EXPLORING AL-FARUQI'S PERSPECTIVE ON CHRISTIAN ETHICS: A BALANCED CRITIQUE

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Abstract

This article evaluates Ismail Raji al-Faruqi's book Christian Ethics: A Historical and Systematic Analysis of Its Dominant Ideas. The study looks at Al-Faruqi's approach to comparative religion, especially his concept of "Epochè" and his critique of exclusivity in Jewish and Christian ethics. Using library-based research and deductive analysis, the article explores how Al-Faruqi highlights universal moral values and deals with the challenges of interfaith dialogue. The findings show that while Al-Faruqi stresses ethics as a shared human concern, he also confirms Islam's comprehensive ethical framework. This study shows how Al-Faruqi's work contributes to better understanding among different religious communities and offers methods for improving interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

Keywords: Ethics; Christianity; Islam; Comparative religion.

INTRODUCTION

Books about Christian ethics are numerous, but most lie at the extreme ends of the discussion. Many are written by those who remain within the Christian tradition, focusing on challenges faced by Christians and offering faith-based solutions. On the other side are works by former Christians who have become critics, often as spiritualists, materialists, or atheists, expressing strong criticisms of the religion.

Al-Faruqi, in his introduction, avoids both extremes. He aims to critically analyze Christianity from a perspective that is neither biased nor dismissive. Although not a Christian, Al-Faruqi insists that his book is not a polemic against Christians or their faith. As a Muslim, he appreciates Christianity's legacy and acknowledges its shared roots with Islam, including belief in the same God and prophets, such as Abraham and Jesus (Al-Faruqi, 1965). He writes, "The author holds for the religion of Jesus Christ the same respect and awe that he holds for his own, namely, Islam" (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967). While Al-Faruqi firmly believes that Jesus is not divine but a prophet (Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, 1998), this viewpoint, he argues, does not detract from his commitment to being fair and objective in his analysis. His goal is not to refute Christianity or glorify Islam, but to provide a framework for understanding religious ethics (Alwi, 2010).

Al-Faruqi's vision (1967), was ahead of its time. He believed the world was entering an era where religious discourse would no longer remain personal or private. Instead, it would become a subject for public debate, open to commentary, judgment, and critique. To facilitate such discussions, he aimed to establish universal methods or guidelines for analyzing religions and their ethical teachings. He introduced the concept of "new oneness of humanity," a forward-looking idea that anticipated greater unity due to the narrowing communication gap worldwide (M. J. al Faruqi, 2005). Al-Faruqi linked this to the liberal trends in political, social, and religious development following the world wars. He emphasized that the post-colonial and post-war period left many people clinging to "tribalism, provincialism, nationalism, and sectarianism." These attitudes, he argued, created barriers to mutual understanding and healthy communication, perpetuating racism and division (Luthfi, 2024).

Despite humanity's progress toward greater understanding, Al-Faruqi recognized that the world remained divided into four main regions: the West, the Muslim world, the Hindu-Buddhist world, and the Materialist world. Each region sought to assert its ethical systems, often at the expense of others. He argued for the necessity of a communication framework that could bridge these divides. While the book's broader purpose is to create a platform for meaningful dialogue among all of humanity, Al-Faruqi's primary audience is Muslims, encouraging them to study Christian ethics and recognize their evolution over time. Similarly, he invites Christians to critically reevaluate their ethical doctrines, which he sees as resistant to criticism and change. Al-Faruqi emphasizes that any understanding between Islam and Christianity should not undermine third-party belief systems. Although he writes from a committed Muslim perspective, he insists the book is not intended to push a Muslim agenda. Instead, it seeks to promote understanding among individuals with diverse religious, cultural, and political backgrounds. Al-Faruqi acknowledges that reconstructing the truth or returning to the origins of a religion is a deeply sensitive and challenging task, one that is often painful. Yet, he insists it is a necessary endeavor to address the complexities of religious ethics (Idrisi, 2022).

RESEARCH METHOD

Al-Faruqi discussed in his Introductory part the principal methods that a subject shall undertake in order to study a religion. One shall never treat a religion as a scientific or observatory entity and detach oneself from the phenomena within the religion itself. A religion is a life phenomenon which is very much so associated with societal and communal life, and hence shall never be studied empirically and if done so would not be giving meaning to the phenomena within the object of study (Alwi, 2010). He spoke lengthily of the term "life-fact" that should be studied using special methods instead of using scientific or social methods, as both latter methods would not be fair to the life phenomena (Yusuf, 2014). They would be too empirical or too biased.

The concept of "Epoch" was suggested by al-Faruqi as he said many phenomenologists study religion using this method (Averroes, 2003; Ibrahim, 2018). The concept of Epoch is that one shall disengage from one's belief and traditions and come to live with the belief and religion of the object of study. One shall not judge or draw an assumption of the object of study based on his religo-cultural practice (Zaidi, 2011). A total disengagement from his religo-cultural background together with the staying/living within the phenomena of the object of study shall grant a better understanding rather than through scientific or social approach (Ibrahim, 2018). This doesn't have to go to an extreme measure where the student completely dissociated himself from his religo-culture permanently and to a radical measure. The student must to a point be able to "move freely and continually between these three realms of determination" which are his own beliefs, the religo-culture of the study he is undertaking and the universal rationality. He shan't go out and more importantly he shall be able to navigate his studies within these three realms. Al-Faruqi continued discussing the critics posed on the deviation of studying something out of scientific bounds. Many skepticisms would say that any study that navigates out of the empirical ways would only be satisfying the desires of the researchers and that in most ways would be biased. He maintained on that "religious facts are life facts" (Zein, 2011). They aren't based on theories nor deductions of minds. They need to be lived-in in order to be justly understood as a life phenomenon rather than a sample or a case study (I. R. Al Faruqi, 1986). Indeed, while advocating the concept of epoch, al-Faruqi agreed that it couldn't be permanent and the needs of other principles would arise later, which would be beyond the epoch system (Averroes, 2003; Zein, 2011).

Other principles are required as the study of comparative religion isn't a study of and for academic purposes only. It is the study of ethics and the co-existence of ethics (Hashi, 2008). It is also a study of a re-evaluation of what is believed to be the truth and what really shall be the truth, also what comprises the differences between the two (truth and beliefs). Other than using the epoch method, the use of epistemology and meta-physics shall apply as well as to study the life within the religion (Averroes, 2003). Again, a navigation from the empirical way is bound to happen and may not jive well with scientists and materialists' ways. Moving away from the empirical scientific method is needed as studying life-fact means studying values. And values are never

theoretical; they are personal, societal and communal in many levels. Their degrees vary individually. They could contradict and support each other at the same time. All this makes it seem impossible to study religion and religo-culture using and treating them as phenomena or life-fact, and using scientific methods would seem easier, but according to al-Faruqi it must be done no matter how painful and grave it gets. It is not impossible. Prejudices and relativism would be two among other challenges that the study would face (Hashi, 2008).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Jewish Background: Jewish Ethics

Arkoun's ethical and political reasoning are grounded on his idea of Applied Islamology, which attempts to be comparative rather than eliminating methodological disparities across Islamic studies. while upholding interdisciplinary scientific cooperation with an Islamic studies paradigm. Furthermore, Applied Islamology welcomes criticism from the scientific community and does not view itself as the only valid approach. For Arkoun, Islam is not a lifeless or abstract concept; rather, it is greatly impacted by social, historical, and other contexts. Consequently, every intellectual output of Islamic thinking is extremely restricted to a certain epistemological framework, even its political offshoots. Future research on Islam, according to Arkoun, has to employ modern epistemes rather than those from the Middle Ages. Stated differently, Arkoun seeks to highlight that Islamic studies ought to be able to recognise ordinary mental constraints as well as the historical context and reality in addition to the text's content. In the Mediaeval Ages.

The distinguished character about the Hebrews and their newer descendants would that they were the only ones throughout history who didn't give a either-or emphasis on these two values: political relationship and population of humans. Most researchers would have agreed that throughout history, especially old civilizations, options were usually made that would benefit a small group or a community at large. Most options circled around two modalities; human population and political system. Most civilizations and groups of people would have a specific names or titles that would refer to them as a group of people or as a group of political system (Idrisi, 2022).

The remarkable note that distinguished the Hebrews from the rest of the other civilizations or human race was that they were never bothered with the advancement of number of people in their community nor were they concerned with political relationship with other states. They rather defined themselves as a race rather than as a group of civilization or political system (M. J. al Faruqi, 2005). The Hebrews were then the first racialist and their whole history would depend on their attachment to racialism. They also particularly hold on to the words of Jesus that he was sent for the Jews and to confirm the Torah. This has been the underlying concept for the Jews that there were the chosen ones and high above other races. "Their scripture is theirs, and only theirs". In a way, their scripture reflects or probably rather induces racialism. God showed a lot of favoritism. He would choose one person, one family or one race over another in the Hebrew scripture (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967).

The Jewish ethico-political system experienced evolution since the time of Jesus. This was due to a lot of political and interpretation struggles. These differences of interpretations at many points aroused the realizations that the scripture wasn't necessarily exclusive to the Jews nor the Jews were meant to be the exclusive race (Siddiqui, 1999). However, throughout the centuries of interpretation, the Jews again and again turned their backs against the fresh outlook of the scripture in order not to be made of a similar status with other races. This greatly portrayed the famous stubborn yet brilliantly opportunistic nature of the Jews in history (Alwi, 2010)

Jesus Breakthrough: Methodological And Doctrinal Distortions

Palestine as a place had had many exposures of different cultures and civilizations prior to the coming of Jesus. Among those faiths, civilizations, cultures and political powers were the Greek-Roman, Babylonian and Persian. This being said Palestine had its fair share of many ideologies be

it Zoroastrianism, naturalism, imperialism, rationalism, skepticism, empiricism and most notably monotheism (Ford, 1993).

Jesus was born in this area among these ideologies and beliefs. He did not convey a new message before the age of thirty. He was born as a Jew among the Jews and he spent his early life being a keen observer within the Jewish environment. He analyzed and studied the characters of those influences within his community (Idrisi, 2022). He was very well versed of the Torah and the teachings of the Jewish scripture and it did not fail him to put a finger on the ethics, or lack of them thereof, within the teachings. He realized that while there was not much issue of lack of divinity within the religion, he also was aware that the notion of the exclusivity of God to the Jewish people was a telltale sign of a reduced (or in fact, a lack of) set of ethical values. It shall be added that prior and during his time, the Jewish ethical values were going downhill – again due to the exclusivity of the people and God (Shehu, 2023). This directly affected the moral system, which could be easily understood. When people intentionally, or otherwise, abused the concept of a divine God as the answer to life by changing it to the elitist and sole ownership of God whereby God answered to them and only them, this would be a sure-fire symptom of declining morality and ethics. To them, God belonged to their race alone and that their race was far superior from others. Also, they believed that other beings not only were inferior but also were created to cater the needs of their people. A person who could detach himself or herself from an in grilled cultural, societal, political and religious sentiment would be able to see that. As a balanced observer, Jesus was able to pin point the rights, wrongs and evolution of the ethics of the Jews (Ford, 1993).

Jesus realized that while the Jewish values still existed, appreciated and practiced by the community, they were actually a set of false, evolved and intentionally developed values to preserve the premier and non-shared Jewish club. While this was practiced as a community, an exclusive one that is, Jesus unfailingly acknowledged that individuals were the people who made up a society, and hence individual perception, values, choices and decisions were the ones that really mattered (Siddiqui, 1997). When an individual decided to choose goodness over an agreed communal behavior, an "ethically sick" society would be able to progress from the cumulative wrong notions (Siddiqui, 1999). According to al-Faruqi, while a community, more often than not, would have a rather strong and decisive influence on an individual, an individual himself actually really had the power to decide on what the community would be like. The growth and development of an individual according to him would have a higher rank of determination of what the values of the society shall be like, higher than what was practiced as a whole by the community. This makes a lot of sense as the relationship between people and God is actually basically individual. Had a person chose to understand God and divinity in a less proud, less snobbish and in general less exclusive manner, he would be able to create, or at least give out minimal, impacts to the community. Al-Faruqi used this "individual versus community" idea to describe the coming through of Jesus Siddiqui, 1997).

Al-Faruqi was of course careful to maintain that it does not matter how Jesus is perceived or believed as today. He could be a Prophet, a direct representative of a higher Divine entity or he could be God himself (as Judaism, Christianity and Islam would have differences on), one thing that should be accepted was that he brought about a more ethical version of the belief in his society based upon his observation and realization of the sickness and the downfall of the ethics within the Jew community of his time. He brought by another perspective, which was "ethical self-consciousness" (Shehu, 2023). When one was to be conscious of their self ethics, they would rise beyond the accepted level of morality and set of behavior within his community. This is where the concept of separatist (exclusivity) against brotherhood (inclusivity) started to materialize, albeit slowly -as Jesus did not have much followers-, within the Jewish community. The Jew's Law was the separatist and exclusive law while Jesus' teachings were very inclusive of all mankind and that humans shall be able to stand equally together within a brotherhood conviction. Jesus brought about that humans are humans. They shouldn't have to be grouped into one small higher class, which was the Jews and a lower class, which was the others, or the Gentiles. Humans are born with dignity and not with exclusivity. Whether one would like to believe the teaching as a revealed religion or simply as a mortal political movement, one couldn't deny that Jesus was visionary and

he could come out with an enhanced set of values despite being bounded by a community who believed they were the elitist and the crème de la crème. Jesus was adamant that a community shouldn't mean and refer to the Israelis, but to the whole mankind. This would be where the values brought about Jesus clashed from the Jewish-agreed ethics (Shehu, 2023).

Al-Faruqi described best about Jesus' observation about the Jews' Law as a community. The outcome of their set of agreed values were not ethical, they were really "a cod of utility" – where certain standards of lifestyle were imposed. Granted, these standards would create a notion of rules, regulations, civilization and properness, but they could never be an image or picture of a community's ethics. In fact, most if not all, set of conducts of the Jews were instilled to create proper and high standard of the people, being the divinely selected ones. However, not much of those standards really portrayed the ethics of the Jewish community. In fact, they portrayed ill balanced terms - benefiting the Jews and disadvantaging other people. Morality of a community would absolutely decline when social justice was not upheld and when one was born automatically superior than others.

Al-Faruqi went on to discuss that the righteousness of a person does not really depend on the set of values imposed in and onto a community the person lives in. In a way, Al-Faruqi appeared to believe that a person has all the ability to be aware of goodness and of right from wrong (Sumaiya Ahmed, 2020). Hence, if one were to choose to detach themselves from a questionable set of values, they would be able to make an impartial judgment of what should be practiced and what shouldn't from whatever that was fed to him. Conscience and the choice to be conscious are important to determine a person's ability to make this kind of judgment. Jesus was of course an advocate of this navigation from a complete acceptance of lack of ethics, to the search of inner morality. The reason that this shall be the best form of inquiry is because conscience and the realization of intent would not really break any law and legal system of a community (Siddiqui, 1999). They are merely a realization, which is best and probably on works at an individual level. Al-Faruqi described it best in this quote, "Jesus, therefore, in making his ethic one of intent rather than consequences, rightly based it upon the inward voice of conscience" (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967).

Chapter 2 of his book could probably be summarized in this sense. Jesus' coming through was in a way a response to the superiority and supremacy of the Jews and their lack of religious ethics. The chapter also discusses how the ethics of a religion or of any belief system shouldn't be utilitarian; they should be moral. They should first and foremost recognize the universal and all fair goodness, which would serve the common ground of many if not the whole humankind. When this state is not achieved, ethics would be greatly reduced. Goodness, while could be expressed and determined by a community, it actually comes back down to individual responsibility. Fault shouldn't be put on the community to have shaped how the person behaves, acts and thinks. He himself shall have the responsibility to mobilize and be conscious of his conscience (Sumaiya Ahmed, 2020).

The New Ethic

Al-Faruqi maintained his argument regarding the stance of Jesus about the Jews. The Jews' decline was caused by their exclusivism, which was directly causing their diminished ethics (Luthfi, 2024). The anti-Jewish supremacy and anti-separatism sentiment of Jesus was very clear according to al-Faruqi. Jesus was an advocate of universal love of, and to, God – hence the first commandment ("to love God"). God belongs to all mankind, not to specific chosen race or tribe. In this chapter, al-Faruqi tried to make his points about Jesus' teaching to come across by pointing out the love and sensuality within the teaching, by referring to the four Gospels. The gospels teach about loving God, being good within the social spectra (community level; neighbors etc), and about the universally desired features most humans would want to have; health, happiness and other essential necessary conditions. When humans recognize that their wants and needs are very directly related to the generousness and bestow of God, they will realize God's love. In God's love one shall find other realizations such as the recognition of other gifts from God. Humble realizations would in turn

create a more ethical perspective and humbleness in humans (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967; I. R. Al Faruqi, 1986; I. R. A. al Faruqi, 1965).

It is very interesting how al-Faruqi put Jesus' teaching of "Love thy Neighbor" (Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, 1998) as his example to show how Jesus dissociated his teaching from the Jewish ethics (or lack of them, thereof). To put it in simple terms, to love our neighbors in general means to be good to everyone (Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2004). This definitely clashed with the Jewish ethics whereby they were the higher ranked people and hence being good was and shall be contained within the Israeli community. The idea of extending nice gestures to all mankind would clearly mean that the primacy of the Jews as the selected "Chosen Ones" was challenged. In fact, not only challenged, their rank was greatly reduced to being simply equivalent to all other humans who were not Jews. To add more salt to their wounds, Jesus also taught his followers to even love and forgive their enemies. This shows that even people we would despise the most still they would have the same equal rights of God's attention and love. Throughout Chapter 3, al-Faruqi went on to discuss the many ethics in the sense of code of conduct that all humans shall behave and put their life sphere in. He discussed Jesus' teachings when it comes to family, marriage, divorce, social, politics and personal level of love to God (Faruqi, 1963). The major themes would be love and they were quite sensual rather than directive. While God makes the commands and people shall follow the commands, Jesus' teachings according to al-Faruqi steered from his Jewish background in the sense that most of them are within personal level. One should do rights by all means and one shall love by all means. Everything comes down to the consciousness of a person to his or her own individual awareness, comprehension, recognition and sensation of goodness. This is more or less a direct assault and criticism towards the Israeli upscale and high-ends exclusivity.

Al-Faruqi ended Chapter 3 by comparing the concept of the Kingdom of God in the Jewish scripture and in the teaching of Jesus. The Kingdom of God for the Jews of course solely focused (still does) on the coming of a savior, the Messiah, who is supposed to bring back the supremacy and exclusiveness of the Jews. The Messiah would be the person who serves the purpose of God's command to bring back the Jews as the respected and sole high-ranked race, with more rights and of a higher status than the rest of the mankind. Jesus' concept of Kingdom would totally be opposite of this. God does not prefer any human to the other. There would be no special or selected people. Everyone is equal. The Kingdom of God is not for the people of Israel. The Kingdom of God is for every human being. Anyone who loves God and does good as commanded by God and doing so with love to other humans, shall be within the Kingdom of God (Faruqi, 1963).

Jesus and Islamic Mysticism

Chapter four starts off with the many comparisons by Sufism that Islam and Christianity, according to their understanding, have a lot of similarities. One in particular is the sufi's understanding of Islam is in term of the sensuality and personal way of practicing and embracing the faith (Idrisi, 2022). This is of course for so many other Muslim scholars considered as secularism, the separatism of faith from the rules and matters of everyday life. Among the areas that al-Faruqi discussed that compares, or rather relates Sufism and Christianity, are in the disciplines. The disciplines in al-Faruqi's focus were; Love only God, the self-purification path, the first commandment, and seeking union and unity. The abovementioned disciplines according to al-Faruqi, are where Sufism believes to be parallel, or at the very least comparable, to Christianity (Siddiqui, 1999).

Al-Faruqi however took the discussion in an angle outside of what Sufism believes. He compared and contrasted the practice between the two faiths and came out with arguments that show the two are far from being parallel. The first discipline of Sufism discussed is "Love only God". To the Sufi, the concept of Tawhid is already well established, in fact from the beginning of the spread of Islam since Prophet Muhammad's time, whereby the idols and tribal gods of the Arabs were destroyed from Mecca. Hence, to the Sufi, the oneness of God goes without saying (Al-Faruqi, 1986). It is supposed to be accepted and instilled within every Muslim, and should not be still the struggle to be upheld. Rather, to the Sufi, the struggle should be to love only God and God alone. The oneness values to them should go beyond the oneness of God or the oneness of Truth.

It should also include the oneness of a person's attention, devotion, focus, worship, desire and love. It is understandable how the Sufi would like to compare their faith with Christianity. They way the perceive it, both Sufism and Christianity arose in an environment where the people of the religion believe in one God, monotheism that is. This is perfectly understandable. Jesus certainly did not deviate from monotheism when he was calling for the rejection of the Jewish scripture. However, there is a major difference here. Sufism is part of Islam (Tayob, 2013). It is the same faith with Islam, with only slightly different overview (mostly sensual) while Christianity came with a great leap from the belief of the Jews. While both may have the same traits of self-purification and cleansing the soul, Sufism rooted from the need to get closer to God without departing from the religion Islam, while Christianity was a complete navigation from the racist version of a tribal God to a belief that is universal to all humankind.

The second discipline of Sufism discussed by al-Faruqi is the Sufi path that requires them to be one with God, or at the very least try in all possible manners to be highly devoted in all senses, to be united – or closer – to God. This, according to al-Faruqi, is comparable to Christianity though not to Jesus, as Jesus spent his life rejecting the Jewish scripture and bringing a new highlight in the belief of the oneness of one universal God (Siddiqui, 1999). It is very worth noting though that the notion of unity with God in Christianity appeared in the European Middle Ages of about the same time of the rise of Sufism, circa the tenth to the eleventh century. It is very likely that the understanding of the need to be united with God in Christianity was very much well influenced by Sufism in the Muslim world. Al-Faruqi quoted and discussed John and Paul's version of unity with God, where Jesus spoke about him and God the Father as one, as well as where the followers of Christ are in unity with Christ himself. There are of course a lot of philosophically challenged arguments there held by many Christians. God or the Beloved shall actually be the one who the lovers of followers try to please, devote and correspond to – rather than be united with the followers simply because the followers are devoted to Him, the Divine entity. Hence, al-Faruqi questioned as to whether the released (possibly, altered) version of the Christian scripture, in the Middle Ages, was actually re-evaluated and had navigated from Jesus' concept of unity with God, due to the influence of the Sufi (Fletcher, 2014).

It should make perfect sense that God shall be the one who to be pleased and He should be independent from the choices of His subjects, no matter how devoted they are. God shouldn't be pleasing His subjects by uniting with them simply because they show love and devotion. The two, subjects and God, shall remain separate as two despite the effort of the subjects to be closer and closed to God. At many points as well al-Faruqi included that both Sufism and Christianity had influenced one another. This allows them to be comparable and parallel, despite a lot of misunderstanding was going on in the shaping of their comprehension of the teachings within each respective religion. The third comparable discipline is love in Sufism and the first commandment in Christianity (Fletcher, 2014). For the Sufi, love and love only is the evidence of the higher devotion of God. When one requires the needs to be put in a standard, such as doing something for the sake of rewards or for the fear of punishment, it is no longer the most pure form of love and hence the person has not reached yet the level of nearness and unification with God. This concept of Sufism goes back to their main idea of self-purification, for the needs to be near and united with God. Christianity also bears the same notion in the sense that one shall self-purify. Their focus is however different as each man is born with the original sins and hence has to constantly purify and devoid himself from the encroachment of the default faults that he carries. Both Sufism and Christianity do however resemble each other that misdeeds are behaviors that can be cleansed by self-purification whereby only the departure from believing in the religion would be considered as grave. This is not comparable with Islam as in general in Islam sins are a state of situation which can be classified into different degrees of wrongs, small or big, although yes, the departure from believing in the one God would also be the ultimate sin (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967; I. R. Al Faruqi, 1986; I. R. A. al Faruqi, 1965).

Al-Faruqi summarized Chapter Four by comparing the non-historical and historical explanations of the parallel, or lack of it thereof, between Christianity and Sufism, as well as Islam.

In the non-historical explanation, Jesus' ethics were described as a direct response to the Jewish tribalism and the departure from the racist chosen people connotation in the Jewish scripture, while the Sufi's ethics could not and should not be at all deemed as the response and departure of Islamic teachings. Also, the Christian ethics departed greatly from the Jewish ethics whilst Sufism maintains all values brought about by the Prophet. Again, there is no departure from the basic ingredients or beliefs in Sufism. Rather, there was an added value or additional practices, and no negations from the original teachings. In the historical explanation, the Sufi's ethics could be explained as something that is foreign to the "mainstream" values in Islam which could be attributed to the evolution and influences of culture and places. Many would say that Sufism arose Persian and/or Indian philosophy with additional Shi'i values s well. In fact, the same could be said to the accepted Christian values which may or may not have been brought by Jesus himself. The scriptures known today was only released to the public after the separation of the Church in the late Medieval to the Early Modern Age, and hence religo-politics may have had to a certain degree influenced the interpretation of the texts (Senin et al., 2019).

What is Man?

Jesus's ultimate ethics comes back down to the concept of the seeking of the love of God be seeking His will rather than the man's own will. The moral of a man is defined by his will that shall be governed by the will and commandments of God (Idrisi, 2022). The set of these moral values of course could go according to the free will of man himself. This is where the ethic of Jesus could be considered as pure and universal, as there'd be one monotheistic God whose will should be sought and served, but at the same time the man may opt accordingly to his own senses, reasons and choices to do as such and how.

It should be noted though while Jesus had brought this universalistic values, they were interpreted and re-interpreted many times by scholars way past his time. Among the evaluations would be from humanism and humanist-rejectionist angles; Helenistic and Augustine, and rational and irrational angles as well (Abbas, 2017). In the Helenistic humanist angle, it is described that while man is created in the image of God, a man's values still shall be determined and bound by the commandments of God once the man embraces Christianity. This defies almost the whole concept of Jesus' rejection of the Jewish tribal exclusivity. However, once a person is Christian, his humanistic values no matter how faulty they may get, are recognized and fathomed – as at the end of the day the man is still simply human who is trying his best to comply to the commandments of God. In the Augustine humanist rejection angle however, they took the idea of man being after the image of God a little bit too far (Fatimah, Nurdin, & Rudhi, 2024). All of man's qualities are part and fragments of God's qualities. Hence man is put on Earth to strive to achieve to the fullest qualities of God, in order to be fulfilling His will. "To become like God, they must be subjected to God" (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967).

What ought Man to be?

Chapter six opens up with continual discussion from chapter four and five. Chapter four has shown us how the concept of parallelism may or may not exist in between Christianity and Sufism while Chapter five argues the similarities and differences amongst the many beliefs or versions of Middle Ages' Christianity. In Chapter six on the other hand, Al-Faruqi wrote extensively about the expectations on man in Christianity. In line with the title of the book "Christian Ethics', this chapter could be seen as the heart of the area; that is, the ethics of Christians. Titled 'What Ought Man to be?' – which is interesting enough what the question poses, which are expectancies, opportunities and breaks imposed on man – it discusses sin, salvation and redemption, both from the Jewish and Christian perspectives. While both may arguably share the (almost) same scriptures, the concept of sin and salvation are rather complex and comparable between the two faiths (Lattu, 2019).

As examined in earlier chapters, the Jews believed that they were the selected and chosen ones and that their God – the Only and One God – was a tribal God in that sense and He did not put much emphasis on the uniqueness, or the lack of it, on other races. Hence, the concept of sin and salvation for the Jews are not in terms of original sins as they are for Christians (Ismail Raji Al-

Faruqi, 1998; Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967). It is complicated to discuss Jesus' position in this matter. As for the Jews, he brought by an alien concept, almost a whole new religion, which is what we now know as Christianity and that he reduced the whole Jewish racist tribalism into something that was deviated from the Abrahamic teachings. As for the Christians, he was a God, and as for Muslims he was a prophet who continued the spread of faith that went beyond the Abrahamic, in fact the same comprehension, despite differences in practices, since Adam. For the sake of comparing the Jewish and Christian faiths, whilst complicated in more sense than one, it is safe to put him in different angles, based on what believed by the abovementioned religions.

Al-Faruqi started chapter six with the assertion of the necessity of sin in Christianity. Giving an example of many doctrines in Christianity, albeit the diversity of the versions, they always start off with a reminder that all man comes in the world with original sins and they should be well aware of the sins, and therefore well conscious about the concept of salvation as well, so as that their sinful souls could be cleansed within their lifetime. This would be expected to be a struggle as man always self-contradict himself. While he may be aware of the sins and the needs to salvage his soul, also the concept of rights and wrongs, man would not be able to oppose the desires to project behaviors that would deny him the salvation. In spite of this, the man is still expected that he is always sinful. Every single human being is not and will never be sin-less. This assertion and realization is key in Christianity as without this grasp the man would never be able to appreciate the fact that he needs to perform ablution acts that would purify him from his daily sins.

With this case in hand, Al-Faruqi argued how could this concept ever be a value to the Christians. The fact that a newborn baby comes with sins and an inclination towards evilness is the fact criticized by him. The whole indoctrination in Christianity that humans come on Earth with original sins so that they will go back to God and with His Divine intervention and His alone, the man would be salvaged from his evilness. While the equation may sound to make sense to the believers that humans require something to be completely dependent to his own Divine belief system as mentioned by him "No Christian thinker will disagree [..]", it is a notion that he found strange to be justified. On the other hand, he made it a point – where he sounded understanding – that the whole concept would make sense of the religion and the presence of Jesus Christ himself. If such conception did not exist, than there would not be a need for Jesus to be there and this would have refuted a whole religion. At other points, Al-Faruqi appeared as well to be sneering when he was discussing both angles of human's goodness and evilness. Man is expected to be sinful so that God will bless him with forgiveness and salvation when the man redeems himself. On the other hand, if the man decided to stay moral and in goodness, he would have upset God's plan to be the savior. It is very interesting to note how vocal and candid Al-Faruqi in criticizing this nature of the belief system in Christianity.

In the next sub-discussion, Al-Faruqi discussed the concept of the fall, where man is expected to sin, due to the availability of free will, from the Jewish background. In a sense he was trying to make sense of the conception of this belief of the fall of man into sinfulness and the need to do salvation from historical point of view, which may be traced back from the history of the Jews, especially since the exile and the sufferings they had bore. It could be seen in the later Jews that they had by then accepted the view that all men were evil in nature from the Psalms. This could as well be the root of evolution of the Jewish belief system onto the Christianity, as the similarity was there – that men were naturally inclined to evilness. This evilness however is not as original as the one in Christianity, as the concept in the Judaism is more or less on the moral of the man himself. Take the Genesis for example. The story of the fall of Adam and Eve could not really be said to be due to original sin. They sinned or crossed the line after they were aware of the choices that they could make. This surely appears like a morality issue, a choice to do one thing over another based on one's judgment (Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, 1998; Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967; al Fārūqī, 2018; I. R. Al Faruqi, 1986; I. R. A. al Faruqi, 1965; Faruqi, 1963) (Al-Faruqi, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1986, 1992, 1998, 2018). From this story alone, it does not make much of an argument if the Christians were to say that the decision taken up by both of them, Adam and Eve, was due to an original and expected sin. Rather, it was a choice that was almost done due to a spur of the moment and of decision – though one

cannot deny that the decision was more inclined to do something that was wrong. The case argued here, how did one perceivably wrong decision could have led to all mankind to now be born with a set of original sins?

In an even more interesting note, Al-Faruqi compared the story of the fall of Adam and Eve from the Genesis to the one in the Quran. In the Quran, yes, both of them made the decision to defy God's order from eating from the forbidden tree. However, the forbidden tree was not at all the focus here. The focus was that man, according to the Quran, was supposed to be sent on Earth either way. Another focus is the fact that there will be a constant struggle between following God's orders while constantly being enticed by Satan to do otherwise. Man did not fall from grace according to the Quran. This is the absolute difference between the Genesis and the Quran. Man or Adam, the prophet, was sent on Earth not because of being ultimately punished and was going to be bear, from generation to the next, the decision made by Adam and Eve. He was sent down because that was the original idea of him being created and the event of defying God by eating from the forbidden was in a way the reason he was sent down as such. There is a lesson, an ultimate one that is, in the story. That man will continue facing the struggle of his own decisions based on what is ordered and what is forbidden, what is asked from God and what is lured by an evil revengeful being, the Satan. Also, it should be noted that in the Quran, Adam asked for forgiveness and he was given as such and he was still guided by God, being a prophet himself, and he was not left alone without guidance as a punishment.

In the next few sub-discussions, Al-Faruqi addressed the comparison of the concept of sins in Christianity from different factions. They are the concept of sin in the Gospel, in the teaching of Paul, in the teaching of Apostolic Fathers, prior to the teaching of Augustine, in the teaching of Augustine, in the Reformation and in the modern Christian thought. Just simply looking at the need to have to discuss the concepts separately within one same belief, it is clear that Christianity is not very universal to the whole mankind in that sense – or at least, that is how it appears like to someone who is detached from any of the religion's factions. In the Gospel, as Christians are well aware of, there is no evidence claiming that humans are innately sinful and are inclined to doing evilness. Most Christians however argue that while it is not mentioned in words, the way that Jesus lived his life and died show that he was there for the salvation and to be the savior of humankind. Most Christians seem to be in line with the teaching of Paul though where man is to be saved by God after has done the expected wrong doings. This seems to counter of what is said in the Gospel and hence humans appear to have been condemned not because of their choices but because of their predicament that they will and must lapse in their ordeal on Earth just to be saved again by God, if he is worthy to be saved that is (Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, 1998; Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967; al Fārūqī, 2018; I. R. Al Faruqi, 1986; I. R. A. al Faruqi, 1965; Faruqi, 1963) (Al-Faruqi, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1986, 1992, 1998, 2018).

The Personalist and Societist Ethics

Chapter seven started off with Al-Faruqi negating the authenticity of the Gospels in Matthews about concept of the Church whereby it was never invented nor suggested by Jesus himself. According to him, other than the two times it was mentioned in Matthews, which again are rather questionable of its credibility – at least in term of these two references- Jesus never mentioned the needs to have a congregation that could cause the universality of his teachings to be diminished. If we go back to the earlier discussion by Al-Faruqi, Jesus' teachings were meant to discredit the whole Jewish racism and their belief of special tribalism and of a one God that would cater to their needs, and their needs alone as they deemed themselves as the chosen ones. Therefore, the congregation of Church in this manner would only defy the original teachings of Jesus. Nevertheless, Al-Faruqi did dedicate one whole and his final chapter going through how the Church may or may not, have or have not, impacted the reformation of personal and societal ethics brought about by Jesus (Alwi, 2010; Luthfi, 2024).

It would come handy when going through this chapter to recall back that one of Jesus' ultimate aims was to eradicate the sense of ethics of a religion based on a community or race as a whole (where in the Jew society an individual reflection was first and foremost based on what was

imposed, expected, granted and rather made special by their community), rather he made an emphasis that the changes shall start with individuals taking up responsibilities. An individual shall go back to the basic nature of good and evil and of the sense of right and wrong before taking up of activities or rituals allowed or expected on them by their society and religion as a whole. Another thing that will come useful when discussing this chapter is to recall that Jesus' teachings were a direct response to the behavior of the Jews during his time.

Al-Faruqi continued by comparing societism and personalism in the ethics of Jesus. While he held strongly that the reform brought about by Jesus was on the personal level of individual, the reflections of this reform should and shall be seen in the society as a whole (Furqani, 2015) – as ultimately the problems in the Jew society were his main concerns. Al-Faruqi surely had issues with the original sins as he kept emphasizing that Jesus' first teaching was to love God wholeheartedly and as one does do so, one will want to strive to do anything to please, worship and submit to God and at the same time put his wants, needs and desires aside. He could not quite make it as to how the ide of the original sin should be the reason why one shall submit to God, as if there was an underlying clause that one only will love and be loved if they manage to salvage their self from the original sin. In his teachings, the individual and personal reformation held close was meant to re-develop the sense of equality, love and to defy racism and tribal exclusivism, instead of to sensually love God without any determination whatsoever from the man himself (Quds & Fuad, 2022).

In his words, Al-Faruqi said that while "to love God is to invite Him to determine mind, soul and heart" (Isma'il R Al-Faruqi, 1967), this determination should come about recognizing that they are many realms in life and activities, instead of only the out-of-this-world spirituality. This of course could and would have impacts to the society despite Jesus' focus being the reformation of individuals in the personal level. Soceitism or the societist ethics in Christianity is different. It's an additional value in which probably to many levels a value that was an outcome of the personalist ethics. The societist ethics while being different, they neither clash nor contrast from the ethics of Jesus. They simply are additional values- probably more easily explained in Islam rather than in Christianity. To Muslims, there is no denying the teachings, reformation and God-revealed knowledge brought about by Jesus. There is no question about the sanctity and status of Jesus in Islam. He was a messenger of God and his teachings were relevant for that society, time and place. Islam did not come to purify the teachings of Jesus, rather in Islam it is a continuation and addition of the teachings, and to correct of what was lost in the Christian world, which is almost all from the original simple and basic version to what the religion of Christianity of today. Societism or the ethics of Islam put added values to the original teachings and breakthroughs of Jesus. The ethics of Jesus were the ethics of intents, instead of the ethics of acts and consequences as in the Jewish society, which are in line with the soceitist ethics in Islam. As the right intent would promote, if not definitely grant, right acts and consequences, which in a greater circle would impact the society, to put it in a simple equation (Bjoernaas, 2017).

In Islam, once an individual ethics are recognized and attempted to be satisfied by the individual, other realms in the real world shall be considered, as there are real activities and real life out there greater than the needs of a person to salvage himself to God. One shall move on to do greater goods in real life activities by being "a moral agent" and a doer of good who is engaging in the real world and life activities. In Islam, the consequences are not the focus, the intents are (Ba-Yunus, 1988). Being moral and delivering moral values are key and one is actually expected and required to "disturb" the flow of life activities. By disturb here, it means one should be involved in the society, community, progress, advancements and at the same time know his moral values as well as spread the values. This is where the similarity and difference between Islam and the ethics of Jesus lie. Both promote the ethics of personalist (individual moral values) and the ethics of intent instead of consequences. The difference is of course Jesus' teachings did not focus on the greater societal responsibility of an individual, in fact it was the opposite. This is easily comprehended due to the relevance and suitability of his breakthroughs which were a direct response to the exclusivity and specialness of the Jews- thus of course societist ethics were only not his major concerns, he was in fact departing from those (S. Ahmed, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Al-Faruqi used the term "an inherent disease" freely to describe what was brought by Paul. Mankind, according to him, could not escape wrongdoing no matter how hard it tried, as sin seemed to be embedded as though it were a genetic condition. This inherent inclination to err meant humans would constantly misbehave and face condemnation for their lapses. While Paul argued that Adam's mistake allowed humans to grow in awareness and understanding, it also placed them within a framework of perpetual error and redemption. Al-Faruqi critiques this as a concept that leaves little room for individual moral agency, as humans are expected to sin and then seek salvation through the path provided by Jesus. On the topic of the Kingdom of God, Al-Faruqi aligns with historians who assert that the Church as an institution emerged long after Jesus' death. Jesus, he argues, did not build or endorse a Church aimed at congregating followers, as his teachings prioritized individual ethical reform rather than societal constructs. The Church's later evolution into what was called the Kingdom of God deviated from Jesus' original intent. Al-Faruqi critiques this institutional shift as transforming a universal and inclusive message into a more exclusive organization. He notes that the Kingdom of God, as embodied by the Church, became a socially limited concept, benefiting only those who adhered to Christianity while alienating others—a departure from Jesus' goal of breaking societal exclusivity.

This critique leads to broader reflections. Al-Faruqi's writings serve as both an analysis and a call for constructive dialogue. He highlights the challenges posed by exclusivist tendencies in religious traditions and the need for frameworks that encourage understanding across different faiths. His emphasis on "Epochee," or the suspension of biases, reflects his commitment to studying ethics within their lived contexts rather than through preconceived judgments. In today's interconnected world, Al-Faruqi's approach remains relevant. He encourages religious communities to engage in conversations that prioritize mutual respect and understanding rather than conflict. These ideas are not only academic but also practical, offering guidance on how faiths can coexist and cooperate to address shared global challenges such as inequality and social justice. By promoting shared moral principles, his work seeks to build bridges rather than deepen divides.

In conclusion, Al-Faruqi's Christian Ethics stands as an important contribution to comparative religion. It challenges exclusivist narratives and calls for a reevaluation of ethics in light of shared human concerns. His work invites scholars and believers alike to revisit foundational ideas with openness and to engage in dialogues that can help create a more inclusive and harmonious world.

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