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*Between Western Academia and Pakistan: Fazlur Rahman and the fight for fusionism**

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Abstract

In the wake of European colonization, Muslims across the globe have wrestled with the problem of intellectual dualism, or the bifurcation of knowledge into the distinct Islamic and modern Western spheres. This article examines the career of Pakistani intellectual and University of Chicago professor, Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988), who emerged as a particularly significant figure in this debate over intellectual dualism in the latter half of the twentieth century. Arguing that academic methodologies were integral for Muslim understandings of Islam, Rahman broke down the dichotomy between Western and Islamic knowledge in favour of a merging of the two, an approach I term 'fusionism'. He propagated this fusionist vision, with mixed success, in his native Pakistan and across the Islamic world. In his position as a respected professor at the University of Chicago, Rahman furthermore re-imagined and utilized the Western university as a valuable space for modern Islamic thought, thereby challenging any sharp boundary between the two discourses and their respective institutions.

Introduction

For more than two decades, Pick Hall Room 205 at the University of Chicago has been known as the Fazlur Rahman Common Room. Serving as the informal lounge for the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, the room was dedicated in Rahman's memory shortly after

* I am grateful to Muhammad Qasim Zaman and Leah Klement for providing feedback on multiple drafts of this article. Their comments, along with those of the two anonymous reviewers, were indispensable in helping me revise the article for publication.

his untimely death in 1988.[1] The Islamic Research Institute, located 7,000 miles away in Islamabad's Faisal Mosque complex, also bears Rahman's imprint. The Institute's library houses many of Rahman's scholarly works, and its Publication section continues to print and distribute some of his monographs as well as the journal, *Islamic Studies*, which he founded. Throughout his scholarly career, Fazlur Rahman travelled the geographic and cultural distance between Western academia and Pakistan's Islamic public sphere, leaving his mark on both institutional milieus. As a long-time professor at Chicago, he published numerous academic books and articles, and was awarded the prestigious Giorgi Levi Della Vida Prize in 1983. As an outspoken Islamic modernist, he also implored fellow Pakistani Muslims to bypass what he derided as the intellectually bankrupt tradition of the *ulama* and instead revitalize Islam through a direct return to Qur'anic principles.[2] Insisting upon the compatibility of these roles, Rahman occupied the two positions and their respective discursive spaces simultaneously. He dedicated books to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences and constructed arguments that intervened in academic debates as well as Muslim reformist politics. Ultimately, through his writing and activism, Rahman worked to unite the two intellectual traditions so that the next generation of scholars could freely traverse the line between Western academia and Islamic politics.

Although a prolific writer and prominent Islamic modernist, comparatively little has been written on Fazlur Rahman's life and ideas. The majority of relevant publications are commemorative essays by Rahman's former students and colleagues that combine personal reflections with brief thematic analyses of Rahman's work.[3] The few more in-depth studies focus almost exclusively on his Qur'anic

[1] I thank John E. Woods for providing me with a tour of Pick Hall and sharing his recollections of Rahman. John E. Woods, Personal Interview, 9 November 2012.

[2] For the purposes of this article, 'traditionalist' denotes those Muslims who follow the authority of an established school (*madhhab*) of Islamic law, which, in the case of Pakistan, is usually Hanafi. In contrast, the label 'modernist' refers to those Muslims who argue for the necessity of continual and sometimes radical *ijtihad* (original legal reasoning) in order to adapt Islam to changing social contexts.

[3] For several examples, see: Denny, Frederick M. (1991). 'The Legacy of Fazlur Rahman', in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad. *The Muslims of America,* Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 96–110; Sells, Michael (2011). 'Foreword', in Fazlur Rahman. *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, Reprint, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Waugh, Earle and Denny, Frederick (eds) (1998). *The Shaping of an American Islamic Discourse: A Memorial to Fazlur Rahman*, Scholars Press, Atlanta; Waugh, Earle (1999). The Legacies of Fazlur Rahman for Islam in America, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 16.3, pp. 27–44.

hermeneutics.[4] Taking a wider perspective, this article examines how and why Rahman challenged the separation between Western academia and Pakistani Islamic politics. Specifically, I argue that Rahman's scholarly career was dedicated to and even consumed by the issue of intellectual dualism. I define intellectual dualism as a system of classifying knowledge that positions Islamic and modern Western thought as two distinct and largely independent discursive traditions. Because dualists partition canonical texts, methodological tools, and metaphysical presuppositions into either the Islamic or Western discourse, they divide rules of discursive engagement and claims to truth between the two traditions.[5] In contrast to this prevailing dualism, Fazlur Rahman tried to forge a new way of navigating the encounter between Western and Islamic thought, an approach I term fusionism. Fusionism connotes a unified conception of knowledge that maintains the universality and hence objectivity of truth. As a result, fusionists believe in the commensurability of Western and Islamic ways of knowing.[6] For Rahman, academic research methods were the lynchpin of his fusionist project. He embraced certain academic disciplinary frameworks, such as critical historical research and hermeneutics, as valuable and largely objective tools for the production of knowledge about Islam and argued that these modern Western methods should inform Muslim understandings of Islamic history and texts. In turn, Rahman argued that Islamic source texts and ethics should never be separated from so-called secular disciplines

[4] For writings focused on Rahman's Qur'anic hermeneutics, see: Cragg, Kenneth (1985). *The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the Qur'an*, George Allen & Unwin, London, pp. 91–108; Jacques, R. Kevin (2002). Fazlur Rahman: Prophecy, the Qur'an, and Islamic Reform, *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, 4, pp. 63–83; Saeed, Abdullah (2004). 'Fazlur Rahman: A Framework for Interpreting the Ethico-Legal Content of the Qur'an', in Suha Taji Farouki. *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 37–66. A notable exception to this Qur'anic focus is Farid Panjwani's article on Rahman's ideas about education. See: Panjawni, Farid. (2012). Fazlur Rahman and the Search for an Authentic Islamic Education: A Critical Appreciation, *Curriculum Inquiry*, Vol. 42.1, pp. 33–55.

[5] In light of this reified conception of civilizational discourses, proponents of intellectual dualism tend to obscure moments of historical cross-pollination between Islamic and Western thought. Nevertheless, over the past several decades, historians have examined the extensive networks of intellectual exchange among Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the pre-modern eras. One particularly notable example is the work of George Saliba, including: Saliba, George (2007). *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Boston.

[6] I am indebted to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre for the language of intellectual traditions and commensurability. See: MacIntyre, Alasdair (1988). *Whose Justice, which Rationality?*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame.

like economics, science, and technology but must instead underpin research and guide practical applications. His fusionism necessitated radical alterations to both the Islamic and Western traditions.

As a committed fusionist, Rahman both built upon and distinguished himself from a longer genealogy of Islamic modernists and Muslim educational reformers. Beginning in earnest in the late nineteenth century, Muslim leaders like Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) and Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) challenged the complete bifurcation of Islamic and Western education by building new colleges or integrating some Western-style subjects into existing seats of Islamic learning. In the twentieth century, a range of Muslim educational institutions—from Egypt's al-Azhar to Indonesia's state-recognized Islamic schools (*pesantren*)—embraced some version of a mixed curriculum in which secular subjects like maths, science, and English are taught alongside Islamic disciplines.[7] As Muhammad Qasim Zaman has argued, there is widespread acceptance, even among the Pakistani *ulama*, of such mixed curriculums.[8] While mixed curriculums expose students to both intellectual traditions, they retain a dualist system of categorization that divides classes and textbooks into either Western-style secular or Islamic disciplines. Often designed to preserve the integrity of Islamic subjects, this mixed mode of education ironically reinforces secular conceptions of religion as a sphere unto itself, divorced from the economic, scientific, and political realms of society.[9] In contrast, fusionists refuse to recognize any distinction between Islamic and Western disciplines. Rather than studying Western-style sociology or physics in one classroom and then early Islamic history in another, fusionists insist that they belong in the same conversation. In one significant example of such boundary crossing, Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) combined Einsteinian relativity and Qur'anic interpretation in his seminal *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.[10]

[7] In 1961, the stronghold of traditional Sunni Islamic education, Egypt's al-Azhar, added departments of medicine and engineering to its Islamic faculties. In 1975, the Indonesian government mandated that Islamic schools devote 70 per cent of instructional time to secular subjects compared to just 30 per cent to Islamic ones if they wanted state recognition and financial support.

[8] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim (2012). *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*, Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 143–175.

[9] Zaman, Muhammad Qasim (2002). *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, pp. 60–86.

[10] Without a doubt, Iqbal's engagement with Western thought extended well beyond his creative interaction with the writings of Albert Einstein. For the most detailed

Profoundly anti-secular, fusionists deny the segmentation of knowledge and truth in favour of a decidedly holistic approach.

While taking inspiration from fusionist predecessors like Iqbal, Fazlur Rahman's ability to move between Western academia and Pakistan's Islamic sphere represented a new degree of fusionist commitment. Indeed, for Rahman, the commensurability of the Islamic and Western academic traditions was no mere theory; instead, it moulded the trajectory of his scholarly career. By drawing on previously untapped archival and media sources, this article demonstrates that, in practice as well as in thought, Rahman merged the roles of academic professor and Islamic activist. In Pakistan in the 1960s, he urged Muslims to embrace academic methods in order to re-envision Islam as integral to an ethical modernity and, in turn, experienced a profound backlash against his ties to Western academia. In the 1970s and 1980s, he used his position as a university professor to speak not only to fellow academics but to advise Muslim governments. In his final years, he attracted so many Muslim students to the University of Chicago that the classrooms in Hyde Park began to resemble a modernist madrasa. By transforming the Western university into a valuable space for modern Islamic thought, Rahman challenged any sharp boundary between the two discourses and their respective institutions. Yet, despite his commitment to commensurability, Rahman remained vulnerable to attacks from both Muslim opponents in Pakistan and post-colonial theorists in Western universities who castigated his fusionism as a capitulation to secularizing Western epistemologies.

A tug-of-war between two traditions, 1946–1961

Born in 1919 in the Northwest Frontier province of present-day Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman received his initial education under the guidance of his father, Mawlana Shahab al-Din, a member of the local Deobandi *ulama*. Having committed the entire Qur'an to memory by the age of ten, Rahman continued the traditional Deobandi course of study but also, with his parent's encouragement, enrolled in a modern

demonstration of Iqbal's fusionism, see: Iqbal, Muhammad (2009). *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Reprint, Dodo Press, London.

college in Lahore.[11] After earning a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Arabic at Punjab University, Rahman relocated to Oxford University in 1946.[12] Although he was by no means the first Muslim intellectual to pursue graduate study in the West, Rahman was among the pioneering generation of scholars who sought to build academic careers as experts on Islam in European or North American universities.[13] For Rahman, the early years of his academic career were a challenge. Apprehending the Islamic and Western intellectual traditions as discrete entities, Rahman initially wrestled with how to navigate what he perceived as their competing claims. As a doctoral candidate at Oxford, he explored these questions of discursive allegiance through an in-depth study of Islamic philosophy, a subject that he found both captivating and unsettling. He simultaneously faced a geographic tug-of-war over whether to settle in the West or Pakistan. However, by the late 1950s, Rahman began to reconcile the two modes of belonging. Rather than looking to Islamic philosophy as a bridge between the Islamic and Western traditions, he instead embraced Western historical methods as a tool for both academic and internal criticism of the Islamic tradition. This strategy provided Rahman with a fusionist escape from the dualist impasse.

During his graduate studies at Oxford, Rahman distinguished himself as a talented young scholar with a particular affinity for the complex field of medieval Islamic philosophy. He devoted his studies to unravelling nuanced philosophical theories on human reason, the soul, and the nature of prophecy. In order to understand the depth of Greek influence on these aspects of Islamic philosophy, Rahman studied Aristotle, Plato, and other Greek thinkers, and even mastered classical Greek and Latin. The intense course of study compelled Rahman to work tirelessly as a doctoral candidate, and he nearly lost his eyesight in the process.[14] His unrelenting interest in medieval philosophy also resulted in a close relationship with his adviser, Simon van den Bergh,

[11] As Rahman recalled several decades later: 'Unlike most traditional Islamic scholars of that time, who regarded modern education as a poison both for faith and morality, my father was convinced that Islam had to face modernity both as a challenge and an opportunity.' See: Rahman, Fazlur (1986). 'Fazlur Rahman', in Phillip L. Berman. *The Courage of Conviction*, Ballatine Books, New York, p. 195; Masud, Muhammad Khalid, et al. (1988). In Memoriam: Dr. Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988), *Islamic Studies,* Vol. 27.4, p. 397.

[12] Masud, In Memoriam, p. 390.

[13] Other notable Muslim academics from Rahman's generation include: Isma'il al Faruqi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Majid Khadduri, and Muhsin Mahdi.

[14] Masud, In Memoriam, pp. 397–398.

with whom Rahman discussed the finer points of Hellenistic thought during long walks through the neighbourhood streets.[15] Only three years after his arrival at Oxford, Rahman finished his thesis—a critical compilation, translation, and commentary on Ibn Sina's psychology—in 1949. In its published version, he stressed his profound gratitude to his two advisers, writing: 'in order to express, in some measure, my deep indebtedness to the able and effective guidance of Dr. S. Van Den Bergh and the constant encouragement and concern of Professor H. A. R. Gibb, who, indeed, created the very conditions for my work, I have dedicated the book to them'.[16] For his part, Gibb returned the praise, remarking in the early 1950s, that Rahman was 'the brightest Pakistani [he] had encountered in a long time'.[17] After leaving Oxford, Rahman secured a position at Durham University's Department of Oriental Studies and quickly impressed the programme's chairman.[18]

Despite his accomplishments at Oxford and Durham, and the accolades he received from esteemed Orientalists, Fazlur Rahman struggled with the apparent disconnect between his early Islamic education in Pakistan and Western academic ways of knowing Islam. His study of philosophy in particular raised bewildering questions about reason, revelation, and the compatibility of Islamic and Western (Greek) philosophy. Looking back at the mid-1980s, Rahman acknowledged: 'after I went to England, a conflict between my modern and traditional educations was activated. From the later forties to the mid-fifties I experienced an acute scepticism brought about by the study of philosophy. It shattered my traditional beliefs.'[19] In an effort to resolve his personal crisis of faith, Rahman confronted his ambivalence concerning Islamic philosophy directly in *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (1958) and in other contemporaneous publications.[20]

Drawn to the philosophers' reason-infused faith, Rahman defended their Islamic credentials and took inspiration from certain

[15] Paul Walker, Personal Interview, 15 November 2012.

[16] Rahman, Fazlur (1952). *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitab Al-Najat, Book 2, Chapter 6*, Oxford University Press, London, p. viii. Rahman also dedicated *Prophecy in Islam* (1958) to van den Bergh.

[17] 'Excerpt from John Marshall's diary, Durham', 2 July 1951, folder 442, box 50, series 401R, records group (RG) 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archives Centre, Tarrytown, New York (hereafter RAC).

[18] 'Excerpt from JM's diary, London', 14 April 1951, folder 442, box 50, series 401R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

[19] Rahman, *Courage of Conviction*, p. 195.

[20] Ibid., pp. 195–196.

philosophical doctrines on prophecy. Specifically, his *Prophecy in Islam* examined how Ibn Sina (d. 1037) and al-Farabi (d. 950), two of the greatest medieval Muslim philosophers, navigated Greek and Islamic doctrines in their efforts to craft a synthetic theory on the nature of prophecy. Rahman began by explicating how the philosophers understood the relationship between regular human intelligence and the phenomenon of prophecy. He explained that, whereas Ibn Sina and al-Farabi believed that ordinary intelligence is receptive and functions in piecemeal, they characterized prophetic intelligence as creative and holistic.[21] Furthermore, they stressed that, unlike even the highly developed minds of philosophers, prophets possess a strong imaginative faculty capable of transforming religious intellectual truths into powerful symbolic truths that are immediately accessible to the masses.[22] Rahman concluded 'that every stitch of this elaborate theory has its sources in Greek ideas', but he denied that the Muslim philosophers were 'merely artificially trying to engraft Greek doctrines on Islam'.[23] Instead, Rahman argued that Ibn Sina and al-Farabi retained Muhammad as their model prophet and hence altered Greek theories on the prophetic intellect to accommodate Islamic teachings and ultimately to defend Islam against Hellenistic detractors. In this sense, Rahman insisted that, despite their deep entanglement in Greek philosophy, Muslim philosophers were sincere defenders of the faith.[24] Having thus recuperated the Islamic reputations of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi, Rahman freed himself to draw on their ideas about the prophetic intellect and its creative faculties. In his writings from the 1960s, he rejected conventional understandings of the Prophet as a passive recipient of revelation in favour of a philosophically influenced alternative that re-imagined Muhammad as actively involved in the process.[25]

Although he embraced certain aspects of medieval Islamic philosophy, Rahman's writings from the 1950s and early 1960s also betrayed serious hesitance about some philosophical methods and

[21] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 35.
[22] Ibid., pp. 36–45.
[23] Ibid., pp. 59–64.
[24] Ibid., pp. 59–64.
[25] On the nature of Islamic revelation, Rahman wrote: 'The Qur'an is thus pure Divine Word, but, of course, it is equally intimately related to the inmost personality of the Prophet Muhammad whose relationship to it cannot be mechanically conceived like that of a record. The Divine Word flowed through the Prophet's heart.' Rahman, Fazlur (2002). *Islam*, 3rd Edition, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 33.

conclusions. For example, Rahman was deeply uncomfortable with the philosophers' division of humanity into two unequal groups: those who could understand pure intellectual truth and those among the masses who required symbolism. Condemning this doctrine's anti-egalitarian implications, he seethed that 'all this is done in order to keep a sharp cleavage between the intellectual oligarchy and the multitude of the stupid'.[26] At a more fundamental level, Rahman criticized the philosophers' overly intellectualized approach to the Qur'an. He castigated the philosophers for reducing revelation to nothing more than an intellectual truth and thereby robbing it of its ethical and legal potency.[27] He even wrote that Ibn Sina's approach 'seems to me to deprive him of all means to interpret the Koran by the Koran itself'.[28] Rahman concluded that, while they were brilliant and committed Muslims, the philosophers had permitted too many Greek ideas into their conceptions of Islam and had thus drifted too far from the Islamic source texts. Consequently, he deemed that 'the Muslim philosophers were headed in the wrong direction' because they allowed their Greek influences to diminish the integrity of their Islamic vision.[29] In their place, Rahman demanded an integrated approach that could encompass philosophical rationality, the Qur'an, and Islamic ethics.

As Rahman's frustration with the limitations of Islamic philosophy grew in the late 1950s, he redirected his attention to the historical study of Islam. This intellectual shift was further facilitated by Rahman's decision in 1958 to leave Durham for the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies in Montreal, where Director Wilfred Cantwell Smith (d. 2000) had built a space for inter-religious encounter and academic research with an eye towards religious reform.[30] With Smith's encouragement, Rahman embarked on an ambitious new project on Islamic religious history at McGill, which he simply titled *Islam* (1966).[31] Featuring chapters on Muhammad, the Qur'an, Islamic law, philosophy, theology, Sufism, and modern reform efforts,

[26] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 45, 64.

[27] Rahman, *Islam*, pp. 121–127; Rahman, Fazlur (1965). *Islamic Methodology in History*, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, pp. 118–129.

[28] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 45.

[29] Rahman, *Courage of Conviction*, p. 196.

[30] Rahman had been a visiting professor at the McGill Institute during the 1953–54 academic year, and after the experience, worked with Smith to secure a permanent post.

[31] Although *Islam* was not published until 1966, Rahman began work on it while at McGill. Smith reported in 1959 that Rahman had begun serious work on a major

the book's wide scope precludes an in-depth analysis of even a majority of its contents. Instead, I focus on Rahman's adoption of a popular academic genre: the sweeping historical narrative as a vehicle for Islamic critique. At the time, Western studies like H. A. R. Gibb's *Mohammedanism* (1949) and Smith's own *Islam in Modern History* (1957) analysed Islamic history in search of the roots of Islamic civilizational decline. Diagnoses ranged from the anti-rational essence of the Arab mind to the insufficiency of Muslim internal criticism.[32] For his part, Rahman's sweeping historical narrative criticized the contingent and one-sided nature of 'orthodox' Islam.[33] Characterizing the Sunni community as essentially conservative, Rahman argued that the *ulama* often over-corrected for the extremes of its opponents. For example, Rahman maintained that the reason-based doctrines of the Mu'tazilah produced a counter-theological movement (Ash'arism) that over-emphasized God's omnipotence and human pre-destination. In a similar vein, the legal minutiae of *fiqh* (Islamic legal scholarship) gave rise to an antinomian and disengaged Sufism. Ultimately, Rahman portrayed the *ulama* as a counter-revolutionary force that enshrined its own reactionary doctrines as orthodoxy.

Rahman also made the dualist roots of Islamic education a principle target of his historical critique. In *Islam* (1966), he issued a stark diagnosis of the madrasa's institutional disease: a self-imposed isolation from 'rational' disciplines like medicine, philosophy, and the sciences. Specifically, he argued that, in order to protect their authority vis-à-vis the Mu'tazilah, Shi'a, and other sects, the *ulama* had constructed their religious sciences into 'apparently absolutely self-sufficient' disciplines sealed off from outside influences.[34] For a period, the *ulama's* intellectual universe flourished because the

history of Islam as a religion, most definitely referring to *Islam.* See: 'Report of Activities: July 1959', folder 101, box 11, series 427.R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC. Rahman stated in his 1968 resignation announcement from the Islamic Research Institute that he had written the book in 1958. See: 'Resignation of Fazlur Rahman: Text of Letters', *Dawn,* 6 September 1968.

[32] For prominent examples of this mode of historical critique: see: Gibb, H. A. R. (1947). *Modern Trends in Islam*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Gibb, H. A. R. (1953). *Mohammedanism: A Historical Survey*, 2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, London; von Grunebaum, G. E. (1964). *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity*, 1st Vintage Edition, Vintage Books, New York; Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. (1957). *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

[33] In this discussion, I follow Rahman's own use of the term 'orthodox', which he deployed to denote the mainstream Sunni *ulama*.

[34] Rahman, *Islam*, p. 186.

defensive barriers excluded philosophical and scientific works and hence propelled scholars to fill the resulting gaps with their own systematic theories. Yet, the walls that the *ulama* initially built to defend their intellectual tradition gradually turned into the very structures that imprisoned them. Rahman explained: 'when its [the tradition of the *ulama*] content is regarded as absolutely and exclusively self-sufficient, taking the place of all other rational thought, it removes the possibility of all creative challenge that might arise'.[35] According to Rahman, this isolation from other streams of knowledge stifled the development of Islamic education and eventually rendered it largely irrelevant for evolving Muslim societies.[36] It was undoubtedly an exaggerated account of the *ulama's* isolation and stagnation.[37] Yet, by adopting this essentializing Western framework that Islam was a civilization in decline, Rahman was able to use the reductive methodology to attack dualist isolationism and to champion a more open educational model.

In addition to attacking intellectual isolation, Rahman also used *Islam* (1966) to advocate the benefits of historical research. In the preface, he wrote: 'the Muslim should learn to look more objectively at his religious history, particularly at how Islam has fared at his hands'.[38] By identifying shortfalls in the Islamic tradition, Rahman believed that Muslim intellectuals could confront and then correct those mistakes. In other words, history could illuminate the path for religious rejuvenation. He highlighted the Sunni political 'dogma' of 'passivity' as a key starting place for reform in his concluding chapter:

> The task before the Muslim in the field of politics, *after a candid appraisal of his history*, is to reformulate the orthodox content on this point [of passivity] and to create adequate institutions to ensure (1) the solidarity and stability of the community and the state and (2) the active, positive, and responsible

[35] Ibid., p. 187.
[36] Ibid., pp. 186–192.
[37] In the mid-1970s, Rahman himself acknowledged a moment of brilliance in medieval Islamic thought when he devoted an entire book to notable medieval Muslim scholar, Mulla Sadra. However, Rahman made sure to note that Sadra's creativity was exceptional for his time when 'most other students who, in order to gain vainglorious fame, devoted themselves to the hairsplitting details found in later learned books which offered little insight into real problems'. See: Rahman, Fazlur (1975). *The Philosophy of Mullah Sadra, Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi*, State University of New York Press, Albany, p. 2.
[38] Rahman, *Islam*, p. xiii.

participation by the public at large in the affairs of the government and state.[39]

Rahman framed this task as a predominately Muslim responsibility. Although he allowed for borrowing from non-Muslim models, he believed that Muslims could retrace their historical missteps and then return to the straight path of the Qur'an and the Prophet.[40] In this sense, Rahman maintained that 'objective' historical research could jump start an internal and necessarily normative revolution.

Although Rahman used history to develop an internal critique of Islam, he remained committed to the promise of Western academia and to McGill's unique mission of cross-religious encounter in particular. Throughout the late 1950s, both Western and Pakistani colleagues encouraged Rahman to return to Pakistan to build his career. In 1956, Wilfred Cantwell Smith urged Rahman to accept a prestigious faculty appointment in Lahore so that he could help sow the seeds for an Islamic intellectual renaissance in Pakistan, but he declined the offer.[41] Rahman received another Pakistani job offer in 1959 for a professorship at Punjab University. Although emphasizing his desire to contribute to the development of academic Islamic studies in Lahore, he again turned down the opportunity in favour of remaining at McGill. Explaining his decision to the university administration, he wrote:

> For many years to come, the work will be so exacting on the organizational and administrative side, that whoever undertakes it, must leave his academic and writing work almost severely alone. In my special case—and I hope you will agree with this—this will be unfortunate, since my whole past training has prepared me just for this type of work. Further, it is impossible to deny the importance of this Institute [at McGill], especially with a view to its future potentialities. Muslim scholars are badly needed here (and, of course, keenly sought after), and I do think that by serving here, in this academic way, I am serving not only McGill, but also both Pakistan and Islam.[42]

[39] Italics added by author. Ibid., p. 240.

[40] Ibid.

[41] According to Smith, the Lahore job offer was 'a permanent and very highly paid and quite prestigious post in Lahore, as University Professor of Arabic', presumably at Punjab University. Wilfred Cantwell Smith letter to John Marshall, dated 1 December 1956, folder 1772, box 7, RG 36, McGill University Archives.

[42] Fazlur Rahman letter to U. Kramet, dated 11 July 1959, folder 7562, box 253, RG 2, McGill University Archives.

Clearly, the better opportunities for research and publishing at McGill influenced his decision to remain in Montreal. However, the letter also hints at Rahman's refusal to accept geographic or discursive boundaries on his research. In asserting that his academic service at McGill extended to 'both Pakistan and Islam', Rahman proposed that the two institutional spaces were not necessarily at odds but were instead intertwined. By deploying academic methodologies to revise the history of the Islamic tradition, Rahman envisioned himself as contributing to both an academic conversation *and* an internal Muslim discourse of Islamic reform. In many ways, Rahman believed that Western academia transcended national and religious categories. It was an anti-dualist spatial contention that dovetailed with his emergent fusionism.

Fusionism and its opponents in Pakistan, 1961–1968

In 1961, Fazlur Rahman decided to return, at least temporarily, to Pakistan in order to contribute to a nascent Islamic reform movement in the country. He had not abandoned his commitment to Western academia nor to the promise of a transcendent and hence anti-dualist academic culture. Rather, Rahman could simply not pass up this new opportunity. In March 1960, Pakistani President Ayub Khan established the Central Institute of Islamic Research (later renamed the Islamic Research Institute) in Karachi and tasked it with the responsibility of providing Islam with 'a rational and scientific interpretation in the context of the modern age'.[43] Ayub Khan envisioned the Institute as a centrepiece in his campaign to bypass what he saw as the intellectually stagnant *ulama* and to create a modern Islam for Pakistan. Possessing substantial political capital, it was a platform from which to wield both religious and political authority. Consequently, Rahman quickly accepted the offer of the Institute's founding director, I. H. Qureshi (d. 1981), to join his staff as a visiting scholar.[44] Upon his arrival in Karachi, Rahman wasted little time before voicing his dissatisfaction with the Institute's activities.

[43] Central Institute of Islamic Research Grant Description, folder 11, box 1, series 465.R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

[44] On McGill's end, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who was ever keen to have Rahman return to Pakistan in a position of Islamic leadership, secured Rahman leave from McGill. Fazlur Rahman letter to Chadbourn Gilpatric, dated 10 January 1961, folder 12, box 1, series 465.R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

On 25 October 1961, Rahman sent a joint letter, co-signed by visiting scholar, Isma'il al Faruqi (d. 1986), to Qureshi that outlined a series of suggestions for the Institute.[45] Apparently, the letter fell on deaf ears. In mid-1962, Smith visited the Karachi Institute and reported to Rockefeller officials on the situation:

> In Karachi, Smith was given a very disappointing account of the conditions of work in the Central Institute for Islamic Research. As Visiting Professors there, Faruqi and Rahman said that the Institute currently is 'just awful' and 'nothing is allowed to happen'. Smith talked with I. H. Qureshi, Director of the Institute and Vice-Chancellor of Karachi University, to find out the reasons for stoppage in research and other planned activities. Qureshi was evasive and, according to Faruqi and Rahman, has new political ambitions in Pakistan.[46]

Deeply frustrated with the situation, Rahman decided to go straight to Ayub Khan. He drafted a letter on how best to organize and manage the Institute and then hand delivered it to the president.[47] The gamble paid off. On 4 August 1962, Rahman was appointed the new director of the Islamic Research Institute on the personal orders of the president of Pakistan.

Capitalizing on his newfound authority as director of the Islamic Research Institute, Fazlur Rahman pushed his fusion of academic methodologies and Islamic faith to new heights. He even proclaimed the Institute 'an organization endowed with a duty that is as academic as it is ethical'.[48] In his own scholarship, Rahman applied tools of historical analysis to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and, in the process, developed a competing conception of the prophetic Sunnah that untethered it from Hadith. He then used these fusionist

[45] The two men argued that the Institute should not exhaust itself with collating and editing ancient manuscripts but rather commit itself to historical research on Islamic principles and then contemporary applications of them. Specifically, they proposed that the Institute be re-organized around six research fields: aesthetic, sociological, economic, international, educational, and legal divisions. With each division headed by a qualified professor, their respective teams would then identify pressing problems facing the Muslim community in their field, research relevant Islamic teachings, and then propose properly Islamic solutions. Shafiq, Muhammad (1994). *The Growth of Islamic Thought in North America: Focus on Isma'il Raji al Faruqi*, Amana Publications, Brentwood, Maryland, p. 14.

[46] 'Interview: CG, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Director, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 27 June 1962, telephone', folder 101, box 11, series 427, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

[47] Shafiq, *Growth of Islamic Thought*, p. 15.

[48] 'The Central Institute of Islamic Research', folder 11, box 1, series 465R, RG 1.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

methodologies to advise the Ayub Khan government on Islamic policy matters and worked to build a cohort of researchers who approached Islamic materials with 'objectivity and in a scholarly manner' while 'remain[ing] true to the Divine Message the Prophet had received'.[49] As he struggled to integrate academic methods into these many realms of Pakistani Islam, Rahman encountered often fierce resistance. Threatened by Rahman's aggressive reforms, members of the *ulama*, like Ihtisham al-Haqq Thanawi, protested his seeming preference for non-Muslim Western academics over Muslims trained in the Islamic tradition. Accordingly, Rahman faced a series of public controversies during his tenure as director and was eventually forced to resign from the Institute in 1968. Although the opposition was undeniably hostile, Rahman's decade in Pakistan enabled him to grow increasingly vocal about his fusion of the academic and Islamic worlds.

Over the course of his first three years back in Pakistan, Rahman devoted much of his intellectual energy to revisiting and ultimately revising the early history of Islamic thought. Like much of his work, it was a project with one foot in Western academic debates about Islamic history and another foot in an Islamic reform movement in contemporary Pakistan. In a series of journal articles (later compiled into the book, *Islamic Methodology in History*), Rahman challenged the prevailing Muslim conception that the prophetic Sunnah was synonymous with Hadith.[50] In contrast to a Hadith-based Sunnah, Rahman argued that early generations of Muslims had conceived of the Sunnah as an adaptable set of exemplary teachings. Rahman called this the 'living Sunnah'. Citing historical evidence from the Qur'an and early Muslim scholarship, he argued that the 'living Sunnah' had enabled Muslims to use individual free thought (*ra'y*), analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), and independent legal reasoning (*ijtihad*) to continually re-interpret the Prophet's example to meet new social situations. Then, through discussion and contestation, the community gradually reached a consensus (*ijma*) on which behaviours, beliefs, and practices constituted the Prophet's Sunnah.[51] In this way, Rahman tied *ijtihad*, *ijma*, and the Sunnah into an organic process that both

[49] 'The Central Institute of Islamic Research', Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

[50] In much of his discussion of the Sunnah and Hadith, Rahman drew from the historical methods and revisionist narrative developed by Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht, but he also had serious disagreements with these noted Western academics over the history of the Sunnah as a concept and how to understand fabricated Hadith.

[51] Rahman, *Islamic Methodology*, p. 19.

immortalized the Prophet's teachings and also allowed space for dynamism.

However, according to Rahman's careful historical analysis, the 'living Sunnah' underwent a radical transformation at the hands of al-Shafi'i (d. 820). Determined to stabilize and thus formalize the prophetic Sunnah, al-Shafi'i severed the organic relationship among *ijtihad*, *ijma*, and the Sunnah and replaced it with a concept of the Sunnah as entirely dependent upon Hadith. In Rahman's words, 'the place of the living Sunnah-ijtihad-ijma he [al-Shafi'i] gives to the Prophetic Sunnah, which, for him, does not serve as a general directive but as something absolutely literal and specific and whose only vehicle is the transmission of the hadith'.[52] Rahman acknowledged that al-Shafi'i's consolidation of a Hadith-based Sunnah laid the groundwork for a more unified Muslim community under which Islamic civilization, for a brief period, flourished. However, prioritizing Hadith over the dynamism of the 'living Sunnah' also resulted in long-term problems. First, it led to the widespread tendency among Muslims to project their own religious and political positions back to the Prophet by creating Hadith. Indeed, Rahman agreed with many Western academics that the majority of Hadith were historically inauthentic, that is, did not go back to the Prophet. He thus developed a historical method of source criticism—based primarily on the principle that no real Hadith had predictive force—to root out fabrications.[53] Despite acknowledging their historical inauthenticity, Rahman did not call these retrospective Hadith forgeries; instead, he believed that they represented the 'living Sunnah' or genuine attempts by early Muslims to interpret the Prophet's example. Second, Rahman argued that only a select (or skewed) set of early Muslim opinions had been preserved as Hadith. In his estimation, some Muslim groups had been more theologically or socially inclined to enshrine their positions in Hadith, and consequently, the Hadith canon came to feature a preponderance of one-sided statements on issues such as political passivity and predetermination. With the absolute dominance of the Hadith-based concept of the Sunnah, subsequent generations of Muslims mistook

[52] Rahman, *Islamic Methodology*, p. 23.

[53] Describing his general principle, Rahman wrote: 'A hadith which involves a prediction, directly or indirectly, cannot, on strict historical grounds, be accepted as genuinely emanating from the Prophet and must be referred to the relevant period of latter history. We do not reject all predictions but only those which are fairly specific.' Rahman, *Islamic Methodology*, pp. 46–53.

these one-sided, conservative Hadith as authoritative and literal reports of the Prophet's teachings.[54]

In order to legitimate his fusionist methodology, Rahman argued during this same period that the Qur'an itself instructed Muslims to seek knowledge widely and especially via historical research. In a short 1967 article, he explained that the Qur'an praised all knowledge as worthy and beneficial as long as it was put in the service of higher values rather than base material gain. According to Rahman, the Qur'anic conception of knowledge was organic and total in nature. It knew no bounds and was necessarily dynamic.[55] On historical knowledge in particular, he wrote:

> The Qur'an is equally emphatic ... on the historical study of societies. A correct appreciation of other cultures, societies, and religions must yield positive results in several directions. It will broaden the horizon of the human mind and remove bigotry and narrow-mindedness. It will enable us not only to judge others in terms of successes and failures but also to see our own virtues as virtues and our vices as vices. History, if genuinely and seriously pursued, necessarily leads to a comparative study of one's own society with that of others, and is a necessary instrument of self-criticism and self-assessment.[56]

Because, for Rahman, the Qur'an required the pursuit of historical research, there was no meaningful distinction between Islamic and academic knowledge in this field; instead, it all contributed to one, unified truth. By grounding his trust in historical analysis in the Qur'an itself, Rahman located an Islamic basis for academic methods.

Insisting not only that fusionist scholarship was Islamic but that it had practical implications for Muslim societies, Rahman applied his new historical methodology to pressing Islamic policy issues in Pakistan, like the permissibility of *riba* (often glossed as interest). In 1962, banking interest emerged as a point of public contention in Pakistan when some members of the National Assembly objected to the proposed annual budget on grounds that its use of interest was un-Islamic and thus unconstitutional.[57] In response, Ayub Khan's government turned to Rahman for advice. In his confidential report, which was only later published as the article 'Riba and Interest', Rahman began his examination of *riba* with the Qur'an. He advanced

[54] Ibid., pp. 85–147.

[55] Rahman, Fazlur. (1967). The Qur'anic Solution of Pakistan's Educational Problems, *Islamic Studies*, Vol 6.4, pp. 318–320.

[56] Ibid., p. 318.

[57] Rahman, Fazlur (1974). 'Some Islamic Issues in the Ayyub Khan Era', in Donald Little. *Essays in Islamic Civilization*, McGill University Press, Montreal, pp. 291–295.

that the relevant Qur'anic verses characterized *riba* not as simple interest but rather as a doubling and re-doubling of the principal when a borrower was unable to pay back a loan.[58] Yet, if this doubling was the Qur'anic definition of *riba*, then how had Muslim scholars arrived at a more expansive conception of *riba* as encompassing all forms of interest? To answer this question, Rahman turned to Hadith. He concluded that many Hadith which provided broader definitions of *riba* were mired in unresolvable contradictions and were also historically inauthentic. Yet, Rahman did not dismiss them as outright forgeries. Instead, he argued that the historical development of progressively rigid anti-*riba* Hadith served as an archive of how early Muslims had interpreted Islamic principles on a cooperative and just economy.[59] From this careful historical investigation, Rahman provided several pieces of actionable advice: first, the clear Qur'anic prohibition of *riba* applied narrowly to the act of doubling and re-doubling; second Hadith, which were merely written records of the 'living Sunnah', and the Qur'an itself pointed to an Islamic ethics of economic justice that condemns but does not prohibit other forms of interest; and third, while an ideal Muslim society would end all interest in order to embody these Islamic economic ethics, Pakistan's economy was only healthy enough at the time to prohibit the more narrow Qur'anic definition of *riba*.[60] With this advice, Rahman demonstrated the applicability of his historical research.

Although clearly eager to exert his influence on state Islamic policies, Fazlur Rahman invested most of his time as director of the Islamic Research Institute in training junior scholars in fusionist methodologies. By elevating graduate training to a top priority, he hoped the Institute could 'bring up men well-trained in the techniques of scholarly research, well-informed in the history of development of every aspect of the Islamic world and life-view, but profoundly committed to, and *engaged* in, the mission which the Prophet had entrusted to use for the transfiguration of Reality'.[61] Accordingly, he helped to design and implement a four-year diploma programme in which graduate students studied Islamic and European languages, Islamic history, and traditional Islamic disciplines like *fiqh*, Hadith,

[58] Rahman, Fazlur (1964). Riba and Interest, *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 3.1, pp. 1–8.
[59] Ibid., pp. 8–37.
[60] Ibid., pp. 40–41.
[61] Italics in original. 'The Central Institute of Islamic Research', Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

and the Qur'an.[62] Given the challenge of training his own fusionist research staff from scratch, Rahman also pursued opportunities, even before he became director, to reach out for assistance. In December 1961, he wrote to McGill University President Cyril James (d. 1973):

> This Institute has started to function actually i.e. academically from September and I am trying to do as much as possible in order that it may start off at a fairly high academic level. There is, however, an almost total dearth of suitably trained people in this field and I do not think the Institute can begin to be productive until such men are available. To train people here is rather difficult—I have been given great academic freedom but the training of people requires more than a professor or two and it requires other factors which are at best lacking here. I have written to the President [Ayub Khan] about the inadequacy of the situation here and have suggested to Wilfred [Cantwell Smith] if I could bring with me to McGill a few students who should be given a training there in an adequately constructive Islamic Research—such as needed by the Muslim society of Pakistan. I am convinced—and I think the President will be open to accept this—that this help will [be incredibly important]. Perhaps you and Wilfred could kindly think this matter over.[63]

As a result, several young Pakistani scholars enrolled at McGill for graduate studies, and many more travelled to other international centres of Islamic studies. Still, Rahman had a difficult time attracting Western academics to the Institute to teach research methods.[64] Despite such occasional setbacks, Rahman established the aspiration that the Karachi Institute engage in both academically rigorous and Islamically significant scholarship.

By the middle of 1963, Rahman's fusionist activism began to draw increasing criticism from Pakistani *ulama* and other Islamic intellectuals. When Rahman's 'supposedly confidential' report to Ayub Khan on *riba* was leaked to the press, Pakistan's leading English-language newspaper, *Dawn*, published a front page headline on 22 September announcing that Rahman had ruled *riba* to be permitted (halal).[65] A full-scale controversy ensued. However, I argue that the fundamental point of conflict revolved not around banking interest but instead around Rahman's commitment to and propagation of academic methods. In fact, the following weeks saw the spotlight

[62] Ibid.

[63] Fazlur Rahman letter to Cyril James, dated 18 December 1961, file 8263, box 274, RG 2, McGill University Archives.

[64] Rahman, Fazlur (1982). *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 123.

[65] Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues', p. 294.

definitively shift from *riba* to Rahman's close association with Western academia.[66] On 7 October, a popular member of the Deobandi *ulama*, Ihtisham al-Haqq Thanawi (d. 1980), held a press conference to broadcast his strong disapproval of Rahman and his Institute's overall vision for Islam. He raised suspicions about Rahman's self-proclaimed Deobandi background by questioning Rahman's decision to dedicate his first book not to his father or another Deobandi scholar but to 'the Jew Orientalist Symon' (Simon van den Bergh). He also distributed copies of private correspondence between Rahman and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, whom he called a Christian priest, in order to denigrate Rahman's attempts to solicit McGill assistance for the Institute.[67] Thanawi declared: 'I want to expose Dr. Fazlur Rahman's attempt to "modernize" Islam by exploiting the Central Institute of Islamic Research in collaboration with foreign Christian missionaries.'[68] Many Pakistani Muslim thinkers shared similar concerns. Over the next several weeks, dozens of *ulama* and Muslim intellectuals from Karachi universities wrote critical letters to *Dawn* assailing Rahman's ties to Western academia. Labelling Smith as among 'the avowed enemies of Islam', Iqbal scholar, S.A. Vahid insisted: 'We do not want our Islamic Institute to be a copy of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. We want it to undo the harm that McGill University has done and is doing to our cause.'[69] Other critics wondered whether Rahman suffered from an inferiority complex that led him to venerate Western Orientalists over his Muslim peers.[70]

At first glance, these accusations against Rahman, especially Thanawi's vitriol about a 'Jew Orientalist' and a 'Christian priest', appear as nothing more than a polemical smear campaign. However, the subsequent deluge of letters and petitions points towards a more

[66] Rahman made numerous attempts in his press releases and in the Institute's monthly Urdu journal, *Fikr-o-Nazar,* to persuade members of the *ulama* to focus on the contents of his arguments about *riba* rather than the source of his methodology. With the exception of Abu Usaama Hasan al-'Ajami (whose article from the Deobandi journal, *Bayyinat*, was reprinted by Rahman in *Fikr-o-Nazar* in April 1964), very few did. See: al-'Ajami, Abu Usaama Hasan (1964). 'Afikar', *Fikr-o-Nazar*, No. 10, pp. 59–79.

[67] Rahman later said that the letters had been stolen by his personal secretary and then passed onto Thanawi.

[68] 'Thanvi, Rahman State Their Case', *Dawn,* 9 October 1963.

[69] S. A. Vahid, 'Islamic Research', *Dawn*, 11 October 1963.

[70] For examples, see: M. Saleh Atfla, 'Islamic Research', *Dawn*, 12 October 1963; Ziauddin S. Bulbul, 'Islamic Research', *Dawn* 15 October 1963.

intractable disagreement between Rahman and his opponents over who should have the authority to study and teach Islam in Pakistan: Western (non-Muslim) and Western-trained Muslim academics or Muslims educated in the Islamic tradition. In his own press release, Rahman defended his collaboration with Western academics by emphasizing the utility of 'their research techniques, particularly with regard to historical data'.[71] As Rahman explained, he was interested only in acquiring these techniques: 'if a Western Orientalist visits here, his activity will be strictly confined to imparting a knowledge of scientific technique of research and he will have nothing whatsoever to do with the problems of Islam as such, for example, riba'.[72] Even after delineating this limit for Western involvement in Islamic research, many Muslim scholars were furious that Rahman would use the Islamic Research Institute to elevate non-Muslim research over the long tradition of Islamic scholarship produced by men of faith. In a joint press release, 16 notable Islamic scholars, including both members of the *ulama* and university professors, explained:

> The real objection is that principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah are sacrificed at the altar of the so-called researches of the anti-Islam Orientalists. And when it is considered indispensable and without their help and academic relations with them, we will be groping in the dark. Dr. Fazlur Rahman has never cared to refer himself to the researchers of those who have devoted their entire lives in the service of Qur'an and Islam.[73]

They accused Rahman of belittling great Muslim scholars like al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and venerating instead Christian and Jewish scholars like Smith and van den Bergh. In contrast to Rahman's belief that academic methods could illuminate new truths within the Islamic tradition, his critics viewed the very involvement of Western non-Muslim scholars in Islamic research as a capitulation to Western (Christian and/or Jewish) power and as a threat to Islam's integrity.

In the wake of the *riba*-McGill scandal of 1963, Rahman and his array of Muslim critics continued to spar publicly over family planning, mechanical slaughter, *zakat* (obligatory charity) regulations, and other topics of Islamic reform. These persistent protests culminated in 1968 when the Islamic Research Institute's Urdu journal, *Fikr-o-Nazar*, published sections of Rahman's *Islam* (1966) in translation. Rahman's

[71] 'Islamic Research—Dr. Rahman's Justification', *Dawn,* 19 October 1963.
[72] Dawn Staff Correspondent, 'Questions and Answers', *Dawn*, 9 October 1963.
[73] 'Views of Central Islamic Research Institute Director Criticised', *Dawn*, 23 October 1963.

unconventional stance on the nature of revelation, in particular, became the target of unrelenting attacks. Because, in the book, Rahman had reconceived Muhammad's role in the revelatory process as active rather than only a passive recipient, many *ulama* castigated him a disbeliever in the Qur'an.[74] Over the summer months of 1968, angry demonstrators calling for Rahman's removal from office filled the streets. For example, in Sialkot, 500–600 students from the Jinnah Islamic College went on strike in early September to demand that the book be seized.[75] In Lahore, Rahman later recalled that posters offering a price for his head decorated city walls.[76] In an attempt to calm the situation, Rahman and Federal Law Minister S. M. Zafar held a joint press conference on 3 September, but it was to no avail.[77] Unwilling to risk the growing political turmoil, Ayub Khan called the embattled scholar on Thursday 5 September and asked him to resign his post before Friday prayers.[78] Rahman announced his resignation the following day through the Friday morning newspapers.[79]

Although this final controversy focused on Rahman's statements about revelation, his ties to Western academia emerged yet again as a critical point of contention. In a joint letter published in *Nawa-i Waqt,* members of the Jam'iyyat 'Ulama-e Islam and the Nizami Islam Party of East Pakistan accused Rahman of seeking to alter Islam to accommodate the West. In their eyes, Rahman insinuated that 'an incomplete Islam can only be perfected through Western leadership'.[80] They further disparaged his book *Islam* as Rahman's own effort to 'fulfil' Islam's message through mimicry of the West. In their letter, the signatories demanded to know:

> Have you now decided that Pakistan was achieved so that [you] could sit and have Islam proven to be incomplete and to pay obedience to and blindly follow (*taqlid*) the West in order to have it perfected? If this was not [the purpose of Pakistan] and certainly it was not, then come. Stand up in the name of God.[81]

[74] Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues', pp. 299–300.

[75] 'Sialkot main Doktor Fazl ur-Rahman ke khalaf mazahare', *Nawa-i Waqt*, 4 September 1968.

[76] Rahman, 'Some Islamic Issues', p. 301.

[77] For coverage of the press conference, see: 'Qur'an hakim khuda ka kalam hai awr iska aik aik lafz rasul pak par nazal hua tha', *Nawa-i Waqt,* 4 September 1968; 'Holy Quran Totally Divine Word', *The Pakistan Times*, 4 September 1968.

[78] Leonard Binder, Personal Interview, 28 August 2012.

[79] 'Resignation of Fazlur Rahman: Text of Letters', *Dawn,* 6 September 1968.

[80] 'Kitāb "Islam" ke gumrahkun mandarjat', *Nawa-i Waqt*, 26 August 1968.

[81] Ibid.

Clearly, members of the *ulama* believed that Rahman's statements on revelation were tied to his Western education.[82] During the same period in 1968, another Urdu newspaper, this time Karachi's *Jang*, printed reports that Rahman was a spy for none other than McGill University. Rahman brought a libel case against his accuser, but the story continued to garner attention, eventually forcing the Canadian High Commissioner for Pakistan to become entangled in the matter.[83] Although the case ostensibly ended when Rahman left Pakistan in early 1969, the spectre of his relationship with McGill and other Western universities continued to haunt him to the very end of his Pakistani political career.

Why had Rahman's tenure as director of the Islamic Research Institute, and especially his insistence on an academic-Islamic fusion, proved so wildly unpopular in Pakistan? Although this article is by no means an in-depth analysis of Pakistani politics *circa* 1968, Rahman's resignation must be considered within the wider context of *ulama* and Islamist opposition to the modernist military regime of Ayub Khan. As early as 1959, Ayub Khan castigated Pakistan's *ulama* as antiquated and made clear his intention to either convert them to his modernist programme or to sideline them altogether.[84] For their part, the *ulama* entered into open political opposition. They protested vehemently against Ayub Khan's implementation of family law reform and even supported a parliamentary move to overturn the Family Law Ordinance in 1963. As Ali Usman Qasmi details, they also attacked controversial modernist and close Ayub Khan adviser, Ghulam Ahmad

[82] Interestingly, some of the signatories' objections to *Islam* seem less like genuine disagreements than lost-in-translation misunderstandings. Throughout the book, Rahman offered nuanced defences of Muhammad and the Qur'an to counter Orientalist criticisms, but, perhaps unaware of the academic context for Rahman's statements, the *ulama* misconstrued Rahman as agreeing with the very points he sought to discredit. These moments of mistranslation highlight the 'otherness' which the *ulama* ascribed to the Western academic study of Islam.

[83] During a visit to Pakistan in January 1969, Charles Adams, director of the McGill Institute of, met with the recently resigned Rahman who discussed the accusations that he was a 'McGill spy'. Adams then reported this information to Acting Director Donald Little and the McGill administration. See: Donald Little letter to Rocke Robertson, dated 20 February 1969, folder 13189, box 356, RG 2, McGill University Archives.

[84] For details on Ayub Khan's Islamic policies, see: Ansari, Sarfraz Husain (2011). Forced Modernization and Public Policy: A Case Study of Ayub Khan Era (1958–69), *Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 18.1, pp. 45–60; Qasmi, Ali Usman (2010). God's Kingdom on Earth? Politics of Islam in Pakistan, 1947–1969, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 44.6, pp. 1225–1253.

Pervez, labelling him a 'denier of the Sunnah' and even an infidel.[85] Like Pervez, Rahman was closely connected to Ayub Khan and hence became a lightning rod for regime criticism. By assailing Rahman's scholarship and his leadership of the Islamic Research Institute, the *ulama* were able to wage a proxy war against the modernist Ayub Khan government.[86]

Nevertheless, Rahman's close ties to Ayub Khan do not explain the vitriol directed at his academic connections in particular. Consequently, I suggest that it was also Rahman's fusionism that posed a substantial threat to the authority of the Pakistani *ulama* and other Islamic scholars. The threat functioned on at least two levels: the intellectual and the material. In the intellectual realm, Rahman consistently disparaged the *ulama* as suffering from a narrow outlook, a self-imposed isolation, and a pervasive intellectual decay. To make matters worse, Rahman argued that he, along with non-Muslim academics from the West, possessed the necessary methods to genuinely understand Islam and thus revitalize it for the modern world. By challenging the *ulama*'s position as the foremost experts on Islam, Rahman had the potential, if heard, to cast serious doubts on their capacity to continue serving as the custodians of the tradition. In addition to attacking the *ulama*'s *raison d'être*, Rahman's criticisms also raised the possibility of real political and material losses. As director of the Islamic Research Institute, Rahman marshalled valuable resources for fusionist projects and gained the ear of the president regarding Islamic policy decisions. His activities thus robbed the *ulama* of political capital. Ultimately, Rahman was a menacing figure. Because his fusionism had the potential to radically alter religious authority structures in Pakistan, opposition grew until Rahman was forced to flee the country in early 1969.

The Muslim professor as Islamic activist, 1969–1988

After leaving Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman returned to the Western academic milieu where he spent the remainder of his scholarly life. He first accepted a temporary post at the University of California Los

[85] Qasmi, God's Kingdom, pp. 1238–1247.

[86] I thank Muhammad Qasim Zaman for bringing to my attention the possibility that Rahman's ties to Ayub Khan's authoritarian state may have been a primary motivation behind *ulama* attacks.

Angeles and then officially joined the University of Chicago faculty on 1 October 1969.[87] In frail health and nearly blind (he was forced to wear two pairs of glasses in order to read), Rahman arrived in Chicago with six children in tow, all under the age of about 14. After briefly residing in university housing in Hyde Park, Rahman opted to move the family to the suburban town of Naperville, from where he often commuted into campus with his graduate students. He quickly gained a reputation as a generous and accessible teacher, serving on many doctoral committees and consistently advocating for his students, especially his female advisees who encountered a predominantly male discipline.[88] While Chicago provided some respite from the continuous political controversies in Pakistan, Rahman refused to see the space of the Western university as distinct from the realm of Islamic activism. Instead, he forged crucial partnerships with development scholars and agencies and then used these connections as platforms for fusionist activism in Pakistan. He also advised a cadre of Muslim graduate students at Chicago, transforming the university into a centre for fusionist education. Through his continual religious and political engagements, Rahman thus pioneered a new model of Islamic intellectual leadership: the Muslim professor as Islamic activist. Yet, because he constructed this model on an unwavering belief in the ideal of academic objectivity, he was susceptible to both Muslim and post-colonial criticism.

Throughout the 1970s, Rahman co-ran an ambitious research project entitled 'Islam and Social Change' with Leonard Binder, a professor of political science at Chicago and a long-time scholar of modernization in the Islamic world. With an unusually large budget of US$360,000 from the Ford Foundation, 'Islam and Social Change' served as the umbrella for much of Rahman's fusionist activism while at Chicago. The project itself aimed to examine how Islamic scholars and educational institutions across the globe had responded to the rising tide of modernization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[89] In other words, Rahman and Binder made

[87] 'University Press Release, 13 October 1969', folder 14, box 24, Allen G. Debus Papers, Special Collections Research Centre, University of Chicago Library. Rahman filled the professorial chair recently vacated by Muhsin Mahdi, who had departed for Harvard.

[88] Paul Walker, Personal Interview, 15 November 2012; Stephen Humphreys, Personal Interview, 30 August 2012.

[89] Leonard Binder and Fazlur Rahman, 'Islam and Social Change: A Research Proposal', Grant Number 07400141, Reel 3087, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

intellectual dualism their very object of study. To guide their research, they also adopted an appropriately anti-dualist methodology that combined Islamic discursive and social scientific analyses. In their proposal, Rahman and Binder outlined what they labelled their 'bi-modal' approach: 'We seek to learn the consequences *for Islam* and *for development* of the modernization of society, economy, polity, and culture. Certainly, religious phenomena must be studied in their own terms. Evaluation from within does not, however, mean that a system of religious institutions and attitudes cannot be evaluated in terms of its consequences for development.'[90] In this manner, Rahman and Binder insisted on the possibility of assessing both modern Islamic thought and development theory simultaneously. In order to tackle this expansive agenda, the project brought together over a dozen researchers to conduct country-based case studies, while, as co-directors, Rahman and Binder produced their own comparative and synthetic volumes.

Using his connections with the Ford Foundation, Rahman furthered his fusionist agenda in Pakistan as a project administrator and a noted outside expert. In late 1972, he returned to the country for the first time since his forced resignation and received an unexpectedly warm welcome by many in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government. His travelling companion, Leonard Binder, even called the visit Rahman's 'second coming'.[91] While he still had to contend with some hostile media reports and private concerns about his controversial views, Rahman nonetheless had access to and sometimes advised high state officials in the mid-1970s.[92] As part of the 'Islam and Social Change' project, he met with Bhutto's education minister and prominent Islamabad professors in the hope of establishing a partnership between the University of Chicago and Pakistani institutes of higher education. He also cultivated relationships with Bhutto and his inner circle. For example, in December 1974, Rahman exchanged letters with Bhutto himself over the Ahmadiyya controversy.[93] In mid-1975, he met with

[90] Italics added by author. Ibid.

[91] T. M. Smith Memo to Reuben Frodin, 'Binder and Rahman: Comparative Islamic Education', dated 22 January 1973, Grant Number 07400141, Reel 3087, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

[92] Fazlur Rahman, 'A Report on My Visit to Pakistan', attached to letter dated 7 October 1974, Grant Number 07400141, Reel 3087, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

[93] Rahman wrote directly to Prime Minister Bhutto about the constitutional amendment that declared the minority to be Ahmadiyya non-Muslims. Rahman

the prime minister's close political adviser, Yusuf Bach, and drafted a policy memo on Islamic initiatives for the administration.[94] He advocated the creation of a modernized Islamic university to train imams and madrasa teachers and for an increased political role for his old fusionist base, the Islamic Research Institute.[95] In this sense, Rahman saw his commitments to Ford and his religio-political activism in Pakistan as entirely compatible.

At the end of the Ford-sponsored 'Islam and Social Change' project, Rahman wrote *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (1982), which was, in many ways, an extended historical critique of intellectual dualism. Specifically, Rahman located the origins of dualism in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries when madrasas drew 'the most fateful distinction between the "religious sciences" or "traditional sciences" and the "rational or secular sciences", toward which a gradually stiffening and stifling attitude was adopted'.[96] For Rahman, this unfortunate attitude was the result of internal Islamic developments, including anti-intellectual Sufism, attacks by eminent thinkers like al-Ghazali on the rational sciences, and better employment prospects for jurists compared to philosophers. While dualism thus pre-dated the modern era, Western colonialism greatly exacerbated the problem. Rahman categorized Muslim responses to the influx of modern European sciences into two strategies: either limited adoption of practical technologies or an embrace of all forms of Western intellectualism.[97] In Rahman's assessment, the former technological approach merely formalized the existence of two entirely separate education systems. In turn, the latter holistic approach fell woefully short in its own ways. While some reformist Muslim schools taught both rational and

especially objected to a speech in which Bhutto characterized the amendment as a 'secular decision' with origins in Pakistan's 'secular constitution'. Rahman wrote: 'we [do not] have a secular constitution but an Islamic one—and self-professedly so! And this Islamic Constitution has *Islamically* [enabled this decision].' Within a month, Bhutto responded to the letter in order to explain that his emphasis on secularism had been intended for an international audience. See: Fazlur Rahman letter to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, dated 2 December 1974, Grant Number 07400141, Reel 3087, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC; Zulfikar Ali Bhutto letter to Fazlur Rahman, dated 5 January 1975, Grant Number 07400141, Reel 3087, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

[94] 'Report of Professor Fazlur Rahman's Visit to Pakistan in Summer 1975 in Connection with the "Islamic Education" Project of the University of Chicago', undated, Grant Number 07400141, Reel 3087, Ford Foundation Archives, RAC.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 33.

[97] Ibid., pp. 33–39, 46–47.

religious subjects, they kept them as separate disciplines and therefore prevented any real intellectual cross-pollination. Moreover, schools like Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Mahomadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh were attacked by *ulama* and disappointed reformists alike for producing 'bloodless, pale shadows of the West and cultural-intellectual bastards'.[98] Rather than inculcating fusionism, these reformist efforts bred ambivalent mixed systems. Through his historical narrative, Rahman thus argued that intellectual dualism dominated Muslim societies well into the twentieth century.

In contrast to what he deemed as these earlier failures, Rahman articulated his own fusionist resolution to dualism in *Islam and Modernity*. For Rahman, modern Islam faced two critical challenges: incorporating academic social sciences and humanities into its intellectual tradition and returning the Qur'an itself—not commentaries upon it—to its rightful centrality. To confront both of these issues, he proposed a new hermeneutic for the Qur'an, the 'double movement theory'. The first step depended heavily upon historical research. In Rahman's view, the Qur'an had been revealed as a direct response to Muhammad's own situational dilemmas, and therefore, Qur'anic verses were not literal injunctions intended for all times and places but were rather the articulation of ethical universals into the Prophet's specific historical moment and cultural milieu. The universality of the Qur'anic message was thus buried in contextual particulars. Accordingly, Qur'anic scholars needed to conduct careful historical research into Muhammad's context in order to unearth the universal message of the Qur'an.[99] While step one moved from the particular (the revelatory moment) to the universal, step two moved from the universal to another particular (the present). In other words, Rahman's second 'movement' tasked scholars with determining how to apply those universal Islamic principles to their own contemporary contexts. Rahman suggested that Muslims required social scientific methods to help them unravel the complexities of contemporary social, political, and economic systems. With such detailed knowledge about present social realities, only then could Muslims implement Islam's universal principles effectively.[100]

[98] Ibid., p. 72.

[99] Fazlur Rahman drew out these universal Qur'anic principles in his 1980 book on the Qur'an. See: Rahman, Fazlur (2009). *Major Themes of the Qur'an,* 2nd Edition, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

[100] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 7.

Rahman's double-movement hermeneutic enabled Muslim intellectuals to engage fully in both academic and Islamic reformist conversations, but did his fusionist ideal extend to non-Muslim scholars of Islam? In the early 1980s, he outlined a complementary and yet distinct role for such non-Muslim academics. Rahman allowed that non-Muslim scholars could achieve an objective understanding of the Qur'an through the use of sound methodological principles. After all, he envisioned the first step of his double movement hermeneutic, which relied heavily upon historical contextualization of revelation, as just as much an academic project as a Muslim religious one. Although the research focused on Qur'anic values, Rahman argued that the researcher need not ascribe to those values but only be able to recognize and understand the historical manifestations and interpretations of them.[101] As long as non-Muslim academics were sincere and not unduly prejudiced, they could 'aspire to "intellectual understanding and appreciation"' of the Qur'an and of Islam more generally.[102] Rahman elaborated:

> The kind of intellectual understanding being considered—given concern, sympathy, and lack of prejudice—is a sort of scientific knowledge. It is not a religious experience but a quasi-scientific knowledge of a religious experience, where the normativeness or authority of the experience vanishes but something of its direct effect upon the experiencing subject (including the latter's report on it) can be preserved and made accessible to others. The experience as a living and integral whole, therefore, cannot be conveyed by a historian or social scientist; such scholars, nonetheless, can appreciate it intellectually and convey it so that it becomes a part of 'scientific knowledge'.[103]

Put another way, the historicity of Qur'anic values was knowable, given proper research methods, but the experience of their truth was only accessible to faithful Muslims. Likewise, in the second step of the hermeneutic, non-Muslim academics could provide critical insight into the present socio-political and economic landscape, but they could not actualize Qur'anic ethics in that landscape because they did not embody those ethical principles. Rahman did allow for the possibility that, through vigorous research into the historical values of the Qur'an, non-Muslim scholars might see truth and discover

[101] Ibid., pp. 4–5.
[102] Rahman, Fazlur (1985). 'Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies: Review Essay', in Richard C. Martin. *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, p. 192.
[103] Ibid., pp. 193–194.

their own faith.[104] Still, for Rahman, faith was a prerequisite for full participation in Islamic reform and for the full realization of fusionism.

For Muslim intellectuals as well, Rahman positioned faith as the key to unlocking the benefits of academic methods for the Muslim community. In *Islam and Modernity*, he lamented that many Western-educated Muslims squandered their potential due to a lack of Islamic commitment. He wrote:

> There has been a constant flow of those scholars who have earned their Ph.D.'s from Western universities—but in the process have become 'orientalists'. That is to say, they know enough of what sound scholarship is like, but their work is not Islamically purposeful or creative. They might write good enough works on Islamic history or literature, philosophy, or art, but to think Islamically and to rethink Islam has not been one of their concerns. Obviously, in order to carry out Islamic purposes on the plane of thought, a purposeful, creative-interpretative study is a *sine qua non*, and this is precisely what is lacking ... the question must be raised whether what they are doing was Islamic studies at all.[105]

In other words, Rahman believed that many so-called Muslim Orientalists lacked the necessary Islamic values that could give their scholarship significance for the Muslim world. In order to rectify this disjuncture between academically trained Muslims and Islamic reform, Rahman transformed the University of Chicago into a space to train fusionist Muslim scholars. Alongside Binder, Rahman recruited promising Muslim students from across the Islamic world to pursue doctoral degrees at Chicago and encouraged their own fusionist ambitions. From the mid-1970s to his untimely death in 1988, he advised prominent Indonesian Islamic leaders, Nurcholish Madjid and Ahmad Syafii Maarif; the current grand mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mustafa Ceric; one-time president of the International Islamic University of Islamabad, Mumtaz Ahmad, and Malaysian Islamic scholar and professor, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud.[106] While Rahman dreamed of and worked for the day when Muslim countries possessed their own high-quality centres of modern Islamic learning, in the final decades of his life, he concluded that Western academia

[104] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 4.
[105] Ibid., p. 124.
[106] For detailed studies of Rahman's influence on Indonesian Muslim scholars, see: Burhani, Ahmad Najib (2013). Transmission of Islamic Reform from the United States to Indonesia, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Vol 41.119, pp. 29–47; Abbas, Megan Brankley (2015). Knowing Islam: The Entangled History of Western Academia and Modern Islamic Thought, PhD Thesis, Princeton University.

was the best available place for Islamic intellectualism. Consequently, Rahman's corner of Chicago emerged as a sort of a Muslim madrasa where academic methods and Islamic reformist convictions comprised the fusionist curriculum.

As Rahman was carving out room for fusionism at Chicago, a new and formidable challenge arose from within academia itself: post-modernism. The post-modernist assault on the academic ideal of objectivity raised serious questions for Rahman's fusionism.[107] Consequently, he devoted several pages in *Islam and Modernity* to defending his central assumption that 'the meaning of a past text or precedent, the present situation, and the intervening tradition can be sufficiently objectively known'.[108] In the process, Rahman took on Hans Georg Gadamer's influential *Truth and Method* (1960).[109] He paraphrased Gadamer as arguing that 'any attempt to understand anything is doomed to unscientific vitiation' because the interpreter is always and inevitably preconditioned by his own historical context and experiences.[110] No individual, regardless of his method, could overcome this preconditioning. To challenge Gadamer, Rahman turned to examples of great thinkers, like Augustine, Luther, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Taymiyya, who exerted profound changes on their respective traditions. While Gadamer (in Rahman's view) argued that these revolutionary changes were largely pre-determined, Rahman insisted upon these figures' self-awareness and agency. He argued that in order to alter the course of their traditions, they possessed the capacity to understand the tradition's past and shortcomings objectively and then to intervene normatively. If such objective assessment of the past was possible for Augustine and al-Ghazali, then Rahman maintained that modern Muslims could also approach both the Qur'an and the Islamic intellectual tradition in a similarly objective manner.

Although Rahman was able to marshal a defence of individual intellectual agency, he consistently bypassed the more damning critique emerging from post-modernism and post-colonial theory—

[107] For another and more in-depth discussion of Rahman's engagement with Gadamer, see: Moosa, Ebrahim (2000). 'Introduction', in Fazlur Rahman. *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, pp. 9–23.

[108] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 8.

[109] Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2004). *Truth and Method*, 2nd Revised Edition, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York.

[110] Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 9.

that knowledge was always and inescapably bound to particularistic interests and colonizing power. In the late 1970s, Edward Said emerged as a foremost theorist of the colonial nexus of knowledge and power and, with his groundbreaking *Orientalism* (1978), took aim at Rahman's own field of Islamic studies.[111] Despite the controversy the book produced, Rahman never published a direct response to Said. On the contrary, he continued to insist throughout the 1980s that academic methods were objective and that, if applied correctly, they would lead to historical and social truths about Islam. He retained a unified and boundless conception of knowledge. Apparently, Rahman did not worry that academic methods and frameworks might be built upon Christian and secular presuppositions, which exerted conceptual influences on Islamic interpretations and practices. Nor did he articulate any concerns that the values of academic research may discourage religious, and especially Islamic, faith. For Rahman, fusionism merged the strengths of academic research and Islamic faith in pursuit of knowledge beneficial to both communities. He saw them as commensurable, not as rival ways of knowing.

Ultimately, Rahman's continued belief in the ideal of objectivity and a unified truth left him vulnerable to attacks from both post-colonial critics within the academy as well as Muslim opponents, like those he had faced in Pakistan. Indeed, post-colonial theorists and Deobandi protestors had a similar axe to grind with Rahman: his refusal to see Western academia as inherently Western and hence entangled in imperial projects. Accordingly, they were troubled by his reverence for renowned Orientalists. They also baulked at his open cooperation with the Ford Foundation and the United States Department of State.[112] In the eyes of Muslim and post-colonial critics, Rahman's fusionism served the interests of Western colonial dominance over the Islamic world and, worse yet, he seemed to be in denial about his own complicity in these discursive power structures. Rahman did not—or could not—provide satisfying answers to quell these concerns. Instead, he pointed to what his critics surely saw

[111] Said, Edward (1994). *Orientalism*, 25th Anniversary Edition, Vintage Books, New York.

[112] During his years at Chicago, Rahman also occasionally consulted for the United States Department of State and, in one instance, provided his assessment of the Shi'i population in Pakistan. See: Confidential Memo from Secretary of State, Washington DC to American Embassy in Islamabad, 'Pakistan's Shi'a Community', dated 22 July 1986, United States Department of State Archives, released to the author as part of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

as an intangible faith as the best guarantee of Islamic authenticity and purpose. Despite the opposition, Rahman remained optimistic that, with faith and knowledge as a guide, Muslims could navigate the dangerous waters of Islamic–Western relations without injury to either their academic or Islamic principles.