

The book cover features a dark purple background with intricate floral patterns. The central text is white and reads "Continuing the Living Tradition" in a large, serif font. Below this, in a smaller serif font, is "with Chair of the Department of Theology". At the bottom, the author's name "Dr. Muhammed Volkan Stodolsky" is written in a bold, serif font. The floral patterns consist of white flowers with brown centers and green leaves, set against a dark purple background. The patterns are arranged in vertical bands on the left and right sides, and a larger, more detailed pattern is in the center.

Continuing the Living Tradition

with Chair of the
Department of Theology

Dr. Muhammed
Volkan Stodolsky



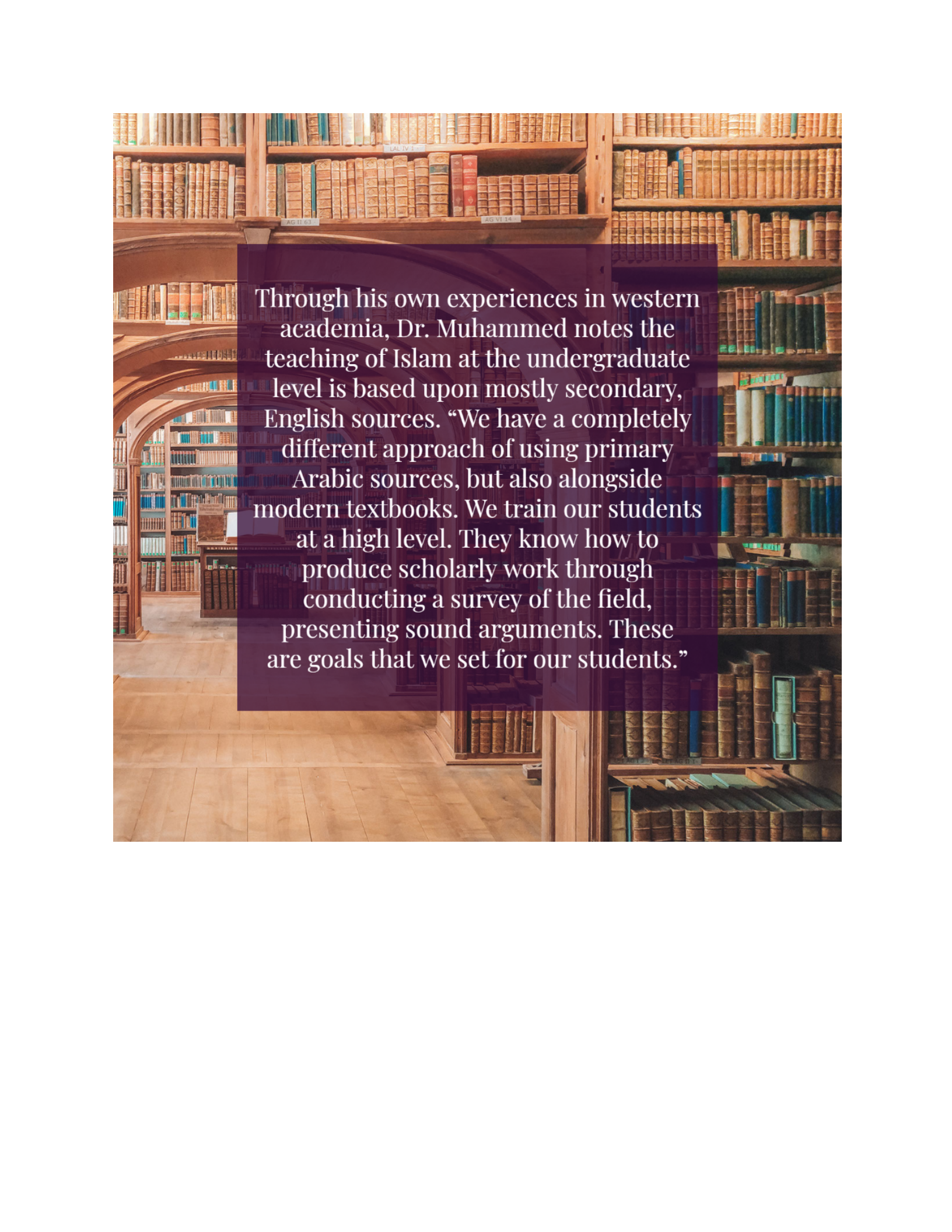
As an authority in Islamic Studies, Darul Qasim College engages in the distribution of religious knowledge, rooted in a living tradition that gives emphasis to the content, context, and distributor of knowledge.



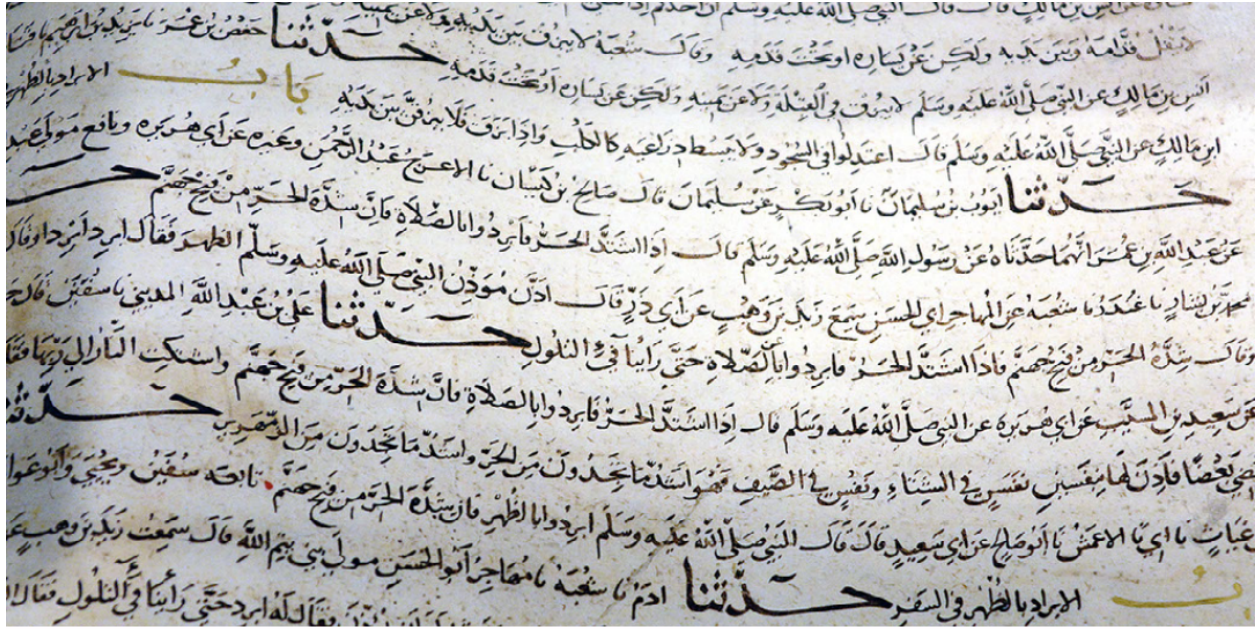
Dr. Muhammed, Department of Theology chair, illustrates the continuation of a living tradition as it permeates through his department's curricular and pedagogical approach to the study of theology. What comes into focus is the need for the distribution of Islamic knowledge from institutions like Darul Qasim College that provide and produce a high level of academic scholarship.



“What makes Islamic traditional learning is this idea of a living tradition. We have this living chain of scholarship, where every ‘ālim can name every link between himself and the Prophet ﷺ. You know, that’s a unique aspect of Islamic civilization. That doesn’t exist in any civilization in the world. So, that makes it very special. And obviously, we want to continue that living tradition.”



Through his own experiences in western academia, Dr. Muhammed notes the teaching of Islam at the undergraduate level is based upon mostly secondary, English sources. “We have a completely different approach of using primary Arabic sources, but also alongside modern textbooks. We train our students at a high level. They know how to produce scholarly work through conducting a survey of the field, presenting sound arguments. These are goals that we set for our students.”



“Both as a Muslim and a scholar, I believe concentrating on primary sources is very worthy and rewarding. We are unique in combining some aspects of the South Asian and Ottoman traditions of learning. In the theology department we teach the standard works that every ‘ālim is expected to know, but with more stress on the Māturīdī School.”

“We want our students to be able to read primary texts on their own. I always tell my students: ‘the standard of your success is that you should feel comfortable teaching the material I’m teaching you. You can evaluate yourself. If after this class, you feel like, ‘oh, I can teach this material,’ then you know you’re successful. If you feel like, ‘I can’t teach this material,’ you know something wasn’t properly done.”



“When we are reading classical texts I follow the Ottoman method of explaining every word (as is the Deobandi method). In the next class I expect them to know, speak and translate what we covered in the previous class. This increases their familiarity and understanding of the text.”

“The way we teach logic is unique. I make them actually construct valid, logical arguments and when they make mistakes, we discuss those on the board. They will then present arguments in the form of valid arguments, such as “modus tollens” and “modus tollendo ponens.” They get to know the names of those forms of arguments in both Arabic and their modern counterparts.”

“Once they’ve learned the names of those valid forms of arguments, when we teach higher level books I’ll ask them: ‘what type of logical argument is this?’ And now, because they know those types of arguments, they can identify them. The idea is that we must have some people in our community who are able to talk about Islamic theology by making valid and sound arguments.”

“It is very important that Muslims must see Darul Qasim College as a trustworthy source for Islamic higher learning so that they don’t learn their religion from non-Muslims.

“You cannot take Prophetic knowledge from a non-Muslim. Perhaps, many or most Muslims in America might not know that.

So, when they take courses in Islamic studies, and not just theology, but also Islamic law, Hadith studies, or any sort of Islamic studies course, they’re going to see Islam from the lens of people who deny it, who don’t believe it. That’s a big problem.”