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On Muslim Theology and Spirituality

The Writings of
Cesar Adib Majul



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The Writings of Cesar Adib Majul

is published by the

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Table of Contents

Foreword

Julkipli M. Wadi

1

Introduction

Nefertari A. Arsad, Ph.D.

5

A Note on Transliteration and Footnotes

9

The Writings of Cesar Adib Majul

The Divine-Human Encounter in Islam

Introduction by Atty. Mehol K. Sadain

12

Islamic Conceptual Framework on Family Planning

Introduction by Carmen A. Abubakar, Ph.D.

32

The Prophethood of Muhammad

Introduction by Darwin T. Rasul III, Ph.D.

44

Muhammad Iqbal and his Philosophy of the Ego

Introduction by Roderick G. Orlina

58

The Concept of *Amanah* in Islam

Introduction by Nefartari A. Arsad, Ph.D.

70

The Relevance of Cesar Adib Majul's Writings in Modern Times	79
<i>Nefertari A. Arsad</i>	
Maikling Pagsalaysay sa Pagtipon ng mga Akda ni Cesar Adib Majul	81
<i>Romila Diana M. Saguil</i>	
Bionotes of the Authors	85

Foreword¹

This collection of Dr. Cesar Adib Majul's articles on Islam, interlaced with summaries and perspectives from three faculty members of the UP Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS), augurs well for the UP Center for Integrative Development Studies (CIDS) in publishing the work of one of the most prominent scholars in the University of the Philippines.

Dean Majul, as he was fondly known, wrote extensively on many subjects from his early days as a student, and later, as a faculty member at UP in the 1940s until he left the University in 1980. He went to the United States and passed away in San Pablo, Oakland in 2003. He became dean of the University College of UP in 1961; dean of the UP College of Arts and Sciences (now the UP Colleges of Arts and Letters, and the Social Sciences and Philosophy) in 1969; and founding organizer and first dean of the UP Institute of Islamic Studies from 1974 to 1979. He served also as officer-in-charge of the reconstituted UP Asian Center in 1979. He attained the highest academic rank in UP as Full Professor in the same year. Finally, the University granted him Honoris Causa in 1989. His five books (not to mention his master thesis on Aristotle's logic) and around 150 articles are tucked under his belt as a scholar. His works are generally grouped into the following categories: (1) Philosophy and logic; (2) Philippine social and political thought, Philippine revolution, and Filipino nationalism; (3) Asian studies, Islamic thought, Muslim history, society, and culture; (4) and the spirituality of Islam and Qur'anic exegesis (Wadi 2013).

The two interlocutors of his five works in this publication (Associate Professor Nefertari Al-Raschid Arsad and Senior Professorial Lecturer Mehol K. Sadain) are equally competent in making commentaries of his writings. They are not only familiar with Dean Majul's works; they have been working and articulating on relatively similar themes and concerns, particularly in the area of Islamic Studies.

This UP CIDS publication is, so far, the latest work about Dean Majul and his writings following Boyle (2004), (Majul 2013),² Tigno (2018), and Al-Junied (2023). It is even more important that these selected works may be considered as the initial release of the long-standing project of UP Institute of Islamic Studies to

¹ This foreword draws somewhat from the introduction I wrote for that issue (Wadi 2010).

² This was a special issue of *Asian Studies* (2010) published in 2013 by the UP Asian Center.

publish all the works of Dean Majul in complete volumes. UP IIS Librarian Romila Saguil has, for a long time, been belabored in collecting and typing these writings; she has also coordinated with publishing companies, especially the family of Dean Majul, particularly in getting their consent for the publication of all his articles. The family agreed to the IIS plan, given that Dean Majul sent all his writings, book collections, research materials, calligraphy, and other mementos to the Islamic Institute in the last phase of his life. A few of his book collections (mostly on Islamic mysticism), documents, and other research materials were given to me whenever he would send me letters containing his greetings, his thoughts, and his prayers.

There are very few academics that could undergo the paradigmatic mastery of sciences, particularly the major disciplines in the social sciences and area studies, and leave an indelible mark in each of them. While Dean Majul was primarily schooled in philosophy, particularly logic, he had a distinctive way of broadening his teaching and writing on politics and history, culture and religion, particularly Islam. The latter became his interest after his stint at Cornell University in the 1950s where he associated with a number of Muslim foreign students and, more particularly, after his meeting with his *shaykh* in Istanbul the day when the *adhan*, or call to prayer was allowed to be called again in Turkey's mosques.

Since then, Dean Majul had begun writing on general areas of Islamic Studies, including Philippine Muslim history, especially when he would receive an invitation to lecture about it. What he wrote mostly without invitation was Islamic spirituality, showing that it was a subject close to his heart. All these he wrote intermittently while he was absorbed in his lectures and his earlier writings about the Philippine Reform Movement, the ideas of Jose Rizal and Apolinario Mabini, his theories of Filipino nationalism, and a host of many issues about the Philippines, Asia, and the Muslim world.³ Even while he was already retired in the United States, Dean Majul was sometimes seen by his visitors at his residence in San Pablo, reading textbooks on algebra and calculus. When asked why he still read those, Dean Majul would respond that mathematics prevents the mind from becoming rusty. At one point, Dean Majul developed an interest in the science of numbers in the Qur'an.

The five articles of Dean Majul in this UP CIDS publication deal mainly with Islamic theology and spirituality. Indeed, appraisal of this sort provides some perspectives about Dean Majul's works and ideas. However, much is needed to develop what may be referred to as Majul's scheme or framework of knowledge with its detailed structure, categories, classifications, locations, intersections, and extrapolation—a reason why, as the first step towards such a goal, the UP Institute

3 Five of these writings were republished in Majul (2010).

of Islamic Studies, through UP CIDS Islamic Studies Program, has long worked on and, *inshaALLAH* (“if Allah wills it”), will soon publish the compendium of volumes of Dean Majul’s articles.

Julkipli M. Wadi

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Introduction

Nefertari A. Arsad, Ph.D.

The Cesar Adib Majul Posthumous Book Project has been a long-held dream. Since his death, Cesar Majul's unpublished writings have been entrusted to the care of the University of the Philippines Institute of Islamic Studies library, so that its trustees can do what they think best with the voluminous intellectual cache. Dr. Majul was the first Dean of the Institute back when it was still a unit under the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, which included the UP Asian Center.

Dean Majul's thoughts span across many disciplines and interests: philosophy, Philippine political history, nationalism, Middle East international relations, Islamic thought and civilization, and Islam in the Philippines, among others. The Islamic Studies Program under the auspices of the UP Center for Integrative Development Studies (UP CIDS) trains its attention on the latter two, with the current Phase 1 featuring his unpublished writings on Islamic thought and civilization. Most of the featured papers were written as lectures for various audiences.

The book's approach is unusual. These writings are each introduced by an academic who has encountered Dean Majul in a meaningful way: as a student or colleague at the Institute of Islamic Studies, as a keen reader of his seminal work, *Muslims in the Philippines*, or as a personal mentee in his post-retirement years. The assumption is that these academics have had a deeper glimpse into Dean Majul's mind and would therefore be able to present his thoughts more insightfully. The introductions are intended to provide the appropriate setting to Dean Majul's writings, akin to the jeweler's careful setting of a gemstone to correctly show off its beauty.

The invited academics lend their own flavour and writing style to the textual dialogue they undertook. Readers will find a mix of conceptual interrogation, contextual discussions or a themed elaboration using Dean Majul's discussions as a springboard.

Mehol Sadain introduces "The Divine-Human Encounter in Islam," a talk presented before the Muslim Association, Cornell University on May 11, 1974. The paper is a treatise on the absoluteness of Allah's presence and proximity vis-a-vis

humankind. This condition holds true for all stages of human creation, and is even prior to it. Sadain elaborates on Majul's iterations on the constant remembrance of God and its prescribed methods as the certain pathway towards realizing nearness to Him, the ultimate state of being that Muslims aspire to. Sadain underscores Majul's argument that the essence of this nearness is "the annihilation of man in the Divine," where human perspectives, desires, caprices, and motivations are dissolved into the well of Divine guidance and mercy.

Carmen Abubakar employs the article, "On the Necessity of Presenting an Islamic Conceptual Framework to be included in the Introductory Essay to the Papers and Discussions of the Rabat Conference on Family Planning," (retitled here as "The Islamic Conceptual Framework on Family Planning") as her point of reference when she elaborates on the *Apuh Panday* or the traditional birth attendant. She observes that Islamic principles on maternity and childbearing, as well as Muslim traditional birth-giving technology, equally provide for maternal and child health. She further asserts that while the *Apuh Panday's* duties span a woman's life milestones, her particular care and coaching of an expectant and new mother, and by extension her child and husband, directly impact a woman's reproductive health, an important spotlight of family planning. Majul's assertions on *amanah* or trust, and *ummah* or community surface at pertinent points in Abubakar's discussions.

Darwin Rasul III's scrutiny of "The Prophethood of Muhammad," a *khutbah* or sermon on the occasion of the Prophet's birth anniversary known as *Mawlud-in-Nabi*, further elucidates on Majul's discussion on the theoretical and contextual articulations of prophethood and how these intersect with the Islamic belief system. Rasul underscores Majul's reiteration about the absolute nonexistence of religious bureaucracy in Islam, particularly orthodox Sunni Islam. Rasul implies a causal connection between this structured elitism and Western secularism, a condition that does not afflict Muslim societies. Rather, Muslims have the greatest benefit of receiving a religion that has been perfected with the final Messenger and seal of all prophets, Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Roderick Orlina presents "Muhammad Iqbal and his Theory of the Ego" from the distinctive angle of someone who personally studied under Dean Majul, and had the singular opportunity of delving into his mind with sustained regularity. Here, Majul's subject is Muhammad Iqbal and the context within which his thoughts on the ego developed. Orlina delves into Iqbal's metaphysical discussions on the ego and existence, observing certain divergences between Majul's and Iqbal's standpoints. Despite this, Orlina draws parallels between their core beliefs and how these pervade in their stance as Muslim scholars and influencers.

Nefertari Al-Raschid-Arsad's introduction of "The Concept of Amana in Islam" is a brief essay on the Divine trust bestowed on humankind, a recurring theme in Majul's featured writings here. Arsad asserts that the trust (*amanah*) is expected to manifest in the spiritual and the mundane aspects of existence, as well as in the private and public domains of humankind. This accentuates the unity of existence and negates secularism, which Majul has consistently asserted. Arsad connects Majul's statement on *amanah* versus 'human arbitrariness' to Islamic leadership and its specific intersections with conventional leadership typologies.

Another unique feature of this book is the motivating account of UP Institute of Islamic Studies Librarian Romila Saguil on the painstaking process of procuring and then compiling Dean Majul's articles. She kept them until such time that their publication may be realized. And now it has.

A Note on Transliteration and Footnotes

In rendering Arabic words, the present volume adopts a transliteration system that does away with macrons to indicate long vowel sounds; it has also used a single letter for which there are two in Arabic (e.g. h and t), and kept the letter h (ta marbuta) for the ending of certain Arabic words (e.g. amanah). Moreover, to render the “u” sound of Arabic nouns in nominative form, and in conjunction with “al,” the formulation became, for instance, *Khalifat-ul-Allah*. This is to preserve the way the phrases/words are pronounced.

All in all, the transliteration system has sought to keep things as simple as possible, especially in consideration of a non-Muslim readership, who may not necessarily be familiar with the intricacies of Arabic orthography or the transliteration guide of, say, the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

However, it is also for this very reason that the editorial team deemed it necessary to supply footnotes in the introductory essays and in Dr. Majul's writings. These define Islamic terms, practices, concepts, movements, personalities, and references to Islamic history that may not be readily familiar to non-Muslims. Furthermore, some minor corrections or additions were made to Dr. Majul's essays. Additional words are indicated by a bracket to provide some clarity.



**The Writings of
Cesar Adib Majul**

1

The Divine-Human Encounter in Islam¹

Cesar Adib Majul

¹ This article is the transcription of a talk given before the Muslim Association on 11 May 1974 at Cornell University.

Introduction

Atty. Mehol K. Sadain²

Majul begins this article by citing the divine qualities reflected in man, starting with the creation of Adam, the first man: “I have made him and have breathed into him My Spirit” (Qur’an 15:29). As such, the encounter between man and Allah, according to Majul, is postulated on the following verse, “We are nearer to him than his jugular vein” (Qur’an 50:16). The creation of man is designed for the worship of Allah. “I created the jinn³ and mankind only that they might worship me” (Qur’an 51: 56).

Central to this exposition is Majul’s main point that “the prescription for *dhikr* (remembrance) is one of utmost significance in Islam.” As Allah says, “Therefore, remember Me, and I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and reject Me not” (Qur’an 2:152). This concept is rooted in the primordial covenant between Allah and the “children of Adam,” wherein Allah asked, “Am I not your Lord?” to which they replied with the first *dhikr*, “Yes, we do testify” (Qur’an 7:172).

Dhikr is the cornerstone of the divine encounter in Islam. For this reason, Majul considers the power of speech to be one of the gifts of Allah to man. He cited these verses, “And He taught Adam all the Names” (Qur’an 2:31) and “tell the angels the Names” (Qur’an 2:33). Furthermore, Allah stated, “He has taught the Qur’an. He has created man. He has taught man intelligent speech” (Qur’an 55: 2–4).

Through *dhikrullah* (the remembrance of Allah), man develops divine qualities in his nature. In doing so, he intensifies and increases the intimacy of his divine encounter and becomes more pious than others.

Majul says that “evoking the Names of the Divine Qualities constitutes a virtual affirmation of the Divine Presence in the Created Being.” This reminds us of Allah’s words, “Recite what has been revealed unto thee of the Book, and perform the prayer, for prayer prevents indecency and abomination; but the remembrance of God is surely greater (*Dhikrullahi Akbar*)” (Qur’an 29:45).

² Atty. Mehol K. Sadain (hem_way@yahoo.com) is Senior Lecturer at the University of the Philippines (UP) Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS) and a member of the Shari’ah Department of the Philippine Judicial Academy of the Supreme Court of the Philippines.

³ The *jinn* refers to spirits in Arabian folklore. Belief in them predates Islam.

Dhikr is considered a great all-embracing devotional act because it permeates the five pillars of Islam: *shahada* (profession of faith), *salat* (prayer), *sawn* (fasting), *zakat* (compulsory giving of alms), and *haj* (pilgrimage) are different manifestations of the remembrance of Allah. Engaging with them and practicing these manifestations are part of the degrees of the divine encounter; however, their essence has always been dhikrullah, the remembrance that purifies man and brings him closer to Allah.

Finally, at the end of the article, Majul mentions the annihilation of man in the Divine, which he considers as the best form of the divine encounter, and quotes this verse in the Qur'an (55:26–27), “Everything that is upon it (the earth) passes away, and there remains (only) the Face of thy Lord, *Dhu-l Jalaal-i wa l-Ikram*” (the Possessor of Might and Glory).

Although this article was written by Cesar Adib Majul in 1974, it remains relevant today, especially given the developments in technology that enables mankind to facilitate communication, and transfer knowledge quickly by accessing repositories that were previously exclusive or even entirely absent.

Esoteric and spiritual knowledge have become readily available through electronic pathways that are not visible to the naked eye, thereby rendering the divine mode of revelation more feasible in man's limited comprehension. Conversely, the knowledge of *fana* (annihilation) and *baqa* (subsistence and permanence with Allah) is now available with just a press of a button.

In today's era of burgeoning electronic communication technology and easy access to online knowledge, Majul's lecture-essay on the divine and human encounter in Islam, delivered almost half a century ago, represents a pioneering attempt to present a typology of divine knowledge to the Filipino people—a concept alien to the predominantly materialistic minds of yesterday. The essay's importance to the search for higher knowledge that brings a seeker nearer to Allah cannot be underestimated. The structure of the essay is both short and concise, yet it remains logical and climactic. This approach imparts ease, thereby making an otherwise challenging subject more comprehensible and accessible, even to neophyte readers or listeners.

As evident in the essay, Majul transforms the divine-human encounter into a progressive and continuing remembrance of Allah, merging mankind with the Divine Presence and with the phenomenon of the return to the Divine Unity of the individual soul. When viewed from a more broader perspective of divine and material unity, the multiplicity of creation diminishes, giving way to the Unity of the Creator.

The Divine-Human Encounter in Islam

Cesar Adib Majul

First of all, I would like to thank all of those present this evening for inviting me to share with you some of my reflections on the subject of the Divine-Human encounter in Islam. Obviously, the term “encounter” is ambiguous and to speak of an encounter between man, an empirical object, and God, who is not subject to the limitations of time and space, creates an epistemological problem. However, in Islam, this apparent difficulty is surmounted by the belief that man possesses certain qualities that are, in a very important sense, manifestations or effects of *sifat* (Divine Qualities). Symbolically speaking, such qualities in man represent dim reflections of certain Divine Qualities. Speaking of the creation of Adam, Allah says in the Qur’an (15:29): “I have made him and have breathed into him My Spirit...” But We are not to interpret such qualities as restricted only to those pertaining to man’s intellectual and moral faculties since life itself as biological movement or form of energy comes from Allah. What is meant in particular is that among the *Ismu’s Sifat* (Names of the Divine Qualities) are those of *Hayyi* (the Living) and *Muhyi* (the Life-Giver). Thus, life in man, in whatever form of energy it is manifested, comes from Allah. At this point, it is important to note that it is the possession of certain qualities in man that serves as a basis for certain obligations to Allah, as well as moral relations between men. Moral prescriptions in Islam are ultimately based on those qualities in man, which, originating from the Divine, are part of man’s nature. Clearly, it is this aspect of man’s nature that ipso facto posits the existence of an all-pervading encounter between the Divine and man, as well as the possibility of a more intimate encounter. The encounter between Allah and man is a religious postulate in Islam and is tersely stated in the Qur’an (50:16): “We are nearer to him [man] than his jugular vein.” Moreover, in all

moral relations, when men are dealing with one another, they are not alone since Allah is encountered in the way:

There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than that or more but He is with them wheresoever they may be.
(Qur'an 58:7)

As believers in Providence, which is the Mercy and Care which Allah has for His creatures, Muslims assert the continuing contact between Allah and man. However, such a contact is of various kinds and of different levels. These shifts in the nature of the contact, at least in our understanding of them, come about since the relations between the Divine and man is one between the Creator and the created, the Adored and the worshipper, the Master and the server, the Necessary and the contingent, and the Absolute and the relative, to mention but a few.

On the chronological, as well as on the theological order, the first encounter between Allah and man is found in Creation. Allah said: "I created the Jinn and mankind only that they might worship Me," (Qur'an 51:56). Also: "There is no God save Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He taketh care of all things" (Qur'an 6:103). Man was created too "...that He [Allah] might try you, which of you is best in conduct" (Qur'an 11:7). An interpretation of this last verse is that creation is also a test of how man is to utilize or develop those qualities which Allah permitted him to have. Pertinent here is a sacred *hadith* (apostolic traditions), which is a favorite among the mystics of Islam. Allah said: "I was a hidden treasure; I wanted to be known, therefore I created the Creation." Certainly, what can these treasures be but the Divine Qualities? And how can man know more about these Qualities unless he, in some way or another, studies and reflects on the effects of these Qualities on himself and the world around him? This might then be the meaning of another sacred *hadith*: "He who knoweth himself, knoweth his Lord." The treasures of Allah had been spread not only in man but in nature as well in accordance with the Divine Plan. Allah said: "Naught there is, but its treasures are with Us; and We send it not down but in appointed measure" (Qur'an 15:21).

A traditional interpretation of this verse, which refers to a primordial covenant, has it that when Allah gathered together the spirits of the sons of Adam, He exacted from them a promise and a covenant which, in effect, placed man

under bond to accept Him as Lord and sole Master. Allah also promised to send prophets to mankind and allow them sacred books so that such a promise and covenant will not be forgotten. This last element in the interpretation is based on numerous allusions in the Qur'an to the effect that prophets like Abraham, Moses, Jesus (son of Mary), Muhammad, and others, had a covenant with Allah (Qur'an 33:17). From the Islamic point of view, one of the most important functions of prophets and messengers had been precisely to serve as remembrances of the original covenant.

Actually, the Qur'an refers to various kinds of covenants, namely, between Allah and individuals as such with mankind, with the Prophet Muhammad, with other prophets, with various religious communities, and so on. However, there is an invariant or constant element in all of them, which is the idea of remembrance of the primordial covenant where Allah is acknowledged as the sole Lord. It is thus to be appreciated why the mystics of Islam have considered the phrase of Allah, "Am I not your Lord?," to refer to the first dhikr or remembrance. In view of this, the prescription for remembrance is one of utmost significance in Islam. Allah said: "Therefore remember Me and I will remember you. Be grateful to Me and reject Me not" (Qur'an 2:152).

Thus, it can be seen that the first dhikr presented a relation or encounter between the server and his Lord; but the server, although in bond to his Lord, is not in involuntary servitude. Among the qualities in his nature is that of free choice. Moreover, because of his biological nature and material needs which lead him to acquire certain personal interests, he can also be forgetful. An Arab proverb says something to the effect that the first creature who came to forget was man.

As suggested earlier, the continuing encounter between man and Allah, according to the Islamic perspective, is made possible by man's possession of certain potentialities which allow him to manifest, albeit in a human, limited, and relative manner, certain qualities which are found in Allah in an infinite and absolute manner. In brief, man is possessed of intellect, will, and the power of speech, as well as an inclination to understand and reach for the source of all these. It is man's intelligence which enables him to arrive at a conception of the Absolute. If there is anything that man can grasp in an absolute sense, it is that

only Allah is One and Absolute. It is in this sense that Islam has often been called the religion of Certainty.

Man's intelligence leads him to form abstractions, grasp the relations and meanings of things, and perceive the significance of the processes and transformations in Nature which are "signs" or "revelations" for "men of understanding." His will allows him to choose between alternatives after the intellect had pointed out to him the difference between good and evil while valuing at the same time the Absolute as against the relative. As it were, the intellect limits the alternatives by pointing out the best choice while also indicating to man what he can do and what he ought not to do. Since Islam lays emphasis on man's intellect and powers of discernment, to say that a man is free to choose what he recognizes as false and evil is a contradiction in Islam. In Islam, therefore, error and loss of faith ensue when man fails to use his reason properly or had failed to understand. The truly free man knows the limitations of his freedom, that is, what he is not free to do. He also recognizes that he cannot do anything without Allah's help. This therefore points out the necessity of Revelation or Allah's Guidance.

The power of speech is considered in Islam to be one of the gifts of Allah (Qur'an 41:21). Also, according to the Qur'an, "He taught Adam all the names" (Qur'an 2:31). However, it must be mentioned at this point that whereas some Muslim philosophers have interpreted this verse to mean the ability of Adam or mankind to form abstract or universal concepts, mystics in Islam have tended to consider the names to refer primarily to the Names of the Qualities of Allah. Speech is considered to be one of the most important vehicles for the remembrance of Allah. For example, it is through speech that a believer is induced to repeat often the names of the Qualities of Allah, most of which are explicitly enumerated in the Qur'an. By repeating and then understanding and reflecting on them, the believer may be led to know more about his Creator, try to develop further the positive aspects of his human nature, and be grateful to Allah for His gifts while asking for His aid all the time.

As suggested earlier, there are many qualities in man, both actual and potential, which are possessed by him in a limited and relative manner, qualities possessed by the Divine in an absolute, eternal, and infinite manner. For example, Allah is called *al-Hayyi* (The Living); but indeed man has life. Allah is called *al-Alim* (The

Knower) but man is possessed of various forms and levels of knowledge. Allah is called *al-Khalīq* (The Creator), *al-Bārī* (The Maker), and *al-Musawwir* (The Fashioner), but man has created artifacts. Allah is called *al-Mumīt* (The Destroyer or The Death Giver); but mankind has exercised such powers. Moreover, Allah who is the *al-Rahman* (Compassionate), and the *as-Sabur* (The Patient), had commanded Muslims to be compassionate to their fellow men if they were to merit Compassion from Him, to expand the frontiers of their Knowledge, and to be patient and steadfast in adversity, as reflected in some of the prayers spread throughout the Qur'an. But since Allah is the *al-Wārith* (The Inheritor) and the Creator and the *al-Malik-ul-Mulk* (The Owner of all Sovereignty), it can be said that such qualities that might be found in mankind are only, for lack of a better term, "borrowed." In more accurate Islamic terms, they are *amanah* (in man as a trust). This is an important concept to be dealt with later on. What is intended to mention at this point is that while the nature of man affirms a continuing contact with Allah, evoking of the Names of the Divine Qualities constitutes a virtual affirmation of the Divine Presence in the realm of Created Being. The actual words themselves constitute symbols par excellence of such a Presence.

The above digression implies the existence among Muslims of [a] Divine prescription of how to develop certain qualities in his nature, intensifying others, while exercising others with great caution in accordance with Divine Law. All these enable the existing encounter between Allah and mankind to become more intimate. It is the nature of the intimacy that renders some men to become more pious and saintly than others. These few are the *aulia*, that is, the protégés of Allah or those who are closest to him. Thus, it can be better understood why, from the Islamic point of view, it is not necessary for God to become Man in order to effect an encounter. The encounter had always been there; it is up to mankind, with Allah's help, to make the encounter a more intimate process.

But man, being a contingent creature limited to the exigencies of time and space, is not God. He is not perfect, for should he be thus, then there would be more than one God—a situation violating the basic witness of Islam that there is no deity but Allah. In brief, "...man was created weak" (Qur'an 4:28). According to the Qur'an (20:115): "Verily We made a covenant of old with Adam, but he forgot, and We found no constancy with him." Thus the disobedience of Adam is consequently attributable to a forgetfulness emanating from the fact that he was

created weak. But Allah, in his Mercy, relented towards Adam and said: “But if there come unto you from Me a Guidance, then whoso followeth My Guidance, he will not go astray nor come to grieve” (Qur’an 20:123). But this promise was coupled with a warning: “But he who turneth away from remembrance of Me, his will be a narrow life, and I shall bring him blind to the assembly on the Day of Resurrection” (Qur’an 20:124). And those who choose to forget the Revelations of Allah will find themselves also forgotten in the Day of Judgement. “Our revelations came unto thee but thou didst forget them. In like manner thou art forgotten this Day” (Qur’an 20:126).

Now it becomes clearer why the Qur’an calls itself a Reminder (Qur’an 34:68; 65:10); why it says that for men of intelligence, the earth, its beauties, its provisions, and its processes are all Reminders of Allah as the Creator (50:7-8); and why it entitles the Prophet Muhammad [as] a reminder and a remembrancer (Qur’an 88:21). A function of Revelation and the sending of prophets to mankind has precisely been to remind man of his primordial covenant with Allah lest his basic weakness lead him, like Adam, to forget.

When Iblis⁴ whispered to Adam: “Shall I show you the tree of immortality and power that wasteth not away?” (Qur’an 20:120), the original Temptation revealed that a cause of forgetfulness on the part of Adam, or mankind for that matter, was the desire to exercise unlimited power coupled with the wish of living forever on earth. Adam ought to have remembered that only Allah is the al-Malik-ul-Mulk (The Owner of All Sovereignty) and the *as-Samad* (The Eternal). In brief, Adam forgot some of the Divine Names Allah taught him by Allah.

On earth, it is overwhelming esteem of the self, selfish personal interests, undue love of women and children, unrestrained love of land and properties, excess love of power, and so on, that leads man to forget Allah. As the Qur’an (3:14) says:

Beautified for mankind is love of the joys (that come) from women and offspring, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and horses branded (with their mark), and cattle and land. That is comfort of the life of the world. Allah: With Him is a more excellent abode.

⁴ *Iblis* refers to what the Judeo-Christian tradition calls Satan.

It is the undue concentration on the satisfaction of the needs of the lower part of the *nafs* (soul), which is personal and selfish in character, that provides for the ingredients of forgetfulness. Indeed, according to the Qur'an, those who love solely the life of this world are those "who fleeth from our Remembrance" (Qur'an 53:29). All these do not, however, mean that Islam sternly recommends the denial of the biological and physical needs of man. On the contrary, it recommends the satisfaction of such needs, but that they must be done in accordance with the Divine Law and therefore within a certain direction which ought to be in accordance with the nature of man, the purpose of creation, and the nature of the original covenant. Therefore, in all the actions of man, his needs on earth must be sanctified by a consciousness of Allah. It is [a] consciousness or remembrance that is manifested not only with a repetition and understanding of the Divine Names, but [also] by gratitude to the Creator and steadfastness and patience when provisions in nature do not fully tally with personal expectations and desires. One of the ills of a civilization that lays too much emphasis on material necessities to the exclusion of a sense of awe and gratitude to Allah is the lack of direction in its social life. As it were, material benefits and progress become the be-all and end-all of all movement, with the consequence that the deeper meaning of life and existence is lost.

In forgetting "the fact of his creation" (Qur'an 36:77), man had allowed many of his qualities, which have their origin from the Divine, to become estranged from their Source. The encounter between the Divine and man, though always there, is thereby diminished or weakened. The estrangement is in direct proportion to the evil and purely material orientation of the individual who therefore progressively begins to act more and more at variance with his original nature. Islam, as a religion that penetrates all aspects of man's life, was, according to Muslims, precisely introduced to bring man closer to his original nature, that is, to remind mankind of the original encounter signified by the affirmative answer to the question: "Am I not your Lord?" (Qur'an 7:172).

Allah in His Infinite Mercy had given the earth to man for his sustenance and his moral development. According to the Qur'an:

See ye not how Allah hath made serviceable unto you whatsoever is in the skies and whatsoever is in the earth and hath loaded you with His favors both without and within? (31:20)

He it is who hath made the earth subservient unto you, so walk in the paths thereof and eat of His providence. (62:15)

To be noted in the Qur’anic narrative is that, unlike his expulsion from Paradise, Adam was sent to earth not as a punishment for his disobedience since before his creation, Allah had already announced to the discomfiture of the angels that He was going to appoint man as viceroy on earth (Qur’an 2:30). Now, the term for viceroy in Arabic is *khalifah*, which carries in its connotation the idea of “agent” and even “inheritor.”⁵ The Qur’an (6:166) says: “He it is who hath placed you as viceroys of the earth and hath exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He hath given you.” It is in this verse where the very important Islamic concept of trust or amanah enters. Briefly what is implied here is that the use of the earth and the skies was given to man as an amanah (trust) to be used for human ends but not to be owned absolutely by man or to be used against each other since, according to the Qur’an (7:128): “Lo! the earth is Allah’s.” Also they were allowed to man as a test of how he was going to exercise the trust, as well as the qualities given to him by Allah. According to the Qur’an[ic] narrative, Allah could have made the angels (who had initially objected to having men become the viceroys since they asserted that earth was to flow with human blood) become the viceroys on earth. “...had We willed, We could have set among you angels to be viceroys in the earth” (Qur’an 43:60).

According to the Qur’an, man had accepted the trust: “We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he hath proved a tyrant and a fool!” (Qur’an 33:71). What this implies, in more concrete terms, is that when an individual decides to have a sweetheart, marry, have children, enter a university, choose a particular profession, accept a particular employment, own a piece of property, etc., he has ipso facto assumed certain responsibilities. This is equivalent to saying that he has accepted the amanah. But the Qur’anic verse

⁵ *Khalifa* is the Arabic basis for the words, “caliph” and “caliphate,” the former being a title that was later applied to the rulers of the Islamic empires/kingdoms. It also has a connotation of “deputy” or “successor,” since in the early centuries of Islam, the ruler was also the *Khalifat-ul Rasul Allah*, “The successor/deputy to the Prophet of Allah,” i.e. successor to Muhammad as the leader of the Islamic community.

goes further than this. It suggests strongly that man, in acquiring power, in various forms, especially in the political and economic sphere, had used it against others and thus ended up as a tyrant, forgetting that Allah is *al-Qadir* (the source of all power) and the *al-Malik-ul-Mulk* (The Owner of All Sovereignty). It goes on without saying that it is the use of power for purely personal or individual and selfish ends [that] nullifies power as a trust and which leads a person to become a tyrant and unjust. Furthermore, man had also become foolish. As capable of acquiring knowledge and as having acquired it, man had come to think that he knows all things or that he can arrive at sure knowledge through his sole efforts, thus forgetting that Allah is the *al-Alim* (the Knower) and the source of all knowledge. This foolishness is a form of what might be called the sin of Pride.

From the Islamic point of view, the claim that man is [an] absolute sovereign or that his man-made ideologies can secure the good life here on earth constitutes *shirk* (polytheism).⁶ This is one of the gravest sins in Islam, for it puts man at par with the Divinity and consequently violates the fundamental witness of Islam that there is one and only one God and that He is Allah. The point here is that in forgetting that Allah is the source of all power and knowledge and the Creator and Lord of all, man deviates from the *Sirat-ul-Mustaqim* (the Straight Path). To the Muslim, to know this path and to be guided through it, man needs the help of Allah; hence the need for Revelation. Thus, in man's encounter with God, man must be aware of his weakness and limitations while postulating that in the final analysis nothing can be done without Allah. He must be infused with that sense of awe and humility before his Creator since, in the final analysis, all man-made creations, artifacts, and ideologies will pass away. Allah said: "Everything that is thereon [on earth] will pass away; there remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord full of Might and Glory" (Qur'an 55:26-27).

However, as long as man is on earth as *khalifah*, there are certain obligations which hinge on his qualities. For example, as long as he has the faculty for knowledge, and since Allah is the Knower, it becomes man's duty to expand his knowledge in accordance with Qur'anic prescriptions and prayers. He has to develop the virtues of Compassion and Patience, although only Allah is the

⁶ *Shirk* is also translated as "idolatry."

ar-Rahman (the Infinitely Merciful) and the as-Sabur (The Infinitely Patient). A study of the Names of the Divine Qualities will enable the Muslim believer to know the most important virtues he must cultivate. It will be noticed that many of these virtues have social consequences, and when cultivated by the believer, constitute moral attributes. For example, although Allah is the al-Malik (The King) and the Owner of All Sovereignty, man does possess and exercise power over his family, his subordinates, and fellowmen. But this power must be exercised in a relative and not in an absolute manner. It is a trust (*amanah*) which must be used with moderation, caution, prudence, justice, and compassion. From the point of view of the *ummah* (the Islamic community), power in society must be used for the peace, cohesion, and well-being of the community to enable it to stand as a witness of the primordial covenant, as well as the principle of the *amanah*. Thus, it can be seen that the possession of qualities granted by Allah to man serves as the basis for obligations and moral behavior.

Islam as a religion and way of life covering all of its aspects and ramifications has always asserted that it is a Reminder of Allah. This can be best seen in its Five Pillars. The first pillar, called the *shahada*, is the witnessing that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet. To the Muslim, Allah is such a Certainty that a rejection of Him is, at bottom, a negation of man's intellectual powers. The second part affirms that the Prophet Muhammad was an instrument of Revelation such that the Divine Will can be better made known. Revelation is needed for men to know what they know not:

Even as We have sent unto you a messenger from among you, who reciteth unto you our revelations and causeth you to grow, and teacheth you the Scripture and wisdom, and teacheth you that which ye knew not. (Qur'an 2:151)

Now, the Divine Will, through Revelation, is best expressed in *Shari'ah* (the Holy Law).⁷ A function of this Law is precisely to see to it that remembrance is effected in all aspects of man's life, even in details which to non-Muslims are

⁷ Although *shari'ah* is often translated as "Islamic law," the former is a broader term that encompasses, among other things, ritual, ethics, religious practice, and other aspects that a Western(ized) society will not consider pertaining to the law. In this sense, *shari'ah* is somewhat akin to the Daoist concept of "The Way" or the Confucian notion of "Heaven." Certainly, the *shari'ah* in its broadest sense is ultimately not a legal instrument.

considered secular or nonreligious in character. The second pillar of Islam is the *salat*, generally translated as ritual prayer in order to distinguish it from *du'a* or supplicatory prayer in the ordinary sense. Now, *salat* is a formal expression of the remembrance of Allah. According to the Qur'an (76:25–26):

Remember the name of the Lord at morn and evening. And worship Him (a portion) of the night. And glorify Him through the livelong night.

Ritual prayer in Islam is essentially [the] formal worship of Allah. It is a formal assertion of Allah's presence before man, although He is unseen. It is a testification of man's continuing encounter with his Lord. According to a holy tradition: "Virtue is to adore Allah as though thou didst see Him, and if thou does not see Him He nonetheless sees thee."

In *salat* (prayer), when the Muslim, after expressing his sincere intention to worship, exclaims "God is Great" with uplifted hands, he is transformed into a state of *haram*⁸ or inviolability. He has left behind him the temporal world with its uncertainties, ambiguities, doubts, and vexations. He is before Allah in a formal manner, and his presence is sanctified by certain prescribed ritual movements, as well as the recitation of certain Qur'anic verses. These verses, which, to Muslims, represent the actual speech of Allah in their intent, when repeated, enable man to use the language of his Creator. As mentioned earlier, speech is considered to be a gift of Allah Himself, and it is this gift which allows the repetition of Allah's speech and thus, evoke His presence or make His remembrance more vivid and intimate. It is a belief among Muslims that the repetition of the words of Revelation from the Qur'an grants *baraka* (blessings) on the sincere believer. This is a reason why the Qur'anic verses in ritual prayer ought to be said in Arabic, the original language used in the revelation of the Qur'an.

To use the language of Western theologians, it is in *salat* where the Muslim meets his Lord and Creator in a sacramental manner. After *salat*, it is customary for the Muslim to utter *du'a*, which are, in effect, *munajat* (intimate conversations) with his *al-Wahab* (Benefactor). One cannot overemphasize the awesome

⁸ Although *haram* is defined in a different context as "forbidden," it also connotes in certain situations the idea of holiness, and of being marked off from something.

responsibility of the sincere Muslim in salat; and, as is well-known, in Islam, there are no intermediaries between the worshipper and Allah.

Prayer is a universal phenomenon and not the monopoly of a single people or religion. The same thing can be said for rituals. With supreme tolerance, Islam assumes the validity of different rituals in the same manner that it never judges another religion apart from its own as false. The Islamic view is that Allah has allowed different messengers and different paths for various religious communities:

And for every nation there is a messenger. (Qur'an 10:48)

For each We have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. (Qur'an 5:48)

The Qur'an also states explicitly that different religious communities have been allowed by Allah to have different rituals in their sacrifices "...that they may mention the name of Allah" (Qur'an 22:34). However, Muslims believe that their mode of worshipping Allah in the salat, as taught to them by the Prophet, constitutes the best form of prayer. Yet the Qur'an warns Muslims that the detractors of Islam will always make fun of the Islamic salat (Qur'an 5:58). It is therefore with some regret noted that some Western films and cartoons make fun of Muslims' praying, [they have] a blatant disregard for the sensibilities of another religious group which ironically affirms that the rituals of their detractors are also valid forms of prayer.

The third pillar of Islam, which consists of rigid fasting during the month of Ramadan, also aims at the remembrance of Allah, for it is in this month that the religious consciousness is meant to be intensified by supplementary prayers, extensive Qur'an reading, and other forms of religious exercises. It was in the month of Ramadan, too, when the Qur'an was first revealed, and it is thus proper that fasting, an institution found in other religions, should be held on such a month for Muslims. Fasting, too, among Muslims serves to remind them of certain social situations like the existence of economic scarcities among the poor and the need for moderation or thrift in the consumption of economic resources-social situations which to Islam have religious implications.

The fourth pillar of Islam is the giving of part of one's wealth and earnings, according to certain specifications, to the poor, the needy, and specific community projects. Again, these specifications are minutely laid down by provisions of the Holy Law. The fourth pillar, as it were, sanctifies the holding of wealth as a

trust. It is a firm reminder that, in reality, no man really owns his wealth since only Allah is the *al-Ghani* (Rich), the *al-Mughni* (Enricher), and the al-Warith (Inheritor). Thus in an important sense, the fourth pillar is a reminder to man that his possessions are simply a trust and must be used for beneficial social purposes as against personal or selfish interests.

The fifth pillar of Islam is the hajj or pilgrimage to the Kabah at Mecca. Historically, the Kaabah is one of the oldest existing temples in the world, and the Qur'an narrates how its foundation were laid by the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Isma'il, an ancestor of the Arabs. Moreover, according to ancient Arabian traditions, the Kabah was erected upon the site where Adam himself had once erected a monument to his Creator after he was sent to earth. The Kabah represents the focal point where communal worship of Allah is effected par excellence. Its simple architectural structure as well as the ancient rituals performed around it attests to the Oneness of Allah and that Islam represents a very primordial religion reminding all other religions that in fundamentals (please clarify this phrasing). That is, to all religions, in the ultimate analysis, Allah is One. It is in this important sense that Islam claims that it is a religion closest to the basic nature of man and that all men are Muslims at birth. The postulate assumed by Islam here is that Islam best approximates that very kind of religion originally meant for man but that historical processes and the heedlessness of man had allowed religions to differ progressively in many of outward forms. At bottom, the communal worship at the Kabah, where mankind forgets all social and material distinctions, represents a supreme reminder of *mithaq* (the original covenant) and constitutes an affirmation to the question of Allah to the sons of Adam: "Am I not your Lord?" (Qur'an 7:172).

To effect the continued remembrance of Allah, the Muslim community is meant to be integrated by the Shari'ah or Holy Law. This is based on the teachings of the Qur'an, the hadith (Apostolic Traditions), and the example of the Prophet who was a remembrancer⁹ par excellence:

Verily in the Messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the last Day, and remembereth Allah much. (Qur'an 33:21).

⁹ That is, someone who remembers.

The Shari'ah delineates what is obligatory, forbidden, recommended, and not recommended for Muslims both as individuals and as members of the community. It also provides prescriptions for the community as a unit. It also states conditions when certain actions do not fall into any of the above four categories. The Shari'ah covers practically every aspect of an individual's life and relations with others. In an important sense, everything in creation falls within the penumbra of the Divine Injunctions and Prescriptions. The Islamic concept of amanah sees to it that this is so in every important aspect of human life. Provisions for incentives to learning, personal hygiene, diet, clothing, prayer, marriage, business, etc., among Muslims must fall under the principles of the Law. The idea here is that man's life is a unity that ought not to be compartmentalized. It is a unity that reflects the Oneness of Allah. Thus, Islam sets aside the Western concept regarding the overriding distinction between the secular [and] the religious.

Important to emphasize at this point is that the Muslim must integrate his life, his family, and society in such a manner that the remembrance of Allah is continuous without forgetting the obligations and necessities of this life. Islam in general had opposed the monastic life for Muslims, while encouraging a healthy family life and honest livelihood. Thus the Qur'anic prayer heard invariably in congregational prayers:

Oh Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good, and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire. (Qur'an 2:201)

The Law intends to channel the will of the Muslims to higher levels of consciousness—a level above the ambiguities, complexities, and uncertainties of life. It increases his certainty on what ought to be done and avoided. As it were, his will is made to conform to the Divine Will by strict adherence to the Law, giving man a higher form of freedom. Adherence to the Law prevents the progressive alienation of man from his original or primordial nature, that kind of nature he had when he knew Allah and accepted Him as his Lord. The Law prevents man-made artifacts from developing a log[ic] of their own and leading to new directions not originally intended by Allah. This means that all man-made products must be viewed under the principle that they are the result of man's creative and artistic faculties, which are effects of the Divine Qualities and must therefore be utilized to glorify the *al-Khaliq* (the Creator) and *al-Musawwir* (the Supreme Fashioner).

Too often has the modern city become so secularized that very few landmarks symbolizing the remembrance of Allah now exist. It is as if in forgetting Allah, Allah has forgotten it. To counteract this, the Muslim living in a modern city, wherever he is, must exert attempts to keep up the remembrance. At least in his home and family he should, in some way or another, keep the remembrance since Allah had promised that His Light will be found “in houses which Allah had allowed to be exalted and that His name shall be remembered therein” (Qur’an 24:36).

If and when a Muslim community is well integrated in accordance with the Law, and any religious community for this matter, then it will be a witness to the remembrance. Among the communities which Allah had brought out from mankind, the Muslim community as a witness to the amanah or trust will be the best among the communities. This is a promise in the Qur’an:

Ye are the best community that hath been raised for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah. (Qur’an 3:110)

It has often been said that the whole of the Qur’an is contained in the *fatihah*,¹⁰ which is the most important prayer in Islamic rituals and which is placed as the first chapter in the Qur’an. Its first four verses constitute, at bottom, an affirmation and remembrance of Allah as the Lord and Master. Verses five and six affirm man’s dependence on Allah and [his] seeking of His Guidance. The seventh and last verse strongly suggests that those who are not in the Straight Road are those who do not remember Him.

Verily, the religion of Islam is a religion of Remembrance. Its theology is a theology of Remembrance while its mystical philosophy and ethical system represents this Remembrance in action. In the long run, the more sincere a Muslim is in his prayers, in following the pillars of Islam, and in doing his utmost to adhere to the provisions of the Holy Law, the more does his selfish and individual interests fade into the background to bring about the good of his community and [in]to the Glory of his Creator. What is important in Islam is the loss of self before the majesty of Allah. Paradoxically, the best form of encounter may be when the self is lost in the Divine and only Allah remains:

¹⁰ The word literally means “opening.”

Everything that is thereon [on earth] will pass away; There remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord full of Might and Glory. (Qur'an 55:26–27)

But as long as man is on earth with individual responsibilities and social obligations, the loss of self is not to be identified with bodily extinction or disregard of the demands of life. What is actually meant is the need for the expansion of his consciousness and elevating it to a higher level where Allah is of utmost importance.

2

Islamic Conceptual Framework on Family Planning¹

Cesar Adib Majul

¹ From the unpublished manuscript in 1972, "On The Necessity Of Presenting An Islamic Conceptual Framework To Be Included In The Introductory Essay To The Papers And Disussions Of The Rabat Conference On Family Planning"

Introduction

Carmen A. Abubakar, Ph.D.²

The inclusion of Majul's paper in the 1972 Rabat Conference may have indicated a growing awareness of family planning as a significant concept that the Philippines' Ministry of Education needed to address when the conference was held. It can also be assumed that a conscious effort was being made to understand the concept of family planning from the point of view of different ethnic groups, potentially leading to divergent interpretations of the subject because of cultural and religious differences.

The inclusion of the Islamic point of view in the conference was timely and relevant given that the Institute of Islamic Studies at the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines Diliman had been newly established. Majul was the first dean of the institute. His knowledge of Islam was well-known and respected at the University of the Philippines. It was only natural that he became the source of knowledge on the subject of Islam and family planning. Prior to the establishment of the Institute, Islam was mainly taught in the *madrasah*, the Islamic schools that catered to Muslim children and adults from elementary to high school. Muslim children who went to public schools usually attended the madrasah every weekend. This enabled them to read the Qur'an, practice Islamic prayers and rituals, and embody Islamic values and behavior. Madrasah students were not only familiar with the Arabic language but also possessed deep understanding of associated cultural practices. Hence, knowledge acquired in the madrasah was applied to everyday life. Giving a rationale to associated cultural practices strengthened the identity of Muslim groups. Nonetheless, higher knowledge of Islam can be attained by attending Islamic schools outside the Philippines. al-Azhar in Egypt is famous as a center of Islamic learning, which Majul attended.

Majul's article on family planning is not just an introduction to the concept but also an affirmation that the concept exists in Islam, taking into account some practices that date to the seventh century C.E., the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

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Majul identifies family planning as part of the *shari'ah*, the legal³ system of Islam which covers all areas of Muslim life—from birth to death. This framing places family planning as part of the general and special knowledge of Islam. The keepers of the *shari'ah*, those who learned and studied the legal system, are religious scholars collectively known as the *ulama*. A male religious scholar is called an *alim* (literally, “the one who knows”) while a religious female scholar is called an *alima*.

Ulama start their Islamic education either in their country's madrasah or through special studies abroad. To gain expertise in specific areas of Islam, particularly its legal system, those who can afford to do so go to either al-Azhar or to other Islamic universities in Malaysia or Indonesia. In this manuscript, Dr. Majul identifies the type of Islamic knowledge that deals with family planning by citing the two main sources of Islamic law: the Qur'an and the hadith. The Qur'an is the holy scripture of Islam. The hadith is a record of sayings, actions, and best practices of the Prophet (s.a.w.),⁴ which have been compiled into volumes. It serves as a guide for making accurate decisions or taking appropriate actions in specific legal situations. Majul also mentions the four schools of Islamic law namely the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i, and the Hanbali.

The Shafi'i school dominates amongst the Muslims in the southern Philippines, as well as in Indonesia and Malaysia. This explains why there are many similarities in the legal processes and decisions in these areas. Some of the pertinent issues concerning family planning mentioned in the *shari'ah* are the following: celibacy, abortion, and the noncoercion of individuals to get married. While Islam considers marriage as a meritorious act, it does not allow its adherents to be coerced thereinto. Essentially, Islam advocates for a healthy family. This is most evident in its recommendation for mothers taking care of newborns.

For example, Islam recommends that a baby be breastfed for at least two years. This effectively prevents unexpected pregnancies and allows proper spacing in the womb for the birth of children. Another provision in Islam is the practice of *coetus interruptus*, or *azl* in Arabic, which was also practiced during the Prophet's time in the seventh century C.E. This was also an accepted safeguard against unwanted or unexpected pregnancies, especially among mothers who had recently given birth. Abortion was another practice mentioned in the *shari'ah*. Muslim jurists consider abortion as murder or assassination and therefore, a crime in Islamic law. As a rule, abortion is not allowed once the fetus is four months old. However, it can be permitted if the life of the mother is at stake.

³ Shari'ah is often translated as Islamic law, but it must be noted that the term encompasses ritual, religious practice, ethics, etc. that are not readily associated with legal matters.

⁴ *Sallallah-u 'alayhi wa sallam* (Peace be upon Him).

In the tenth century C.E., Muslim scholars at al-Azhar showed their concern regarding rapid population growth. In 1965 C.E., a meeting was held by the Islamic Research Academy of Muslim scholars at al-Azhar to discuss the problem of population growth and family planning. A clear and authoritative guide on the Islamic position on family planning can be drawn from the discussions of this meeting, resulting in the consensuses of the 1971 and 1971 Rabat Conferences. However, these sources may not be readily available to non-academic Muslims. *Majul* was the primary source of Islamic law in the academe during the late twentieth century. This article on family planning would have served as one of the first and primary sources of public information regarding the subject matter not only in Metro Manila but also probably in the country.

Today, the situation is vastly different. There is Presidential Decree No. 1083 (PD No. 1083), a law implemented in 1977 in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), now known as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BRMM). PD No. 1083 equips Muslims with the legal tools necessary to deal with any legal situation they may encounter. Family planning among Muslims in the Philippines is not implicit in PD 1083. Even so, there is a system of learning and practice on the subject, which is actively pursued by Muslim Filipino learners. The *ulama* has dealt with both the legal issues in the *shari'ah*, while others dealt with its practical aspects (i.e. those of child birth).

Those who are interested in the practice of *shari'ah*-based midwifery undergoes training and entered an apprenticeship program, with a recognized Healer or practitioner. Well-known practitioners of *shari'ah* become the *guro* or teacher. The *guro* teaches and trains apprentices to manage childbirths, as well as perform necessary rituals for the service. The expert in this field is called the *panday*, who is usually female. The apprentices who want to specialize in childbirth and childcare accompany the *panday* in various services. The apprentices learn through experience. They anticipate problems that may arise in the various cases they attend to. The *guro* allows them to assist in the delivery of a child. At times, when the *guro* sees that her apprentices can manage on their own, she allows them to take over the service and the ritual.

A *panday's* service usually lasts for 44 days or until the full recovery of the mother, when she is able to care for herself and her baby.

The services of the *panday* encompass care before, during, and after childbirth. The *panday* prescribes and monitors the diet of the mother to guarantee she has enough strength for childbirth. The *panday* also provides timely massages to the pregnant woman, making sure the fetus is in its proper place. The *panday* typically advises the mother to limit her physical movements to prevent accidents and ensure her safety and that of her baby. In addition, the *panday* prepares herbal drinks to

strengthen the health of the mother, enabling her to withstand the stresses of the birthing process and care for both herself and her baby.

After the birth, the mother must again limit her physical movements to allow her body to recover and return to its normal and healthy state. The mother usually remains in bed for a few days. The panday continues to take care of her, closely monitoring her diet and watching out for food that could affect the production of breast milk. This is accompanied by ritual bathing, a process typical in many Islamic healing processes. As the mother recovers, other members of the family usually take over the household chores. The panday continues the massages to relieve the mother's body of stresses induced by childbirth. In some cases, the panday's services include doing the laundry and cleaning other materials used in the birthing process, as well as attending to the attire of the mother and the baby.

Sometimes, the panday also provides advice for marital relations to avoid unexpected pregnancies, especially after a recent birth. Spacing of births is part of the panday's role.

Having more children is preferred to having none at all. However, the family usually considers its capacity to support the children, making the decision to have more children a carefully considered one. In a recent move to support family planning and reproductive health, the BARMM issued a *fatwa* (advisory/ruling) regarding reproductive health and family planning. The fatwa was made after a series of consultations with *imams* (prayer leader) from various provinces in BARMM. This advisory was carried out to inform the public and align family planning and its associated practices with Islamic values.

A shari'ah ruling that impacts family planning pertains to abortion, considered a crime under Islamic law. While having more children is considered a virtue in terms of providing support for the community, the present economic conditions of some Muslim communities discourage families from having more children. Consequently, the panday makes sure new mothers are aware of various contraceptive practices.

Today, the concept of family planning has been integrated into the educational curriculum and incorporated into the Department of Health (DOH) program on population control. Engaged couples are also given a seminar on family planning. Cultural practices are now viewed within the framework of modern medical requirements. The combined services of the local panday and the barangay nurse are now a norm in many Muslim-populated areas in the Philippines.

The Islamic concept of family planning is becoming increasingly well-understood among Muslims, as information on the subject matter has been effectively disseminated by both government and nongovernment institutions.

As previously mentioned, BARMM has already conducted a consultation with imams (prayer/community) leaders, allowing them to share, during Friday

khutbahs (sermons) their understanding of family planning from the Islamic point of view. This platform provides both male and female members of the congregation the opportunity to access new information about government programs and enhance their comprehension of Islamic concepts related to family planning. More importantly, this effort will contribute to a more effective distribution of the government's budgetary allocation for further development.

Islamic Conceptual Framework on Family Planning⁵

Cesar Adib Majul

At the Rabat Conference,⁶ Muslim scholars presented many learned papers ranging in scope, from Islamic moral values regarding the personality and the family to medical and scientific subjects pertaining to contraception, abortion, birth, and health.

Many, if not most, of the views expressed were supported by quotations from the Qur'an or hadith. Other opinions were strengthened by texts written by Muslim theologians and jurists. All of these opinions and the discussions, as well as the differences they provoked, were significant; but they can all become more meaningful if [they are] related to each other by means of certain basic Islamic concepts. In turn, these key concepts should be related to each other within a conceptual or theoretical framework. There is no doubt that these concepts were in the minds of the specialists. However, they were not stated explicitly.

When the papers and the proceedings of this conference are published, they will presumably be read by non-Muslims, as well as by Muslims. To guide the non-Muslim readers, it is necessary to state the key Islamic concepts underlying all the papers and discussions. The possibility that my identification of some of the key concepts is all wrong will not invalidate the need of a framework that will demonstrate the unified and comprehensive character of Islamic ideology.

⁵ From the unpublished manuscript in 1972, "On The Necessity Of Presenting An Islamic Conceptual Framework To Be Included In The Introductory Essay To The Papers And Disucssions Of The Rabat Conference On Family Planning." The essay has been retitled in this volume for brevity.

⁶ This was held in 1972.

The first concept is that of *amanah* (trust). This concept came immediately to my mind when I read the paper of Dr. Hassan Hathout and listened to some of his views at the conference. His view is that if it is wrong to abort the fetus for any reason at all after four months, then it is similarly wrong to abort the embryo for any reason at all below four months. His observation was that nature is a process. From a logical and philosophical point of view, Dr. Hathout is correct. The reason is because man, in order to understand nature or make it more intelligible, often categorizes such processes and his divisions might well be conventional and valid only in the conceptual sphere.

I believe that the reason a mother cannot arbitrarily have a child aborted is that she does not own the child in her womb, whatever may be the age of the creature. Actually, it can be asserted from the Islamic point of view, that the child is given to the mother by Allah as an *amanah* (trust). Allah is not only *al-Hayyi* (the Living) but also *al-Muhyi* (the One who gives or causes life). It is true, as the Qur'an states, that Allah has no need of his creatures; but He certainly uses us as tools or instrumentalities in His creation. Some of these purposes we know from the Qur'an; others we can infer or maybe never know at all. The principle that life is a trust given to us is supported by the commandment that we cannot take our own lives. This means we do not own our lives, much less that of our children. In brief, life is given to us as a trust.

Now, in the same manner that a mother does not own the child in her womb, neither ought the child be a danger to the mother's life. I believe that this is an Islamic principle shared with non-Muslim theologians. Allow me, at this point, to present a crude example or analogy. If Mr. A leaves some books to Mr. B to be kept and taken care of as a trust, Mr. B cannot arbitrarily dispose of those books. It also stands to reason, that neither can Mr. B properly exercise his responsibilities over them if they constitute an immediate and real danger to his life. Apropos to this crude example, it must be stated that a woman's function and responsibility as a wife and mother extends well beyond the birth of her child. The preservation of her life is thus important.

The Qur'an prohibits infanticide. On account of this, Muslim theologians and jurists have agreed that aborting a child on account of poverty is *haram*⁷. However, just how many months in a mother's womb constitutes a living child has been debated by Muslim philosophers acquainted with classical Greek philosophy. Among some Western families, poverty has been used as a reason for abortion at any stage. Since this is not allowed in the Islam, then what ought to be done to poor pregnant Muslim mothers? To say that they should have used contraceptives is wishful thinking and will not solve the problem.

I think that here, the idea of property as a trust is relevant. Allah had given the skies and the earth to man as a trust and it is in this sense that man is only a *khalifah* (regent) on earth. Even if the laws state that we are owners of certain properties, these are really not our own but only held as a trust. It is therefore, the duty of the Muslim community, as such, to take care of the children of the poor families. Clearly, family planning, society, and economics are intimately intertwined in the Islamic framework. The idea of *amanah* goes beyond that of life and property. What I mean in particular is that even political authority is a trust in the hands of the governors of any political community. The principle that all life, property, authority, et cetera, is a trust given by Allah to mankind does away with what is arbitrary in human actions and social relations. In practical Islamic legislation, such arbitrariness is reduced, if not eliminated by a system of rights, e.g. the rights of the child, the conjugal rights of husband and wife, etcetera.

However, we need not go into greater detail. Islam covers practically every aspect of our lives and social relations. This does not mean that the ideas of Western thinkers on the family and family planning are devoid of moral or ethical considerations. Certainly Western families do have ethical considerations governing their everyday life. But these ethical considerations, although once inspired by Christianity, have now been among quite a number of families divorced from a religious basis or sanction. In brief, these moral considerations have often become secular in character. As such, they are being transformed along pragmatic lines so as to serve personal and social convenience. Assuredly,

⁷ *Haram* in this context means "forbidden."

such a transformation is not possible among true Muslims who assert that all moral values are ultimately based on Allah's prescriptions and injunctions. That is why Islam is a well-knit, comprehensive system where the so-called secular aspect is not separated from the religious element.

Another key concept that entered my mind was that of the *ummah* or Muslim community. This was inspired by the paper and comments of Mr. H. Karmi who, in a learned manner, showed how our Prophet presented a new conception of the family as a substitute for that of the pre-Islamic era which was closely bound with the tribe. I had wished that Mr. Karmi had shown us why it was necessary to destroy the old concept and structure of the family. I believe that the old structure of the Arab family was selfish and sectional⁸ in character. What was important to our Prophet was to make the family follow not only the canons of a new morality and Islamic decency but also to allow the family to emancipate itself from partisan, tribal, and dynastic loyalties, and go one step ahead, and become a unit of a greater whole. This was the creation of a greater family—that of the *ummah*—and the chief identifying [trait] of [the] *ummah* was its adherence to and protection of Islam.

In the discussions and in a private conversation, I heard Shaikh Muhammad Shams ud-din, with his usual clarity, mention the necessity of developing the correct Islamic personality to reduce, if not to eliminate, many of the ills besetting the modern world. I agree with him that without developing the individual Islamic personality and consciousness, nothing can be accomplished. Such a development is the most important and first vital step. After all, the individual is the atom of society. But again, society is not just a collection of individuals. By definition, society includes individuals, subgroups, institutions, and the interactions of all these with one another. This means, therefore, that the development of the individual personality, the strengthening and planning of the family as well as the different institutions of society, must all be contributive to the preservation, cohesion, and strengthening of the Muslim community or actual communities. I presume that the gentle Shaikh will agree with me; that the development of the Islamic personality implies the ability of

⁸ Perhaps, Dr. Majul meant "sectarian."

the individual to emancipate himself from personal interests and even those of his family to conceive of the greater good of the community.

I cannot help but think of the ummah as a key concept. A function of the Prophet Muhammad was precisely to help establish a Muslim community on earth. Among the many communities which Allah created on earth, He singled out the Muslim community as the best, provided the Muslims kept their belief in Him, enjoined good conduct, and avoided indecency (Qur'an 3:110). We must therefore see to it that Islamic family values and family planning are all contributive to the greater good of the ummah.

In the introductory essay, however, it must be mentioned just what the function of this community is. This brings us to the problem of Allah's *mithaq* (covenant) with the Muslim community. This covenant includes not only a constant remembrance of Allah but also the practice of right conduct and the shunning of all forms of indecency in every aspect of our personal, family and social life. It includes, too, the idea that the Muslim community should serve as a witness to the belief in the oneness of Allah before the other communities or the rest of mankind. The *mithaq* of Allah with the Muslim community brings into mind Allah's *mithaq* with mankind as a whole as described in the Qur'an when he asked Adam in the plural: "Am I not your Lord?" (Qur'an 7:172). This means that the introductory essay has to show the relation between the Muslim community and its responsibilities to the rest of mankind.

On this point, the problem of population control, sharing of world resources, international cooperation, etcetera, are involved. I would like to think that the publication of the learned papers, proceedings, etcetera, of the Rabat Conference is one of the contributions that Muslim thinkers can render to the rest of mankind. This may well be one of the functions of the Muslim community. The learning, intelligence, and wisdom of leading Muslim theologians, jurists, scientists, etcetera, is also a trust to be used for the betterment, not only of the Muslim community, but of mankind in general.

I believe that with the above key concepts as well as additional ones to be contributed by the learned members of the editorial board, all the ideas in the conference will be related to each other and fitted to one another, like pieces in a well-knit jigsaw puzzle. The conceptual framework can be stated

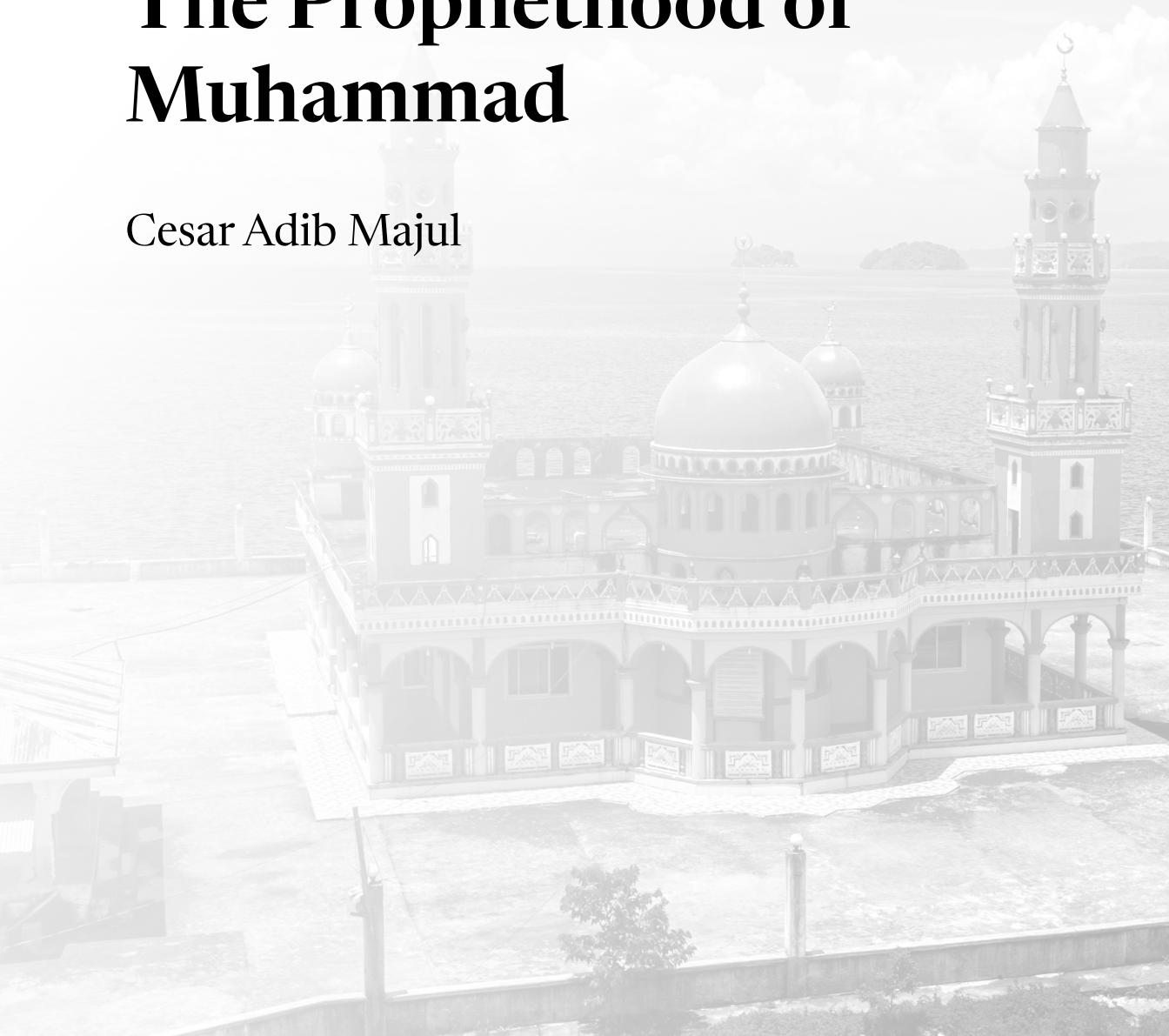
in two or three concise paragraphs. If the key concepts I stated are not the important ones, then certainly the learned members of the Editorial Board should be able to identify the more relevant ones. The conceptual framework, besides showing that Muslim thinkers are not arbitrary or purely pragmatic, will likewise show how some differences of opinions or interpretations often enter into the discussions of learned Muslims. This makes me recall a hadith to the effect that differences of opinions among Muslims can constitute a mercy of Allah. Complementary to this is another hadith stating that should all Muslims agree on a point, they cannot be in error. The basic principle in these two a hadith is that all true Muslims think of the good and purposes of the community and that therefore, their differences come not on account of personal or selfish motives, but on account of how best to achieve this good and purposes more effectively.

Unto Allah is the Guidance.

3

The Prophethood of Muhammad

Cesar Adib Majul



Introduction

Darwin T. Rasul III, Ph.D.¹

In this short essay, “The Prophethood of Muhammad” (first published in 1972), Dr. Cesar Adib Majul raised three pointers as an outline of his brief discussion: 1) the general meaning of prophethood; 2) the meaning of the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.);² and 3) their implications for the beliefs of Muslims.

Majul discussed here the prophethood of Muhammad in what he describes as “the second part of the *kalimah*” or the declaration of faith, and the perfection of Islam as a religion before the demise of the Prophet.

Muhammad in the Kalimah

Seventh-century Arabia saw the birth of one of the most influential religious movements in history. Beginning from the dusty streets of Mecca, Islam had, in less than twenty-three years, managed to unite the whole of unruly Arabia under a simple declaration, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.”

Majul, quoting the Muslim theologian, Taqi-ud-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiya (1263 C.E.–1328 C.E.)³ said that “There are men who do not live up to what they recognize as true and binding. It is then that the *nabi*⁴ begins to act like a reformer or revolutionary because he now brings with him, as part of Allah's Message, a moral and social code intended to bring about a new order in the life of the individual, his family, and society. In effect, such a *nabi* has become a *rasul* or Messenger of Allah.”

What was it about this message that brought about a miraculous revolution? Majul cited the analysis and empirical conclusion of Muslim historian and sociologist, Abdur-Rahman ibn Khaldun (1332 C.E.–1406 C.E.):

¹ Darwin T. Rasul III, Ph.D. (isp.cids@up.edu.ph) is a book author, columnist, political analyst, and consultant on public policies.

² This is an abbreviation of *sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*, meaning “peace be upon him.”

³ ibn Taymiyyah as he is popularly known, was a theologian believed to have been heavily influenced by the teachings of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780 C.E.–855 C.E.), founder of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. He strongly advocated for the continued primacy of the original sources of Islamic law—the Qur'an and Sunnah, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

⁴ A prophet in the Arabic language.

on the rise and decline of empires and civilizations as well as other historical transformations... the function of prophets had been to accelerate or push up mankind's spiritual march to higher level... precisely what Muhammed Rasul-Allah had done... to improve the moral and religious habits of men or change them for the better. "In so doing, the world has never been the same anymore and history has been made to follow a certain pattern," as the Prophet had preached Allah's sovereignty over the affairs of this life. (Majul 1972 citing ibn Khaldun's *Muqqadimah*)⁵

This, he wrote, is the essential meaning of "uncompromising obedience" and *ikmal* service to Allah." It was through the forbearance of the Prophet Muhammad—the lasting impact of his high spiritual and moral examples—that the teachings of Islam were exemplified and thus so widely accepted.

The declaration of faith or the *kalima shahada* (*tayyiba*, the pure declaration), one of the five pillars of Islam, has remained, by and large, the words by which a person enters the fold of Islam. This testimony of faith—"I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah"—is not only a method of conversion, but also a form of worship declared in the call to prayer and is repeated in the daily Islamic prayers. These words date back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

The declaration of faith is the quintessence of Islamic belief. Its wording is divided into two sections. The first part professes belief in Allah, and the second iterates belief in Muhammad as the Messenger of God. Both are essential for spiritual growth within Islam. Together, the two halves of the shahadah combine to give rise to the Islamic ideal of *tawhid* or the absolute oneness of God. All Muslims aspire to achieve this realization of God, where His existence comes to permeate the soul and desires of the self, and all other things become secondary to His being. The declaration of faith is thus a deep spiritual reality that serves as the gateway into Islam.

In the first part (also known as *tahlil*), there is an interesting interplay between negation and affirmation: "There is no God (*Illaha*) but Allah." The term used for God (*Illaha*) refers to any deity, while also alluding to an object of worship and center of one's devotion and love. Therefore, these words profess not only belief in Allah, but also take Him as the object of the deepest love and devotion.

In the second part of the shahadah, there is another affirmation: this time in the belief of Muhammad as the Messenger of God. Although Islam teaches belief in the truthfulness of all previous prophets, such as Moses (s.a.w.) and Jesus (s.a.w.), the declaration of faith only mentioned belief in Muhammad. This is because it is

⁵ This passage comes from the work, *Muqaddimah*, often translated as "Prolegomenon" or "Introduction." It is a critical analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations, attributing it to the strength or absence of group kinship known as *asabiyya*. The *Muqaddimah* is considered a seminal work on the nature and evolution of human society in the premodern world.

through the Prophet Muhammad that one comes to believe in the truthfulness of all other prophets.

Majul (1972), as the title of his article suggests, wrote with more emphasis on Muhammad and his prophethood.

History is a witness to the coming of prophets, but it is the Holy Qur'an that had revealed the profound and inner meaning for the necessity and coming of prophets. The Holy Qur'an also mentions how messengers have been sent to different nations at different times and how these messages have been changed or adulterated by others for selfish reasons. It had therefore become imperative that another prophet should appear not only to recall and confirm previous genuine messages but to point out the additions to them if not actual perversions made by other men. This is part of the reason why the Holy Qur'an was revealed and the Prophet Muhammad [was] chosen as Allah's agency to recite it. The Holy Qur'an had descended as 'a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.'

The Qur'an states:

With clear signs and Books (We sent the Messengers). And We have also sent down unto you (O Muhammad!) the reminder and the advice (of the Quran), that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought. (Qur'an 16:44)

Therefore, to believe in Him is by extension to believe in all other prophets of God. Majul (1972) added, "The Holy Qur'an explicitly asserts in what manner the Prophet Muhammad was foretold by Abraham and Ishmael... when both men prayed for a messenger to recite Allah's Revelations." But the Prophet Muhammad not only came to confirm previous messages. He also "came to purge them of errors and perversions which other men inserted or added to such messages," wrote Majul (1972).

Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad was the chief of the Prophets as he was sent by God (Allah) to explain, teach, and impart wisdom of Qur'an. This evidence alone will show that *hadith* (sayings by or stories about the Muhammad) is part of the *din*⁶ of Islam. Allah has made it clear that obedience to the Prophet is obedience to Him in the following verses in the Qur'an:

1. Say Obey Allah and the Messenger. But if they turn away, then Allah does not like the disbelievers. (Quran 3:32)
2. O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger [Muhammad, *pbuh*], and those of you [Muslims] who are in authority. [And] if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination. (Quran 4:59)

⁶ *Din* is often translated in English as "faith" or "religion."

In the second verse above, Allah says, “if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and his Messenger” (Qur’an 4:59). This Qur’anic verse proves that the Prophet’s role was more than just delivering the Qur’an. It also proves that, if we, as Muslims, have any dispute in matters of religion, we should turn back to His Messenger, Muhammad.

Furthermore, Allah instructs the Prophet Muhammad, “And We have not sent down the Book [the Quran] to you [O’ Muhammad], except that you may explain clearly unto them those things in which they differ, and as a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe” (Qur’an 16:64). Also, concerning the prophets who came before the Prophet Muhammad, Majul said that “It is well known that most, if not all of the prophets that have appeared... have invariably opposed any form of organized priesthood or hierarchy. And it is part at orthodox Islam not to countenance any organized clergy within its ranks.”

To elaborate on Majul’s statement, it is well to state that Muslims have no hierarchical church structure, nor does it have an organized religious bureaucracy or institution. Muslims have no priesthood because Islam does not recognize sacerdotal authority or ecclesiastical power that tends to rival or prejudice the interest of the State. An exception to this is Shia Islam, which provides a “theocracy” in the ultimate sense, but is meaningless in practical terms, since “theocracy” signifies the rule of a priestly or supposedly divinely inspired individual or class. Majul stated his position on Sunni belief: that such priesthood is absent in Islam. Thus, the bifurcation between the sacred and the secular, being completely absent in Islam, admits to an exception in Western jurisprudence. Thomas Jefferson’s⁷ (1743–1826) metaphorical “wall of separation” is not literally absolute in all respects, because the line demarcating the spheres of the State and religion is often blurred.

The Perfection of Religion

With the completion of the prophethood of Muhammad and thus the perfection of Islam as a religion, Majul wrote,

Besides the uttering of the kalimah, wherein Muslims affirm the Prophethood of Muhammad, it has become part of the salat⁸ to affirm that the Prophet Muhammad belongs to a series of

⁷ Jefferson is one of the Founding Fathers of the United States; he served as the third president of the country from 1801 to 1809.

⁸ The Muslim ritual prayer.

prophets. That is why in the *salawat*⁹ that follows the *tashahhud*,¹⁰ we pray that the Prophet Muhammad be blessed by Allah in the same manner that the Prophet Abraham was also blessed by Allah.

“However,” Majul adds, “there are two additional aspects revealed in the Holy Qur’an that are so intimately related and which give us further insights into the Prophethood of Muhammad.” These aspects are the acknowledgement that the Prophet is the Seal of all the Prophets, and that Islam is the most perfect religion. It represents all of Allah’s favors on mankind with regard to revelation.

This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (Qur’an 5:3)

What day is this which combines such important achievements? The perfection of religion, the completion of Allah's favors, and His being pleased with Islam as the religion for mankind, a light for all times to come. It is obvious that this verse does not refer to an ordinary day. It merely suggests that a miracle must have occurred on that day to have brought down such a verse. What happened after the death of the Prophet? Islam as a religion was perfected through the appointment of those who would safeguard its integrity and guide the believers.

Majul and some Sunni commentators view the perfection of Islam in this verse of *ikmal*¹¹ as a reference to the rites of *hajj* which were established by the Prophet Muhammad in his Farewell Pilgrimage, signaling the completion of the Islamic legislation. Other commentators of the Qur’an have suggested that it may be the Day of ‘Arafah¹² during the final Pilgrimage, but nothing happened on that day to warrant such a declaration. They say it could have been the day of the conquest of Mecca, or the day when the *Surat-ul Bara’at* (a chapter and verse in the Qur’an) told the polytheists (i.e. non-Muslims) they could no longer worship at the Ka’ba,¹³ or even the day when the Prophet started preaching God’s word. These suggestions are implausible because the verse was revealed towards the end of the life of the Prophet Muhammad. All these other events happened much earlier.

⁹ Salutations to the Prophet Muhammad, “peace be upon him.”

¹⁰ *Tashahhud*, translated in English as “testimony,” is one of the required acts of the salat ritual prayer. It is the act where one recites the *shahadah*, attesting to the Oneness of Allah and to Muhammad as His messenger.

¹¹ This refers to the third verse of chapter 5 of the Qur’an.

¹² Known as *Yawm al Waqf* or Day of Standing. Arafah is the place during the Prophet's final pilgrimage that he gave his farewell sermon, outlining principles of Islamic legislation. This momentous event is commemorated in the yearly pilgrimage by prolonged standing in prayer and supplication for Allah's Divine Mercy.

¹³ This is the cubic structure which Muslims circumambulate during the *hajj*.

Majul stated that, "All these mean that with the revelation of the most perfect religion, the Prophet Muhammad is the last and the best of the long series of prophets, that all the perfections of prophethood are found in him, and that he is the last law-bearing rasul. This last statement also implies that there cannot be another Shari'a or Holy law except that which is based essentially on the Holy Qur'an."

Majul concluded that the Muslim community was identified by their adherence to the Holy Qur'an as the revealed word of Allah and their affirmation of the prophethood of Muhammad.

In this present world of ours there are many religious communities, each sharing in various degrees and intensities some of the messages uttered by a long line of prophets. But the Muslim community differs from them all by its possession of the most perfect religion and completed favor from Allah as well as by having as its Prophet the last and the best. It is in this sense that Allah said in the Holy Qur'an.

The Prophethood of Muhammad

Cesar Adib Majul

As it is well known to all Muslims,¹⁴ the first principle or pillar of Islam is the *shahadah* or the declaration of faith. This is the uttering of the *kalimah*:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger.

On the occasion of the celebration of *Mawlad-an-Nabi*,¹⁵ I propose to share with you some ideas on the meaning and implications of the second part of the *kalimah*:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah

At least three points will be discussed: the general meaning of prophethood, the meaning of the prophethood of Muhammad, and their implications to beliefs of Muslims.

¹⁴ Among the articles featured in this monograph by Majul, the present appears to be the only article where he uses “Moslem” in lieu of “Muslim.” For consistency, UP CIDS Publications Unit converted all instances of “Moslem” to “Muslim.”

¹⁵ The birthday of the Prophet, which is celebrated in June.

According to Taqi-ud-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiya,¹⁶ the famous Hanbali¹⁷ and Muslim thinker who lived about six hundred years ago, a *nabi* (prophet) is a human agent through which Allah sends messages to mankind. However, according to ibn Taymiya, although such messages are recognized by men as originating from Allah, they might not be followed on account of the selfishness, pride, personal interests, love of power, and so on, of men. In other words, there are men who do not live up to what they recognize as true and binding. It is then that the nabi begins to act like a reformer or revolutionary because he now brings with him, as part of Allah's Message, a moral and social code intended to bring about a new order in the life of the individual, his family, and society. In effect, such a nabi has become a *rasul* or messenger of Allah.

The famous Muslim historian and sociologist Abdur-Rahman Ibn Khaldun¹⁸ after analyzing and reflecting on the rise and decline of empires and civilizations as well as other historical transformations, arrived at the empirical conclusion that the function of prophets had been to accelerate or push up mankind's spiritual march to a higher level. This is precisely what Muhammad Rasul Allah had done. He had come to improve the moral and religious habits of men or change them for the better. In so doing, the world has never been the same anymore, and history has been made to follow a certain pattern. The Prophet had pointed out the necessity for the recognition of Allah's sovereignty over the affairs of this life, and that men owed strict and uncompromising obedience to Allah. This is the essential meaning of *'ibada* or service to Allah.

History is a witness to the coming of prophets, but it is the Holy Qur'an that had revealed the profound and inner meaning for the necessity and arrival of prophets. The Holy Qur'an also mentions how messengers have been sent to different nations at different times and how these messages have been changed or adulterated by others for selfish reasons. It had therefore become imperative that another prophet should appear not only to recall and confirm previous genuine messages, but to point out the additions to them, if not actual perversions made

¹⁶ See footnote 1.

¹⁷ Hanbali refers to the Hanbali school (*madhab*) of Islamic law. It is one of four such schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam. It must be noted that "school" does not refer to a physical edifice, but more of a network of scholars and an approach to legal matters.

¹⁸ ibn Khaldun lived from 1332 C.E-1406 C.E.

by other men. This is part of the reason why the Holy Qur'an was revealed and the Prophet Muhammad chosen as Allah's agency to recite it. The Holy Qur'an had descended as "a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe."

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِلْبَيِّنِ لَهُمُ الَّذِي
أَخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

And we have revealed the scripture to You only that You may explain to them that wherein they differ and [as] a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe (Qur'an 16: 64).

Innumerable passages in the Holy Qur'an assert and explain in what manner Muhammad claimed that he was a prophet.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Say o Muhammad: o mankind: lo! I am the messenger of Allah to you all – the messenger of him unto whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. (Qur'an 7: 158)

The Prophet Muhammad claimed that he was not only a warner but also a bringer of good tidings. Besides painting out the consequences of an evil and corrupt life to the individual and his community, he explained the beneficial results of an upright and virtuous life that was full of the remembrance of Allah. He was ready to face doubts and ridicule from others about his mission. The Holy Qur'an explains how other previous prophets were also denied by their enemies. But the greatest proof of his mission was the existence of the Holy Qur'an (2:23):

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا
فَاتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And if you are in doubt concerning that which we reveal unto our slave (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside Allah if you are truthful. (Qur'an 2: 23)

But this is not all. The Holy Qur'an explicitly asserts in what manner the Prophet Muhammad was foretold by Abraham and his son, Ishmael. This refers to verse 129 of *surah*¹⁹ II when both men prayed for a messenger to recite Allah's Revelations. And verse 6 of *surah* LXI reveals how the Prophet Isa ibn Maryam²⁰ foretold of the coming of the messenger, Ahmad, an equivalent name for Muhammad. But the Prophet Muhammad not only came to confirm previous messages, for, just as important, he came to purge them of errors and perversions which other men inserted or added to such messages. To take only one example, the Holy Qur'an (4:171) states:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ
وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ

O people of the scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter anything concerning Allah except the truth. (Qur'an 4: 171)

Although this verse appears to refer to some religious communities that worship the Prophet Isa ibn Maryam as a god, it is general enough to refer to other practices that have been added to the original teachings of earlier prophets. It is well known that most, if not all of the prophets that have appeared in Asia have invariably opposed any form of organized priesthood or hierarchy. And it should be part of orthodox Islam not to countenance any organized clergy within its ranks. This, incidentally, is a prescriptive for each individual Muslim to read the Holy Qur'an and learn more and more about his religion.

¹⁹ *Surah* is Arabic for "chapter" in the Qur'an.

²⁰ That is, Jesus, Son of Mary.

Strictly speaking, therefore, every Muslim must be prepared to serve as an *imam*²¹ if the situation so demands. He must also try to develop himself into an *alim*.²² This duty is incumbent to every Muslim in accordance with the Qur’anic verse (20: 114):

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

My Lord, increase me in knowledge!

Besides the uttering at the kalimah, wherein Muslims affirm the Prophethood of Muhammad, it has become part of the salat²³ to affirm that the Prophet Muhammad belongs to a series of prophets. That is why in the salawat²⁴ that follows the tashahud,²⁵ we pray that the Prophet Muhammad be blessed by Allah in the same manner that the Prophet Abraham was also blessed by Allah

However, there are two additional aspects revealed in the Holy Qur’an that are so intimately related and which give us further insights into the Prophethood of Muhammad. The first is that the Prophet Muhammad is denominated as the Seal of the Prophet. The second is that Islam is the most perfect religion and represents the completion of Allah’s favors on mankind regarding revelation.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ
عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam. (Qur’an 5: 3)

All these mean that with the revelation of the most perfect religion, the Prophet Muhammad is the last and the best of the long series of prophets, that

²¹ Technically, it means “leader.”

²² Literally, “the one who knows” in Arabic. It means a “scholar” or “learned person.”

²³ See footnote 7.

²⁴ See footnote 8.

²⁵ See footnote 9.

all the perfections of prophethood are found in him, and that he is the last law-bearing rasul. This last statement also implies that there cannot be another Shari'ah or Holy law except that which is based essentially on the Holy Qur'an.

The Muslim community is thus identified by its adherence to the Holy Qur'an as the revealed word of Allah, as well as by its affirmation of the Prophethood of Muhammad. Islam and the affirmation of the Prophethood of Muhammad are so intimately bound that anyone who denies the latter will cease to be a Muslim. He may still believe in one Supreme Being but he belongs to another community.

In this present world of ours, there are many religious communities, each sharing in various degrees and intensities some of the messages uttered by a long line of prophets. But the Muslim community differs from them all by its possession of the most perfect religion and completed favor from Allah as well as by having as its Prophet the last and the best. It is in this sense that Allah said in the Holy Qur'an (3: 110):

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ
ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God. Now if the followers of earlier revelation had attained to [this kind of] faith, it would have been for their own good; [but only few] among them are believers, while most of them are iniquitous

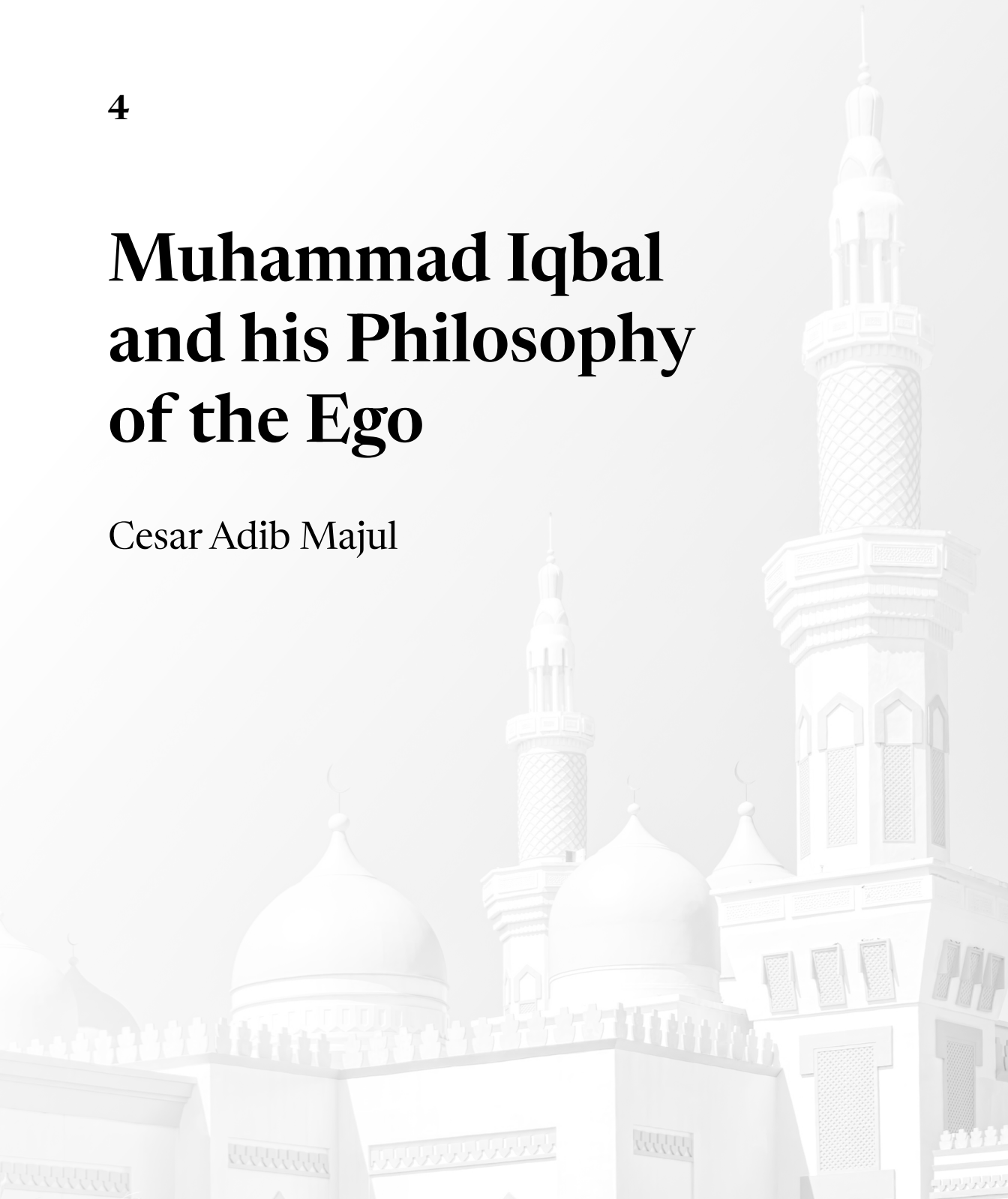
*Inshallah*²⁶

²⁶ God-willing, but literally, "If Allah wills it."

4

Muhammad Iqbal and his Philosophy of the Ego

Cesar Adib Majul



Introduction

Roderick G. Orlina¹

This talk was delivered in celebration of Muhammad Iqbal's centenary year of birth (1977). As a political philosopher, Majul was drawn to writing about the great minds of the Philippine revolution like Apolinario Mabini and Jose Rizal. We find him at this juncture giving a talk about Iqbal, who was a visionary and the inspiration for Pakistan's independence in 1947. Iqbal, from a Kashmiri family in Punjab, advocated for a Muslim state to be formed once the British left India. Initially, Iqbal believed that Hindus and Muslims should be united in their love of Mother India, but he later became convinced that if the Muslim minority remained a part of India, they would not be respected by the majority Hindu population. He emphasized unity amongst all Muslims in the global ummah (community) while disavowing nationalism, which he believed damaged the equality of human beings.

Majul left for America to study at Cornell University in the 1950s, just as Iqbal's path to knowledge led him to England to pursue his higher education in England and Germany from 1905 to 1908. Because of this time in Europe, Iqbal was unique in the Muslim world; he was one of the few exposed to the great thinkers from the modern West. During his studies, he was impressed by the advancements that Western society had made. His study of Western philosophers had left a mark, though. As Majul points out, Iqbal never abandoned the teachings of the great Islamic thinkers of the past and only made use of Western concepts to be better understood by modern readers.

Majul recognized the power of the pen to arouse the human consciousness. Iqbal gained notoriety for his poetry at a time when one could still find wisdom in putting it to memory. Through the classical style of Persian and Urdu² poetry, Iqbal spoke of the spiritual force of Islam. His first philosophical poetry in Persian was titled *Asrar-i Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), published in 1915. He was distinguished particularly for his concept of *khudi*, which can be loosely translated as "ego." Traditionally, the ego (*nafs*) was considered a negative force that needed to be

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² Urdu is a language in India and Pakistan with Persian and Arabic influences.

eliminated for spiritual progress. Majul emphasized that in Iqbal's work, the ego becomes an eternal principal and the essence of a human being, which should be developed positively. God is a perfect ego—the eternal principal—and his creations, including humans, also have egos. As Majul mentions, Iqbal believed the mystical experience is centered on ego development, not ego annihilation. He contends that the moral ideal of man is not self-negation but rather self-affirmation. One attains it by fostering individuality and uniqueness, thereby drawing closer to God. Such an individual absorbs God's essence.

The strengthening of the ego, as Iqbal proposes, is done through the assimilation of divine attributes into man's personality. This process involves recognizing and realizing one's intrinsic worth and potential through self-awareness.

Iqbal was a staunch advocate of the revival of Islamic civilization. He delivered a series of lectures in English that were published in 1930 as "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam." As a Muslim reformer, his main wish was to awaken Muslims to a heightened consciousness and to invigorate Muslim thought in the modern era. He wanted to reconstruct Islamic thought in a contemporary context, rather than cling onto earlier Muslim scholarship, which, in his view, had remained stagnant for the past five hundred years.

Essentially, Iqbal believed that men who are properly focused, should generate vitality through their interactions with God. In the fourth chapter of his work, he deals again with the ego, exploring topics such as the origins of man in the world, the nature and instincts of man, the aspirations of man, his potentialities, and the dual inclination towards good and evil. The ego, as he describes it, is the realm where thought and action are fundamentally intertwined, each possessing uniqueness. Recognizing the human being as God's supreme creation, Iqbal states that humans possess the most advanced ego, rendering them chosen to be God's vicegerents. The Ultimate Ego embodies infinite power, knowledge, and presence. Each atom of God's creativity has an ego, and all things in the universe are a combination of such atomic egos. Majul was a follower of *tasawwuf* (Sufism), especially the *naqshbandi tariqa* (path). His practice of Islam was rooted in the age-old traditions of Sufis. Far from taking offense at Iqbal's critique of Sufis, Majul viewed his ideas in a positive light. Although Iqbal praises the founders of Sufism, he viewed its contemporary representatives as regressive and incapable of getting inspiration from modern thought and experience.

Iqbal rejected Neoplatonism, specifically the "Sufism of dispossession" grounded in the monistic ideas of Greek philosophy. This perspective considers the world and humans as mere metaphors for the Real. Additionally, Iqbal criticized the doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujud* (unity of existence) associated with ibn al-Arabi (1165 C.E.–1240 C.E.), characterizing it as escapist. Iqbal thought that killing the ego results

in inaction and weakness. He believed that the dissolution of the self and lack of engagement with the world are flatly against the Qur'anic spirit of action, which encourages engagement with nature and the universe.

Despite his reservations, Iqbal, being a Sufi himself, embraced certain aspects of Sufism's ideals. To him, there is great value in direct, rather than purely intellectual, experience of God. He criticized inactive Sufis and advocates for a type of Sufism embodied in Rumi—an approach that called for the cultivation of the self. Iqbal further proposed that by putting together the mysticism of Sufism and modern science, compatibility can be found, leading to a rediscovery of the original Qur'anic reality and knowledge. Religious experience, he argued, is a form of human experience and, consequently, a possible source of knowledge.

In several respects, Iqbal's biography and worldview mirrors that of Majul. Having received his education in the U.S., Dr. Majul also drew intellectual inspiration from the West. But as a man of faith he, like Iqbal, believed that we must be guided by religion, as it can establish deep contact with reality. In Iqbal's words, *Khudi ka ssir e nihan la ilaha il Allah* (The hidden secret of khudi is there is no god but God). Allah is the Ultimate Reality, the Perfect Self, and the embodiment of the Ultimate Ego.

Muhammad Iqbal and his Philosophy of the Ego

Cesar Adib Majul

We are gathered here today to honor Muhammad Iqbal—poet, philosopher, jurist, lawyer, and reformer. Not only was he a thinker closely associated with the political ideology that gave birth to the nation of Pakistan, but he was also a philosopher whose doctrines have a universal import. Even when he worked within a framework of Islamic thought, he did not hesitate to draw from or refer to the philosophic heritage of the world as a common pool. Although a great deal of his thinking was directed primarily to a Muslim audience, he tried to demonstrate, by his erudition and inspired pen, that Islam, properly interpreted and invigorated, could still be made to enrich the intellectual and spiritual resources of mankind as it had done in the past.

Even while very young, Iqbal's poetic talents were manifest. In school, he became thoroughly acquainted with Persian and Urdu literature which were then deeply infused with religious, mystical, and even erotic themes. As a student under colonial rule, he initially used his poetic gifts to arouse the patriotic sentiments of the Indian people to lead them to desire to do away with foreign rule. It was a rule, he averred, that constituted oppression, and a barrier to social emancipation and cultural flowering. Iqbal did not hesitate, moreover, to blame the political indifference of the Indian people, as well as their lack of unity, as the major causes of their backwardness, poverty, and suffering. Thus, he tried to foster Hindu-Muslim unity by stressing a love for Mother India. It was a love that would, he believed, eliminate communal differences and distrust. As he wrote, "we shall erase the boundary of blind hostility in order that we may again walk along the same path." But sadly, the irreconcilable differences between the emerging native leaders, coupled with the increase and intensity of clashes between the two communities, as

well as the fact that Iqbal was too deeply steeped in the philosophical and religious heritage of Islam, all led him eventually to commit himself more to Islam as the primary instrument to achieve national ideals. It is believed that his trip to, and studies in, Europe in 1905 –1908 further intensified this commitment.

Iqbal admired the dynamism of European life and sincerely appreciated its possibilities to expand further the horizons of the human intellect. Aware that the initial inspiration for the development of the scientific spirit and science in modern Europe came from Muslim thinkers, he began to wonder why in such fields of endeavor the Muslims had come to be left behind. He could not accept the oft-repeated charge that Islam was responsible for the scientific backwardness of the Muslims of his time. He said, “The strength of the West is due to knowledge and science. Her lamp is alight from this fire only. Knowledge does not depend on the style of your garments, and a turban is no obstacle to the acquisition of knowledge.” However, he was very cautious about blindly accepting the ideas of the West, especially its capitalism and what he considered its materialistic and mechanistic doctrine-ideas which he believed were slowly but surely dehumanizing man. In one of his poems he said:

Can Persia or Arabia suck new life
from Europe’s culture,
Itself at the grave’s edge?

Undoubtedly, Iqbal deeply studied and was quite influenced by European philosophers principally Leibnitz, Kant, Nietzsche, and Bergson. But it is important to point out that he judiciously borrowed from them only those concepts and philosophic techniques which had a relevant correspondence with existing elements in Islamic philosophy, whether of the scientific or mystical variety. Knowing about his Islamic educational background and studying deeper his philosophy, will reveal, indeed, that Western concepts were deliberately used in order that he could be better understood within a modern context or the language of modern philosophy. His famous lectures on “The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam” (1930), which systematized his previously scattered reflections on philosophy and religion and represented his most mature thinking on the matter, was directed to an audience that presumably had a good training in Western philosophy.

Consequently, Iqbal had to use a language it could fully understand and relate to contemporary philosophical movements. All the time, however, he made lengthy references to the ideas of the classical Muslim philosophers and theologians to establish a correlation of ideas as well as to instruct his audience on the Islamic heritage. The fact is that here is practically nothing that he quoted from Western philosophers that had not already been anticipated, if not stated more clearly, by medieval Muslim thinkers. In any case, consciously or not, Iqbal was asserting the existence of the *philosophia perennis*.³

But significant to note is that he was clearly suggesting that Muslim philosophers of the past, if properly interpreted, could be as cogent or contemporary as any modern European philosopher. Moreover, Islam had within itself all the ingredients, as well as the internal corrective measures to make possible, once again, just as it did in the past, the emancipation of the human mind, the harnessing of the creative urges of man, the formation of life-sustaining ideals, the control of nature, and the proper ordering of society. For Iqbal, no Muslim society could or ought to build its national ideals except on the basis of Islamic principles. Yet, everywhere, he was confronted by illiteracy, poverty, indifference, and decadence, especially in political and social institutions, in Muslim societies. Delving into history and studying the intellectual and religious atmosphere then prevailing, he came to blame the stagnation on an emotional and resigning spiritualism, which, at bottom, was nihilistic. In 1917, he wrote:

...the present-day Muslim prefers to roam about aimlessly in the valley of Hellenic-Persian mysticism, which teaches us to shut our eyes to the hard reality around, and to fix our gaze on what is described as “illumination”—blue, red, and yellow reality springing from the cells of an over-worked brain. To me this self-mystification, this nihilism, i.e., seeking reality where it does not exist, is a physiological symptom, giving me a clue to the decadence of the Muslim world.

An object of stern criticism by Iqbal was the concept of the so-called *wahdat-ul-wujud* (unity of existence) with its strong monistic and pantheistic connotation. This concept, propounded by not a few Sufis (Muslim mystical philosophers)

³ A Latin phrase that loosely refers to essential philosophical beliefs.

who were deeply influenced by the neoPlatonist doctrine of emanation⁴, as well as Persian tendencies towards this doctrine even before the advent of Islam, involved the correlative concept of *fana* or the extinction of the individual in its immersion with the Divine.

Iqbal's criticism of, and departure from, the above two concepts, as well as the attitudes towards life and society which the concepts engendered, led many of his students and interpreters to label them as his "break with Sufism." This so-called "break" must, however, be qualified. In the first place, Iqbal was against that particular brand of Sufism then widespread in India, which he believed negated the real personality of the individual, belittled reason, rejected rationalistic philosophy and science, and encouraged asceticism or withdrawal from social and national life as supreme religious values. All these, he insisted, were against the spirit and teachings of the Qur'an and the examples of the Prophet Muhammad. In effect, they constituted grave obstacles to the development of a balanced and complete personality while serving to foster the decline of Muslim societies.

Yet, all the while that Iqbal took Sufism to task, he fully utilized the Sufi critical method to demonstrate the limitations of the rational process in arriving at the truth, accepted their insistence on the role of intuition in the cognitive process, and adopted their idea of *insan ul- kamil* (the perfect or complete man). He once wrote that Sufism in the past did much to enhance religious experience; but what happened later on was that many Sufis, especially in Persia and India, refused to be inspired or helped by modern thought and experiences, social demands, and cultural transformations.

Actually Iqbal's criticisms against Sufis was parallel to those he leveled against Western and Muslim philosophers in that he used a dialectical method. This method was manifested in rejecting what was unacceptable, accepting what was valid, pushing the conclusions to higher levels of thought and relating them to actual experiences, a method he actually learned from Sufis. Indeed, the spirit of inquiry that was once part of Sufism permeated much of the thinking of Iqbal. He himself once confessed to R. Nicholson, an eminent Western Orientalist and student of Sufism: "I claim that the philosophy of the Asrar [i Khudi (Secrets of

⁴ Neoplatonism holds that all of creation emanated from "The One."

the Self]) is a direct development out of the experiences and speculation of old Muslim Sufis and thinkers...”

Contrary to the concepts of *wahdat ul wujud* and *fana*, as cherished by some Sufis, Iqbal stressed the concept of *tawhid* or the unity of God, and the existence of the *khudi* (ego or individual self). Rejecting pantheistic monism, Iqbal viewed the universe as composed of a plurality of egos of different qualities and orders. God Himself is an Ego, the Ultimate Ego, and is the Creator of all other egos which are finite. Finite egos are separated from each other by time and space. There are, nevertheless, egos of a higher order, where self-consciousness, intellect, and intuition can be developed. These are the egos that can subdue the lower egos which compose matter. Such finite egos of a higher order is what Iqbal calls the human ego or self.

Following the main current of Muslim thought, God, to Iqbal, is one but separate from His Creation. According to him: “All life is individual; there is no such thing as universal life. God Himself is an individual. However, He is the most unique individual.” To Iqbal, God is God and man is His creature. The relationship of man to God is one of complete servanthood and not one of perishing into God to the disregard of the self and its responsibility to other selves and society.

The existence of the human ego, according to Iqbal, is evidenced by man’s self-consciousness, desires, passions, thoughts, and aspirations. Some students of Iqbal have reflected that it is here where Rene Descartes’ *cogito, ergo sum*[’s] influence is seen on Iqbal. Actually, Iqbal’s idea here appears to be a development of the ideas of the Ash’arites⁵ and the philosopher Al Ghazali who looked at the ego as a spiritual entity. Be this as it may, to Iqbal, the human self is not something fixed but is capable of higher development. “The nature of the ego,” according to him, “is such that, in spite of its capacity to respond to other egos, it is self-centered and possesses a private circuit of individuality excluding all egos other than itself.” But this, it must be pointed out, is the human ego in its initial development. In its higher manifestation, it is able to transcend its private character so as to love other egos as well as God Himself. And loving others’ egos

⁵ The Ash’arites refer to theological and philosophical “school” in medieval Islam that first emerged in the 10th and 11th centuries.

means the expression of the will to improve society. According to Iqbal: "Its highest form (of the ego) is the creation of values and ideas and the endeavor to realize them." In brief, the ego that works only for itself or conceives of the good of others but does not put this conception into practice is an ego that is arrested in its path to higher manifestations.

The developed human ego is intimately involved in a creative activity. "The final act is not an intellectual act, but a vital act which deepens the whole being of the ego, and sharpens his will with the creative assurance that the world is not something to be merely seen or known through concepts, but something to be made and remade by continuous action." All these mean that the self should not be doomed to rest satisfied in the realm of ideas and verbalizations. Its true character, if this is to be realized, must be expressed in a creative activity not only to reform and reformulate social relations but also, to reshape and improve the external world.

To Iqbal, like all Muslim philosophers, philosophy is intimately related to religion and rational theology. Consequently, his dynamic view of reality and his insistence that the universe is in a continuous process of change and movement is pegged on Qur'anic verses such as:

He (Allah) multiplieth in creation what He will.
Lo! Allah is able to do all things. (Qur'an 35:1)

Every day does some new work employs Him.
(Qur'an 55:29)

The above verses, and similar others, led Iqbal to assert that for man "there is a progressive formation of fresh ends, purposes, and ideal scales of values as the process of life grows and expands." Again, "Nature...must be understood as a living, ever-growing organism whose growth has no final external limits. Its only limit is internal, i.e., the immanent self which animates and sustains the whole." As the Qur'an says: "And verily unto thy Lord is the limit," (Qur'an 100:14)."

Iqbal revolted against the idea of a static universe based on a preconceived plan. He wrote: "As I have already pointed out, the universe, according to the Qur'an, is liable to increase. It is a growing universe and not an already completed product which left the hands of its Maker ages ago, and is now lying stretched in

space as a dead mass of matter to which time does nothing..." As it were, to Iqbal, life and nature represent a continuous revelation of the possibilities which their Maker continues to offer. Moreover, the understanding and knowledge of life and nature is a form of knowing God's behavior. To quote:

The knowledge of nature is the knowledge of God's behavior. In our observation of nature, we are virtually seeking in intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship.

This brings us to the role of man in creation. To Iqbal, man has not only been given the power to help transform nature but actually God's instrument for this. Man is an agency for change. The Qur'anic support used by Iqbal is as follows:

Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they first change that which is in their hearts. (Qur'an 13:11)

Iqbal conceives of man as a creator; but in a relative and finite sense. He wrote: "The true Creator undoubtedly is Allah, the Exalted, but there can be other creators too, as is clear from the Qur'an verse containing the phrase [that Allah is] 'the best of the creators.'" As it were, Man is a "co-worker" in Creation with the proviso that his life and power ultimately derives from God. An example of the creative link between God and man is expressed in his following verses:

You created the night – I lit the lamp
You created clay – I molded the cup.
You made the wilderness, mountains and forests
I cultivated flower-beds, parks and gardens.
I made a mirror from rock
And from poison I exacted a sweet beverage.

To Iqbal, what really brings about an encounter between God and Man is when the intellectual aspect of the ego is well-developed since "...thought demolishes the walls of its finitude and enjoys a potential infinitude." As it were, thought serves as a link between what is finite and infinite. But Iqbal goes beyond regarding the intellect as a mere process of reasoning. He speaks of the intuition that emerges from a well-developed ego. Intuition, to him, is that refined aspect of the intellect that leads man to conceive of things beyond experience or the results of the reasoning process. It is this faculty that brings the finite ego of man to have a

spiritual contact with the Ultimate Ego or God, who is the Eternal, the Intransient, and the basis for all existence with its manifold transformations. It is a power that shapes man's conduct and attitude towards his creative impulses to bring about good in society and nature—an action constituting a veritable prayer to the Creator of all things. The development of intuition, more than anything else, reflects the progress of the ego or man as an ascending spirit. This is what Iqbal felt was the message of the Qur'an when Allah said to mankind:

...you shall journey on from plane to plane. (Qur'an 84:19)

Instead of viewing the developed ego or self as merging into the Infinite, as some Sufis did, Iqbal viewed the finite ego as being embraced by the Infinite Ego without losing its individuality or personality. To know God is not to extinguish oneself into Him, but to strengthen the ego in its encounter with the Lord so as to best fulfill the covenant with Him. Here, Iqbal also thinks like a Sufi for that is what he really was. But he differed from other Sufis in that he believed that the imbuing of the Divine qualities was a continuing process.

In its practical implications, all that Iqbal was appealing about to Muslims and for that matter all men is that they should keep on, while encouraging others, to ask new questions or at least restate old questions in contemporary garb by exercising *ijtihad*,⁶ go deeper into the understanding of the human situation, exercise their freedom and responsibilities, gain new insights into the common problems of philosophy and science, unravel the mysteries of the universe, develop qualities associated with the Divine however finite this development may be, and, above all, trust in Allah.

⁶ *Ijtihad* refers to independent reasoning, whereby Islamic scholars (*ulama*) applied basic Islamic principles in their teachings/opinions/rulings, etc. So for Majul, Iqbal was essentially asking the Muslims of his time to "apply" Islamic teachings to contemporary times/ideas.

5

The Concept of *Amanah* in Islam

Cesar Adib Majul



Introduction

Nefartari A. Arsad. Ph.D.¹

This short article was intended to be an addendum to a much longer piece, “The Divine-Human Encounter in Islam,” which was written for a presentation to the Muslim Educational and Cultural Association of Cornell University in 1974. The *amanah* article is presented here as an independent paper due to the core importance of *amanah* in Islamic thought. *Amanah*, literally meaning “trust,” defines man’s existence. Essentially, it signifies that humanity is God’s creation, with life and faculties temporarily bestowed upon them. Secondly, it implies that humans, as His *khalifah* or steward on earth, are expected to act with utmost mindfulness of the Divine. Dr. Majul introduces the former as a crucial concept at the beginning of his paper and subsequently elaborates on concerns relating to the latter.

Majul asserts several points regarding the *amanah* that God has conferred upon mankind. Foremost is his appreciation of its “tremendous political, economic, and social implications.” The statement hints at the fact that the office of *khilafah* or stewardship encompasses both the private and public domain of man’s affairs. Stewardship is a role of leadership. It is a role of action and accountability, applicable to both man and woman in all aspects of their lives. One therefore need not be a leader in the public arena, nor be constrained by gender or socio-economic conditions to work towards and effect good in society. However, one needs to be guided by Islam’s spiritual and moral compass to undertake this role correctly.

Amanah is certainly not limited to the political domain, as some people might believe. In contemporary times, this misconception may be attributed to the power assertions of groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other organizations in the past decade, which have pervaded popular consciousness. *Amanah* is also attributed to have the function of deterring “human arbitrariness.” In Islamic teachings, one may find that human arbitrariness stems from either forgetfulness, which is considered a human tendency, or from manifest disobedience

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of Divine precepts. This disobedience occurs when the whims, impulses, and desires of the ego take precedence over moral eminence. In any instance where man abuses the trust of stewardship, as pointed out by Dr. Majul, the Qur'an (33:72) labels him as a tyrant and a fool.

The irony lies in the fact that it was solely man who accepted the amanah when it was offered to the heavens and the earth. All others shied away from accepting that trust, fearing its weight. Amanah requires constant and consistent attachment to God. It requires an interminable struggle to establish a high spiritual standard, a moral yardstick, and a nobility of being in one's internal and external environments. Man's fulfilment of the Divine Amanah greatly anticipates a dynamic, moral, and just society.

This short paper is particularly resonant with today's discourse on Islamic leadership and governance, where perceptions of khalifah are conflicting. The leadership modelled by the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate successors demonstrates great attention to fulfilling the Divine trust manifested in spiritual and moral primacy. As ibn Khaldun in his work, *Muqaddimah* (1967) writes,

To such a degree were these early Muslims concerned with improving their religion at the expense of their worldly affairs.

Islamic leadership connects strongly to servant leadership when examined from conventional leadership typologies. Leadership, in this context, represents a position of humility and servitude rather than one of dominance and privilege. Other scholars assert the intersection of Islamic leadership with transformational and transcendental leadership (al Sarhi et al. 2014), a hybrid of the servant-guardian (El Khaleh and Samier 2013) and authentic, ethical, servant, and transformational leadership to form "character-centered leadership" (Beekun 2012). The actions and rationales of Muslim leadership in contemporary times will always be scrutinized using these measures, with the expectation that amanah, the Divine trust, is fulfilled.

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The Concept of *Amanah* in Islam²

Cesar Adib Majul

Amanah³ (trust) is one of the most fundamental concepts in Islam. The *mu'min* (true believer) is trustworthy or faithful to the trust. Since Allah is the Living and the source of all life, a person does not own his life but holds it only in trust. Since Allah is the All-Knowing and the source of all knowledge, a person's intelligence as well as all of his intellectual accomplishments are to be held in trust. All property, whether legally registered as private or otherwise, belongs to Allah and is, therefore, to be held or utilized by men as a trust. Since Allah is the Owner of All Sovereignty, political power can only be exercised by man as a loan under trust. Indeed, the concept of Amanah has tremendous political, economic, and social implications. Knowing some of the Beautiful Names of Allah, which are, in effect, the names of His qualities, the Muslim can readily know what things ultimately belong to Allah, but which are allowed for man's use as a trust.

Clearly, in social life, the idea of Amanah serves as a primary safeguard against human arbitrariness while constituting a basis for the rights of persons on other persons and institutions. Its practice connotes the exercise of individual as well as group responsibility. Allah said in the Qur'an: "Lo' We offered the trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo' he hath proved a tyrant and a fool" (Qur'an 33:72).

² This was published earlier in Volume 11, Number 3, of the journal, *Asian Studies*, 1973, 11-12. The UP CIDS Islamic Studies Program gratefully acknowledges the permission granted by the Asian Center to republish this essay.

³ In the original essay, Dr. Majul did not include the *ta marbuta* in Arabic words. It has been included here for consistency of transliteration across the entire monograph.

This verse strongly suggests that when a person marries, raises a family, studies for a degree, practices a profession, owns property, exercises power of different forms, etc., he has entered into certain commitments. But man, in the exercise of any such trust, had often acted irresponsibly. His tyranny results when he uses his intelligence and power to take advantage of others for the satisfaction of purely personal, family, or dynastic interests; and his foolishness comes about when he believes that he knows everything or can do anything without the help of Allah. Such a tyrant or fool had broken or abused the trust. In effect, he had committed the sin of Pride and had forgotten Allah.

From the Islamic point of view, man is given access to the things of the earth and the skies to facilitate and make more effective his service to and worship of Allah. That this access must be governed by the principle of Amanah implies that man's actions must be done not for selfish interests or to harm others, but for the good of a greater whole. In the practical sphere, this greater whole can refer only to the ummah or Muslim community. What is meant here is that the life, strength, intelligence, skills, property, etc., of the Muslim must be geared to the wider and greater interests of the ummah. A serious study of *mithaq* (the Covenant) between Allah and the ummah as well as a function of the latter in this world, reveal that a purpose, among others, of the Islamic community is to serve as a witness to the other religious communities of how the amanah is to be made manifest and operative in social life. However, all this is not to deny the duties and responsibilities of the Muslim to the whole of mankind since, according to the Qur'an, there is also a Covenant between Allah and mankind, which was implicit when He said: "Am I not your Lord?" (Qur'an 7:172).



The Relevance of Cesar Adib Majul’s Writings in Modern Times

Nefertari A. Arsad¹

Cesar Adib Majul presents the Islamic worldview with a contemporary, academic voice, but nonetheless connects to an eclectic gathering, as evidenced by the different audiences he addressed: students, fellow academics, religious scholars, etc.

Majul’s iterations of fundamental Islamic concepts emphasize the holistic unity of the Islamic creed. Islam is never confined to mere articulations of the Divine; rather, its creed underpins and permeates all aspects of the Muslim’s life, drawing him closer to the Divine. Hence, the consistent declaration, “Islam is not just a religion; Islam is a way of life.” This is a certainty as far as Muslim communities are concerned. There is no separation of the spiritual from the material—a reality that is atypical in today’s secular, predominantly materialistic world. For Muslims, unity of existence is non-negotiable. This is a particularly critical consideration for the crafters of legislation, policies, and programs.

In the Philippines, Muslim assertions toward this unity manifest without fail in all the core principles of their community-generated institutions: the mosque, the traditional *madaris*² system, the organizations of *ulama* (religious scholars) and multiple sectors alike, even their healing traditions. The same applies to government-established programs and institutions for Muslims: the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) of the Department of Education (DepEd); the Policy and Standards

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² *Madaris* is the plural form of the Arabic, *madrasah* (school).

Guidelines of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for Bachelor of Arts in Islamic Studies; the Code of Muslim Personal Laws and the Shariah Court System; the Al Amanah Islamic Investment Bank; the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), Halal industry actors, and the Institute of Islamic Studies of the University of the Philippines.

Some of these institutions were crafted using conventional templates, with added features that aimed to assimilate elements which presumably rendered them Islamic. These initial government incursions into Muslim institution-building were received with apathy, distrust, and resistance in certain cases. The reasons vary: the lack of widespread information about these initiatives and their relevance to Muslim society; the complete absence of the need for such initiatives as they merely duplicated their (Muslims') own community institutions; concerns regarding the absence of genuine consultations with or considerations of, target stakeholders and constituencies; and perhaps the worst, a suspicion that the government had ulterior motives, particularly in its cooptation of Islamic institutions.

Succeeding implementation and continued engagements with Muslim representatives and publics have seen a gradual, nuanced reframing that reflected the Islamic worldview more authentically. These developments do not imply nor forecast blithe acceptance. Rather, they imply a positive yet vigilant participation in the interest of broad progress. Continuously open and interculturally proactive engagements, and most of all, the true obliteration of 'othering,' anticipate healthier relationships between State actors and diverse Muslim publics in the country.

Maikling Pagsalaysay sa Pagtipon ng mga Akda ni Cesar Adib Majul

Romila Diana M. Saguil¹

Isa pong malaking karangalan ang maging kasangkapan upang mailathala ang koleksyon ng mga artikulo ng isang indibidwal, lalo na kung ito ay may malaking kontribusyon sa paglinang ng kultura at sibilisasyon. Ang yumaong Dekano ng Institute of Islamic Studies na si Cesar Adib Majul ang isang halimbawa ng indibidwal na ito. Malaking pasasalamat po sa pamilya Majul na ipinagkatiwala sa aming lingkod ang napakaraming mga sinulat ni Cesar Adib mula noong mag-aaral siya sa Unibersidad ng Pilipinas hangang sa mamalagi siya sa Estados Unidos.

Nagsimula po ang aking interes sa pagkompila ng mga dokumentong ito noong kami ay nag-imbetiga sa aklatan ng Institute of Islamic Studies (IIS). Natagpuan ko ang mga lumang sinulat ni Dean na malapit nang masira. Dahil panahon na po ng mga kompyuter noon, naisipan kong unti-unting i-encode ang mga sinulat ni Dean upang mapreserba, at baka sakaling magamit hindi lamang ng mga mag-aaral ng IIS, kundi pati na rin ng mga mananaliksik mula sa ibang institusyon. Isa ito sa aming mga responsibilidad bilang libraryan.

Taong 1999 nang pinayagan ni Dean Majul ang University of the Philippines Press na muling i-limbag ang kaniyang aklat na *Muslims in the Philippines* (1973) at *Mabini and the Philippine Revolution* (1960). Mapalad din kaming nakapagpa-awtograp kay Dean sa pagkakataong ito. Hindi lang po ako ang nagkaroon ng pagkakataong makahingi ng mga karagdagang artikulo noong mga panahong iyon

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sapagkat lubha pong abala siya sa maikling panahon na pananatili niya sa UP hanggang sa nakabalik na nga siya sa Amerika.

Minsan, naitanong ko kay Prop. Wadja K. Esmula, ang tumatayong Dekano noon ng Institute of Islamic Studies, kung pwede ba akong makahingi ng mga akademikong artikulo ni Dean Majul. Agad naman niya pong binigay ang email address ni Dean Majul. Bago pa lamang ang internet noon at may kabagalan pa ang pag-e-email. Gayunpaman, sinubukan ko siyang sulatan. Humingi ako ng ilang artikulo tungkol sa mga kapatid nating Muslims at sa kasaysayan ng pag-lago ng Islam dito sa Pilipinas. Laking gulat ko po nang mag-reply si Dean Majul at ipinangakong sa aklatan ng IIS niya raw ipapadala ang kanyang “personal collection.” At ganoon nga po ang nangyari. Sunod-sunod na taon at kahon-kahon ng mga aklat, *news clippings*, at mga artikulo ang pinadala niya simula noong taong 2000.

Marami rin po siyang inihabilin: alagaan daw po ang kanyang koleksyon dahil sa pagbiyahe pa lamang, marami na ang nawala, ipa-kopya daw po ang mga ito at pag-ingatan ang mga orihinal na materyales, at dalawin ko pa raw po ang ilang aklatan upang makakuha pa ng mga karagdagang donasyon. Pinangako ko naman na tutuparin ko ang mga ihinabilin niya. Bukod dito, ginawa rin po naming na “For Room Use Only” ang akses sa kanyang “personal collection.” Pinagmalaki ko pa po sa kanya na may airconditioning na sa aklatan, kaya mapre-preserb ang mga ito.

Nanghinayang si Dean dahil hindi niya nabisita ang aklatan noong dumalaw siya sa UP. Hindi niya raw alam na may aklatan na ang IIS noon. Dito ko nalaman na ang ka-email ko po pala talaga ay si Binibining Christine, ang anak ni Dean Majul. Mahina na pala ang mga mata ni Dean noong mga panahong iyon. Si Bb. Christine pa nga po daw ang taga-type at taga-press ng “send” sa kompyuter.

Noong 2003, bumisita si Dr. Susan Boyle, isa sa mga malapit na kaibigan ni Dean Majul at faculty ng Georgetown University mula sa Estados Unidos. Isa si Dr. Boyle sa mga pinagkatiwalaan ni Dean Majul ng kanyang koleksyon. Siya po ang nagdala ng mga ito mula Estados Unidos. Mula rin sa kanyang sariling aklatan, nagpalitan kami ng iba pang mga artikulo kung kaya’t unti-unting nakompleto ang materyales ng IIS. Isa rin si Dr. Boyle sa naghikayat na likumin ang mga sinulat ni Dean Majul upang mas lumawak ang sirkulasyon at mga mambabasa nito. Napakahalagang pamana sa Muslim community kung ito ay maging isang katotohanan, sabi ko sa sarili ko.

Isa rin sa naging daan upang makarating ang ilan pang “personal collection” ni Dean Majul dito sa IIS si Ginoong Roderick G. Orlina. Si Rod, kung tawagin ko, ay mula sa New York at nagtapos ng Masters of Islamic Studies sa UP IIS. Isa siyang masigasig na donor ng aklatan. Kasama din po si Rod sa pagbuo nitong lathalaing ito.

Bukod dito, naghikayat si Ginang Florenda Mallari, isang retiradong laybraryan dito sa UP, upang tipunin ang mga sinulat ni Dean Majul. Nang makita niya kung gaano karami ang mga ito noong minsan siya'y napabisita sa aklatan, pinaalala niyang nararapat lamang na pangalagaan ang koleksyon upang mas malawak ang sirkulasyon nito.

Kasama ang mga student assistant at staff ng aklatan ng IIS, sinimulan naming magsaliksik kung saan pa matatagpuan ang mga sinulat ni Dean Majul. Gamit ang Wordstar (isa sa mga naunang *word processor*), inencode namin ang mga posibleng tagpuan at sinave ang mga files sa 5 ¼ size na disket noong 2004. Lubhang mahaba po kung mag-sulat si Dean kung kaya't kinailangan naming bumili ng kahonkahon na disket. Upang mapabilis ang pag-encode, sinubukan naming i-convert sa Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software ang na-scan na mga dokumento at nang sa gayun, ma-edit sa Wordstar. Masasabi kong dito na po ako natutong mag-scan at mag-crop ng mga imahen lalo na ng mga Arabic scripts. Dahil sa ebolusyon ng teknolohiya, naging magaan ang pagkolekta, komunikasyon at pagtala ng impormasyon. Salamat sa kompyuter at internet!

Bukod sa aking pamilya, kay Dan, David, Judith, Daniel at aking magulang na si Clemens, taos puso po akong nagpapasalamat sa kanilang suporta habang binubuo itong pagtipon.

Malaking pasasalamat din po sa marami pang tao na nag-ambag upang maisakatuparan ang proyektong ito, gaya ni Propesora Mila A. Reforma ng UP National College of Public Administration and Governance na tumulong sa pagpapatnugot ng manuskrito.

Gayundin, sa pagbibigay liwanag sa konsepto at inisyatibo nitong manuskrito, nagpapasalamat po tayo kay Dr. Nefertari A. Arsad, ang Project Leader ng UP CIDS-Islamic Studies Program Cesar Adib Majul Book Project, at sa mga team ng tagapangasiwa at rebyuwer na sina Dr. Carmen A. Abubakar, Atty. Mehol K. Sadain, Dr. Darwin Rasul, Prop. Darwin J. Absari at Roderick G. Orlina.

Dean Majul, para sa inyo po ito!

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