman and some leading professors who were entrusted to implement IOK agenda in the university.
16. See A. M. Mohamed Mackeen "Islamic Studies: An University Discipline," *The Muslim World* 55, no. 3 (July 1965) and 55, no. 3 (October 1965). Professor Mackeen was among the founders of the Department of Islamic Reveal Knowledge and Heritage.
17. Obviously, it was a continuation of the CFK. The only difference was that it was allowed to offer a degree instead of being restricted to service courses. Evidently, these service courses were equivalent to a minor in Islamic studies.
18. See International Islamic University Malaysia, *Undergraduate Prospectus*, 1996.
19. Workshop on "Islamization of Curriculum," IIUM, February 4, 1995.
20. This criticism was mainly given by Abu Sulyman.
21. See "Reflections, Post-graduate Students of IRKH," *Research Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (December 1996): 2.
22. Departments of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage, *Fiqh*, and *Usul al-Fiqh*, in *Undergraduate Handbook*.
23. Department of *Usul al-Din* and Comparative Religion, 2001–2002.
24. Though its meaning was almost there in all the official documents of the university, this term was coined by Professor M. Kamal Hassan. A simple definition of *relevantization* is "how to make Islamic sciences relevant to the contemporary issues and realities."
25. It should be noted that both *Christian Ethics* and *Al-Tawhid* were used as textbooks and his pamphlet, entitled *Islamization of Knowledge* was actually the manifesto of the university for a number of years.

26. See the handbook of the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, which was issued in 2001–2002. In addition to that, a number of Master dissertations were written on al Faruqi's intellectual legacy.
27. It is unfortunately the case that it is quite rare to see some serious work done on his legacy. The only noticeable exception is the work of Dr. Charles Fletcher. Obviously, Professor Esposito's contribution should be acknowledged as the most serious work that introduced and drew attention to al Faruqi's legacy. Other than these two examples, nothing worth mentioning, in this regard, was done on al Faruqi's legacy.
28. This term (*ulum al-ummah*) was coined by al Faruqi to signify the new Islamic sciences.
29. Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari, *Maqala al-Isamiyyin* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963).
30. Ismail Raji A. al Faruqi, *Urubah and Religion*, vol 1 of *On Arabism* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Djambatan, 1962), 211–20.
31. This has been reflected in the popularity of his account on meta-religion among students and lecturers.
32. Al Faruqi defines Islam by saying "*The crucial part in any definition Islam is God's will; i.e., values as members of their hierarchical realm related to one another in such order as God has dictated.*" Then, he went on to emphasize the importance of values: "In answer to the question, what is Islam, we may then say that Islam is a body of values constituting an ideal realm, a transcendent supernal plenum of value at the center of which stands God." *Urubah and Religion*, 200. Italics added.
33. Obviously, both his books *Urubah and Religion* and *Christian Ethics* are good examples of this. Another example is his article entitled "History of Religions: Its Nature and Significance for Christian Education and Muslim-Christian Dialogue," in *NVMEN* 12 (April 1965). See also his paper which was presented to conference on Muslim-Christian Dialogue, held in Tripoli in 1976, entitled "*Al-Usus al-Mushtarakah bayna al-Diyanatiyyin fi al-Mutaqadat wa Mawatin al-Ittiqa fi Mayadin al-Hayat.*" Proceedings of the conference were published in Tripoli in 1981.
34. Al Faruqi, *Urubah and Religion*, 253–70. See also al Faruqi, *Christian Ethics*, 21–32.
35. Al Faruqi, *Urubah and Religion*, 253–59. However, in *Christian Ethics*, al Faruqi focused on the duality between "actual being" and "ideal being" as the basis for his theorization on meta-religion.
36. Al Faruqi, *Christian Ethics*, 3.
37. Al-Ghazali, "Introduction," in *Íya Ulum al-Din* (Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Kutub al-Arabiyyah, 1957).

38. Al-Ghazal , *Al-Mustasfa min Ilm Usul al-Fiqh* (Cairo, Egypt: al-Matbaah al-Amiriyyah, 1904), 6-7; al Faruqi, *Urubah and Religion*, 16-48.