



# ISLAM AND KNOWLEDGE

Al Faruqi's Concept of Religion in Islamic Thought

EDITED BY IMTIYAZ YUSUF

I.B. TAURIS



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Essays in Honor of Isma'il Al Faruqi

*Edited by Imtiyaz Yusuf*

**I.B. TAURIS**

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# From Interfaith Dialogue to Theological Discourse: Al Faruqi's Legacy in Interfaith Engagements

*Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman*

## Introduction

On 18 Ramadan 1496/27 May 1986, the world lost one of its most profound scholars of comparative religion and interfaith activists of all times: Professor Dr. Isma'il al Faruqi. One has only to go through his *Christian Ethics*<sup>1</sup> and his articles in *Islam and Other Faiths*<sup>2</sup> to glimpse the depth and dimension of this great scholar's knowledge on Christianity, Judaism, and other religions. Not only is his scholarship deep and immense; even more outstanding are his analyses of the theologies, doctrines, and histories of these religions, a reading which few, if any, can match – now or in previous times. Above all, al Faruqi forwarded proposals on how to ascertain the authenticity of truth-claims, thereby projecting and promoting *Religionswissenschaft* from a mere scholarly discipline and intellectual discourse into one that is also servicing the spiritual needs of humanity.

Indeed, even if we base our view only on these two masterpieces of al Faruqi, we can already see reflected in his works the minds and talents of some of the greatest Muslim scholars at work in the study of other religions.<sup>3</sup> For example, we see in the works of al Faruqi nuances of the astute contentions of Abu 'Isa al-Warraq (d. c. 247/861),<sup>4</sup> the methodological approaches of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (362–440/973–1048),<sup>5</sup> the sharp disputations of Ibn Hazm (384–456/994–1064),<sup>6</sup> the philosophical argumentations of Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (450–505/1054–1111),<sup>7</sup> and the intense analyses of Ibn Taymiyyah (661–728/1263–1328),<sup>8</sup> to name but a few of the greatest in this