

Salaam

ISSN 0970-5384

Quarterly to Promote Understanding



PAPA FRANCESCO - WELCOME TO INDONESIA
POPE FRANCIS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SINGAPORE
INTERTHEOLOGY: SEEKING TO CONCEPTUALISE
INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS
MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE REQUIRES PATIENCE,
HUMILITY AND EXTENSIVE STUDY
THE JUDGEMENT IN ISLAM
THE SIGNS OF LOVE
CONCEPT OF PURITY ACCORDING TO SHARAFUDDIN MANERI
WISDOM IN 'THE HUNDRED LETTERS' OF SHARAFUDDIN MANERI

ISLAMIC STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Vol. 45

October 2024

No. 4

**“..... that they.....
may be one.....”**

INFORMATION

SALAAM is a Quarterly published by the Islamic Studies Association. Articles and Book Reviews meant for Publication should be emailed to victoredwinsj@gmail.com

All business communications must be addressed to : Victor Edwin SJ, Editor, SALAAM, Vidyajyoti, 23 Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi-110 054, INDIA, or email to : victoredwinsj@gmail.com

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

ONLY FOR INDIA

Annual Subscription (4 Issues) : Rs. 100.00

Life Subscription : Rs. 1500.00

Please do not send subscription by DD and Cheque.

Method of Payment

By transfer of money through Bank

Name: Islamic Studies Association

Bank: Canara Bank

Account Number: 0346101008770

IFSC CODE: CNRB0000346

SAVING ACCOUNT

By Money Order to

Victor Edwin SJ

Editor, Salaam

Vidyajyoti

23, Raj Niwas Marg,

Delhi-110 054

Views expressed in the articles are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or the Editorial Committee.

Design and Print: Bosco Society for Printing & Graphic Training, Okhla New Delhi- 25,
Email: boscopress@gmail.com

(For Private circulation only)

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ISSN 0970-5384

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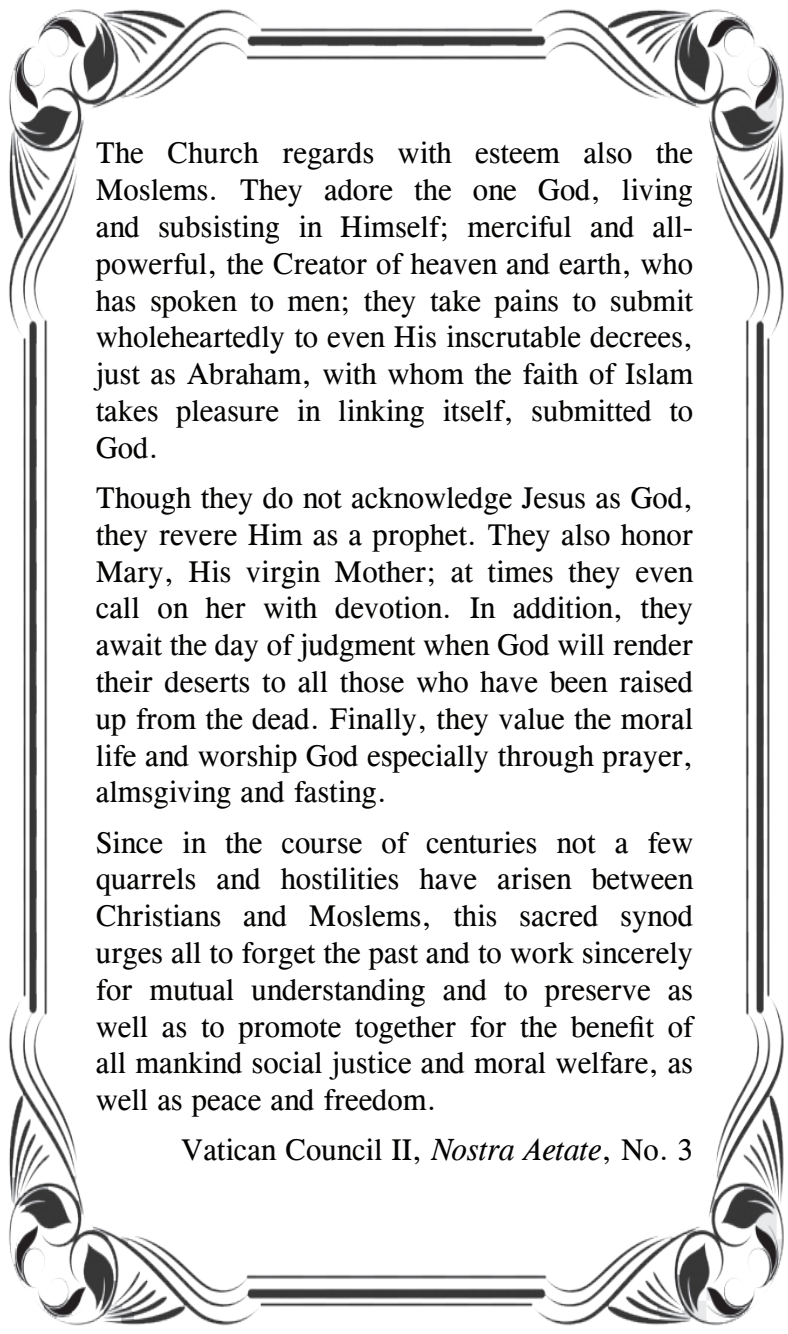
October 2024

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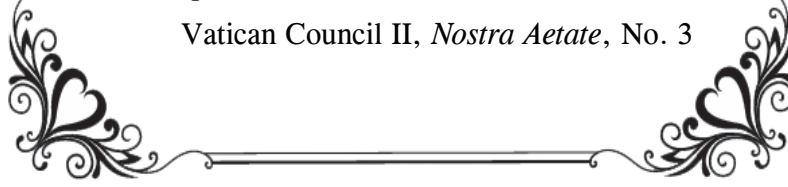


The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.

Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

Vatican Council II, *Nostra Aetate*, No. 3



Editorial

In his address during the Apostolic Journey to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Singapore in September 2024, Pope Francis underscored the importance of unity, interreligious dialogue, and social justice as essential principles guiding Indonesia's social and political fabric. Delivered in the grand hall of the Istana Negara Presidential Palace in Jakarta, the Pope's words reflect not only his appreciation for Indonesia's unique diversity but also a call for global solidarity in overcoming the challenges of extremism, injustice, and social inequalities.

At the heart of Pope Francis' speech lies an acknowledgement of Indonesia's rich cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. Indonesia, an archipelago made up of thousands of islands, has a motto that beautifully encapsulates this diversity: *Bhinneka tunggal ika* — "United in Diversity." The Pope praised this motto for reflecting the nation's ability to harmonize its vast differences into a cohesive whole, akin to a mosaic of individual tiles that collectively create a masterpiece. He recognized Indonesia's treasure in this unity, noting that the country's strength lies in the way it embraces diversity while upholding common values that benefit the entire population.

This unity is not just a matter of policy but a lived experience that permeates Indonesian society. Pope Francis emphasized that achieving true harmony requires considering different perspectives in the pursuit of a shared history and common goals. He urged leaders and citizens alike to actively engage in the "craftsmanship" of politics, where balance and respect for human rights, sustainable development, and peace are central. His reference to politics as "the highest form of charity" highlights his belief that leadership, when oriented towards the good of all, becomes an act of love and service to humanity.

One of the central themes of Pope Francis' address was the vital role of interreligious dialogue in fostering peace and countering extremism. Indonesia, with its significant Muslim-majority population, has long been a model of religious tolerance and pluralism. The Pope acknowledged the challenges posed by extremism and intolerance in various parts of the world, where people sometimes distort religion and use it as a tool to justify violence. In contrast, he emphasized the importance of dialogue, mutual respect, and cooperation between different faith communities, urging them to work together to build a peaceful and just society.

Pope Francis also touched on a recurring theme in his papacy — the need for the Catholic Church to serve the common good without engaging in proselytism. He reiterated that the Church's mission is to promote social justice and equity, working hand in hand with public institutions and civil society to ensure a more balanced and inclusive distribution of resources. In Indonesia, as elsewhere, the Pope's vision is one of fraternity and compassion, where faith drives individuals to serve the broader community and to uplift the marginalized.

Reflecting on Indonesia's history, Pope Francis referenced the country's 1945 Constitution, which repeatedly invokes Almighty God and emphasizes social justice as a foundational principle. These elements, according to the Pope, align perfectly with the motto of his visit: "Faith, Fraternity, Compassion." By drawing on the nation's deep spiritual roots and commitment to justice, Pope Francis encouraged Indonesians to continue fostering a society that respects diversity while seeking the common good.

The Pope's address also highlighted broader global issues that resonate beyond Indonesia. He expressed concern about the rise of violent conflicts driven by a lack of mutual respect and the imposition of narrow interests at the expense of peace and fraternity. The persistence of social inequalities, particularly the marginalization of large portions of the global population who lack the means for a dignified life, deeply troubled him. These imbalances, he warned,

fuel unrest and exacerbate social tensions. His call for social justice serves as a reminder that true peace rests on the foundation of justice and equitable opportunities for all.

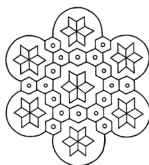
In a striking observation, Pope Francis critiqued modern societal trends that prioritize materialism over the sanctity of family life. He expressed concern about a culture that, in some contexts, values pets over children, a sentiment he finds troubling in light of the growing disregard for human life and dignity. In contrast, he lauded Indonesia's large families, viewing them as a testament to the country's respect for life and its role in shaping the future.

Drawing his address to a close, Pope Francis invoked the words of Saint John Paul II, who during his visit to Indonesia in 1989 similarly praised the nation for its balanced and wise approach to governance. Saint John Paul II's message of unity, diversity, and respect for human and political rights remains as relevant today as it was over three decades ago. Pope Francis echoed this sentiment, reaffirming the importance of building a just and peaceful society based on tolerance, respect, and solidarity.

In conclusion, Pope Francis' address in Indonesia serves as a powerful reminder of the universal values of fraternity, justice, and peace. His words encourage not only Indonesians but all people to embrace diversity, engage in dialogue, and work together to build a more equitable and harmonious world. As he invoked God's blessing upon the people of Indonesia, his message resonated far beyond the walls of the Istana Negara, offering hope and inspiration for a future where faith, compassion, and unity prevail.

Midhun J Francis SJ

Guest editor



VIVA IL PAPA, PAPA FRANCESCO - WELCOME TO INDONESIA: A GLIMPSE

By Sr. Gerardette Philips, rscj

There are several details about Pope Francis' visit to Indonesia; the preparation, the number of places he visited, the people who were in the list to meet him. All of this is covered by social media. You may know this already, so I will not repeat. However, I do want to share with you without claiming to be exhaustive about his visit and some sentiments of the Indonesian people. This may not be a part or perhaps will never be part of world news.

Did the Pope visit Indonesia only for the Catholics?

The Holy Father's choices surprised our sisters and brothers of different faiths. A Muslim is amazed by the simplicity of the Holy Father and shares,

“While in Indonesia, Pope Francis did not want to ride a Mercedes car and did not want to stay in a five-star hotel that had been prepared in advance. He just wanted to ride in a car that is used by the people of Indonesia every day. He stayed in the Nunciature and flew to Indonesia on a commercial plane, not in first class.

I neither know the Bible nor Catholicism but the choices of Pope Francis and his way with people taught me the true meaning of being a Catholic who follows Jesus' teachings in the Bible. Thank you, your Holiness, you have taken me beyond my narrow reasoning and showed me how to be humble and tolerant.

Pope Francis came for all the people in Indonesia, Catholic and Muslim alike!”

There was a special meeting in the Istiqlal Mosque (designed by a Christian architect - Friedrich Silaban) – the largest in South East

Asia. In front of the Mosque is the Cathedral. In recent years, an underground tunnel '*Silaturahmi*'(connection/encounter of love) was built to connect both these places of worship. Pope Francis believed that the tunnel is not merely a formality but a pathway of friendship and togetherness. It is a space created for meetings where together we share spiritual experiences and where we can touch life. The Pope was convinced that Indonesia can offer a model of interfaith relations to the world.

This meeting, while covered by social media, is worth mentioning. When the group of invitees to the mosque came out to take a picture, Pope Francis and the main Imam of the Mosque Nasaruddin Umar were at the center. The connection of the Mosque and the Cathedral with the underground tunnel went beyond places of worship to people and became even more real when Imam Umar kissed the head of the Holy Father and in return the Holy Father kissed his hand. The communication and connection between leaders of the two major religions of the world that crossed the barriers of language, religion, nation, culture and generation has touched the hearts of many.

It is, however, important to take a moment to understand the meaning of this gesture. The head is a very significant part of the body. It is where the spirit resides. It is considered as sacred and the purest part of the body in Indonesian culture. It is touched only out of love. The Imam chose to kiss the head of the Pope. The hands of a priest at his ordination are anointed as a sign of the Holy Spirit who confers the sacred power to sanctify, to shepherd, and to teach. It reflects the hands of Jesus himself in administering the sacraments to his people. The Pope chose to kiss the hand of the Imam. Both the Imam and the Pope touched what is sacred to each of them thus entering a dialogue that sent waves of peace to all the world. True dialogue can only take place when we dare to touch what is sacred! And it is from this sacred space that the Istiqlal Declaration of "Strengthening Religious Harmony for Humanity" was signed by Pope Francis and Imam Nasaruddin Omar.

Was the Pope's visit only for a privileged few?

Travelling through the streets of Jakarta, His Holiness gestured to people mainly women and children to bless them. He looked out for the faces of those who were returning from work and asked to go to them to smile, to bless and to give them a gift. Pope Francis, as we know does not remain confined to 'planned meetings' but gives way to his spontaneity or even more apt, he is in tune with the Holy Spirit and acts accordingly. He stopped the car to meet a pregnant woman, asked her if this was her first child, his eyes lit up when the woman replied, "this will be my second child", he asked her what the name will be, then blessed her and gave her a rosary for her baby. On his way from one place to the other, Pope Francis had his car slow down or asked his assistant Daniele Cherubini who helped him in his wheelchair to stop for him to welcome children and kiss them. He commented that Indonesia can be the example for countries where homes are filled with objects, dogs and cats and emptied of children. Every single person who met him was left in smiles and tears. Pope Francis touched their hearts!

Gotong Royong

Viva il Papa, Papa Francesco - Welcome to Indonesia resonated in every corner of the country and heard aloud in the country's capital Jakarta with the wave of the Indonesia flag in every hand!

The people of Indonesia who believe in '*gotong royong*' carrying something through together shoulder to shoulder lived this to the fullest in these special days of this holy visit. People from all walks of life came together to make this visit happen in a safe and secure atmosphere. There was a pride among the people that Pope Francis, a holy man, was coming to 'our country' for everyone. The RSCJ community played a small part in this visit. Our sisters attended the prayer service in the Cathedral. They came with their parishes and distributed communion at the liturgy celebrated for about 90,000 Catholics that came from all over the country.

The three days of Pope Francis' visit of Faith, Fraternity and Compassion was followed by the people in person and online. This has left its mark as the people reminisce with tears of gratitude the Pontiff's visit that was for ALL irrespective of caste, creed, tribe or race. This visit is a significant contribution to the Nation as she gets ready for her new President.

"No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what in this Message I wish to say to believers and unbelievers alike, to all men and women of good will who are concerned for the good of the human family and for its future.

"No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what I wish to say to those responsible for the future of the human community, entreating them to be guided in their weighty and difficult decisions by the light of man's true good, always with a view to the common good.

"No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy."

John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace,
January 1, 2002

POPE FRANCIS AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS IN SINGAPORE

By Roberto Catalano

Pope Francis celebrated the concluding act of the longest journey of his papacy with young people in Singapore. It was a trip very rich in content and experiences that took Bergoglio to the country with the highest number of Muslims in the world (Indonesia), to a corner of the Asian world (Timor Leste) where, (the exception on the Asian continent apart from the Philippines) Christians are in the vast majority. However, the long pilgrimage also touched on Papua New Guinea, a land of mission and of new expansion for faith in Christ. It ended in Singapore, the capital of world finance, trade and investments and an icon of the processes of globalization and technology that for many - even in the Western world - are futuristic. In his official and even the often-improvised addresses to people, Pope Francis touched on various issues: relations with Islam, social justice, forgiveness, problems concerning the family, and care for the poor and marginalized. Yet, apart from his speeches, also his acting was of fundamental importance: for instance, he made a new pact of human-religious alliance with the imam of Jakarta, after passing through the tunnel connecting the great mosque with the Catholic cathedral. Moreover, he was touched by the enthusiastic faith of crowds in stadiums and esplanades.

However, the conclusion was reserved, as is often the case, for young people. Yet, this time with a difference. In ultra-modern and secularized Singapore, where Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity coexist, he dialogued with young people about religion and religious harmony. A true dialogue, inside a Christian college, but in the presence not only of the local cardinal and other religious authorities, but also the Minister of Culture and Youth. An important presence to emphasize that the dialogue project is an investment that the government has been committed to for decades. In fact, the history of interreligious dialogue in Singapore dates back to colonial times. One has to go back to the late 1940s

and it is worth recalling some of the steps whose fruits were seen in these days.

On 15 January 1949, still amid the colonial era, Syed Ibrahim bin Omar Alsagoff, a well-known member of the local Muslim community, invited various personalities from the religious world of Singapore to celebrate the presence in the city of Maulana Mohamed Abdul Aleem Siddiqi. Muhammad Abdul Aleem Siddiqi Al-Qaderi Meeruti (3 April 1892 – 22 August 1954) also known as *Muballigh-e-Islam* was an Islamic scholar, spiritual master, author and preacher. He belonged to the *Barelyi Movement* of Sunni Islam. He was a student of Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi. Later, he became the leader of the *All Malaya Muslim Missionary Society, Singapore* (now known as *Jamiyah Singapore*). He is remembered as a great preacher of Islam and as a scholar of comparative religion. This Maulana was a great religious leader and spiritual teacher born in Meerut, India. He was a well-known personality who travelled the world for some 40 years to spread his ideas on the Muslim religion. It was he who suggested to those present - some thirty of them - to study how to achieve the collaboration and unity of purpose that the various leaders had expressed during the evening. Not even a month later, a second meeting was convened that would mark a historic step. On 4 February, in fact, the various religious leaders met a third time at the residence of Syed Ibrahim bin Omar Alsagoff, in the presence of the British High Commissioner, the highest colonial authority, to establish the *Interreligious Organization of Singapore*. Its purpose was to foster a true friendship between the leaders of the various religions so that they could work together for the benefit of peace and the happiness of humankind. The presidency changes every year, ensuring that each religion is represented in turn.

These decades of work by the interfaith organization, and many other initiatives that have sprung up over time, explain what was seen on stage at the Catholic Junior college in Singapore. A Hindu young man, a Sikh girl and a Catholic girl recounted their experiences of dialogue. These were not improvisations. It was a sharing of experience in encountering other religions and courage

in facing the inevitable challenges of dialogue: discouragement, the difficulty of stepping out of one's comfort zone, the advantages but also the dangers that come from technological phenomena such as artificial intelligence. Three articulate speeches, clearly based on years of experience. In front of this commitment, Pope Francis left the papers he had prepared and established an impromptu dialogue, commenting later, on the return flight, on how impressed he was by these young people. It was a wide-ranging dialogue. It touched on some aspects that often return in his magisterium: the need for courage, the path of creativity, the ability to dialogue with everyone to create paths of sharing.

One of the things that has impressed me most about the young people here is your capacity for interfaith dialogue. This is very important because if you start arguing, "My religion is more important than yours...", or "Mine is the true one, yours is not true....," where does this lead? Somebody answer. [A young person answers, "Destruction".] That is correct.¹

Yet, he also came to affirm theological contents that, if they had already been hinted at, emerged in Singapore with crystal clarity. He, for example, compared religions to tongues that all ascend, albeit different, towards God. Above all, he made it clear that God is the same God for all, affirming this divine oneness with strength and respect for diversity. He emphasized, however, the absurdity of thinking that the God of some is better than the God of others. God is one. We are all his sons and daughters.

All religions are paths to God. I will use an analogy; they are like different languages that express the divine. Yet, God is for everyone, and therefore, we are all God's children. "But my God is more important than yours!". Is this true? There is only one God, and religions are like languages, paths to reach God.²

¹ Pope Francis, *Dialogue with Young People of Different Religions*, Catholic Junior College, Singapore, 13.09.2024.

² Ibidem.

Moreover, at one point he asked for a moment of recollection so that all could pray in the silence of their hearts to the one God. A fundamental lesson in the face of what only a few decades ago would have raised - and perhaps for some it still does today - doubts of syncretism. A true lesson of the Petrine Magisterium in line with that 'outgoing Church' that Bergoglio has been preaching since he ascended the Petrine throne. An outgoing Church capable of meeting everyone because all are equally daughters and sons of the same Father.

However, a meeting like the one last Friday cannot be improvised. It was, without a doubt, a moment in a long ecclesial journey. Yet, not only. The chair of this teaching was represented not so much by St Peter's Basilica or the Sacred Palaces in the Vatican, but by a world where for decades religions have been trying to harmonize, albeit in their differences, and coexist for peace and social good. The Catholic Church has had and continues to have a fundamental role in the enterprise of dialogue between believers of different traditions. However, we cannot underestimate what others do. The young people of Singapore have shown us this, thanks also to their fathers and grandfathers who were already capable decades before the Council of making courageous choices. Yet, Pope Francis concluded with a meaningful encouragement, which is addressed to all those who have taken the risk of dialogue as a pathway in their lives.

I want to thank you and repeat what Raaj told us: to do everything we can in order to maintain a courageous attitude and promote a space where young people can go and dialogue. This is because your dialogue is one that creates a path, and that leads the way forward. If you dialogue as young people, you will also dialogue as adults; you will dialogue as citizens, and as politicians.³

³ Ibidem.

INTERTHEOLOGY: SEEKING TO CONCEPTUALISE INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS

By Prof. Tobias Specker SJ

Excerpts from a conversation on Intertheology between **Prof. Tobias Specker SJ**, 'Professor for Christianity in the face of Islam' and **Dr Joseph Victor Edwin SJ** on the sidelines of the Jesuits Among Muslims Meeting in Berlin, July 2024.

Edwin: In Germany, although the significance of churches has declined, religion continues to be an influential factor. Those who align with a specific religion view it as a private matter. How has this perspective impacted the evolution of interreligious dialogue?

Specker: The secularisation of European societies manifests itself in various dimensions. It is closely linked with the pluralisation of religions, the diminishing influence of Christian churches, and particularly in the eastern regions of Germany, a notable increase in the number of people who do not affiliate with any religion. Additionally, secularisation impacts religious practices themselves: individual choice has gained prominence, with personal life increasingly becoming the central point of reference. Consequently, affiliations with religious communities are becoming more flexible and less automatic.

It is crucial to understand that this phenomenon affects all religions including Islam. Among Muslim believers, a significant secularisation is also underway. On the one hand, this can lead to greater openness towards other religions; often coupled with a desire for an authentic and profound spiritual experience. Thus, more and more Muslims (and Christians) feel the need for a closer integration of religion with their personal lives. On the other hand, religious plurality and secularisation can also foster exclusive identities that seek to distance themselves from other religious believers and

society at large. In such cases, visible markers of belonging, such as clothing, language, and group rituals, assume a major role. The traditional, inwardly-oriented forms of religion (such as personal prayer or reading the Qur'an) lose importance. Islamic theologian Mouhanad Khorchide refers to this as „shell identities,“ where the rigid outer form of religion makes up the religion, but the spiritual core becomes hollow.

This trend presents a challenge for interreligious dialogue, as traditional institutions are becoming less and less a point of contact for people, and Christian communities often find themselves preoccupied with other concerns. A significant consequence of this might be the need to strengthen structures for dialogue on a spiritual level and this could be done by creating spaces where individuals can share personal spiritual experiences. This brings us to the second point.

Edwin: According to a report, 52% of the population in Germany view Islam as a threat to European culture and way of life. How can Christians and Muslims who embrace diversity address this perception?

Specker: In addressing the fear of Islam, we must first consider what the German sociologist Aladin El-Mafaalani describes as the "integration paradox": the more immigrants of the second or third generation integrate and become part of German society, the more conflicts arise. This occurs because the younger generation, having grown up in Germany, naturally have higher expectations of the country and, in some ways, are less inclined to conform. To some extent, the increase in conflicts is thus a normal phenomenon. However, the global political climate, experiences of discrimination, and the influence of foreign states on Islamic communities have also contributed to a situation where the younger generation of Muslims feels less at home in Germany than their parents did. This is a matter of concern. In confronting the fear of Islam, the roles of Christian and Islamic institutions are distinct. On the Christian side, it is important to differentiate: which forms of Islam genuinely pose

a threat to society, and which social problems are due to religious traditions and which to social causes? It is frustrating that even after a long history of Islamic communities in Germany, Islam is still conflated with migration. On the Islamic side, a self-critical examination of one's tradition is beneficial, involving a critical analysis of the relationship between religion and power and a firm stand against tendencies towards segregation.

On a practical level, I remain convinced that personal encounters are the most effective way to dispel fears. At Sankt Georgen, we have organised several trips involving mixed groups of our students along with an Islamic group. Not only did the jointly prepared presentations foster a deep encounter, but so did sharing daily life. The participants were assigned rooms such that there was always a mix of Muslim and Christian participants. As an example, I would like to quote a Muslim female participant: "One moment I will never forget is when my friend Klarissa woke me up for morning prayers in Andalusia. At that moment, I took it for granted that my friend would wake me up, so I quickly went to the bathroom, performed the ritual ablution, and then prayed. In retrospect, I realised that it was my *Christian* friend who woke me up to pray, not a Muslim one. This thought warmed my heart, and I realised how natural it can be to adapt to the everyday rituals of our friends."

Edwin: In Frankfurt at Sankt Georgen, you hold the chair of, Christianity in the face of Islam', and your centre is involved in a project called 'Intertheology'. Could you explain what, Intertheology is and how it's being developed in partnership with Muslim scholars?

Specker: Intertheology refers to a research project developed collaboratively by Jewish, Islamic, and Christian theologians in Berlin, Potsdam, Hamburg, and Sankt Georgen. Intertheology aims to re-examine the history of Christian-Islamic relations as a history of transitions and overlaps. Historical studies reveal numerous instances of interdependence and cooperation. Much research has been conducted in this area, yet there has been little systematic

exploration of what this means conceptually and - as we are narrative and poetic beings - what imagery can capture these relationships. The images that depict segregation have dominated for thousands of years and are deeply ingrained: Muslims as harbingers of the Antichrist, idol worshippers, heretics; Christians as falsifiers of the Scriptures, crusaders. However, the alternative path remains largely unexplored: What biblical, Qur'anic, or traditionally rooted images adequately reflect the reality of interdependence?

In the Intertheology project, several levels must always be examined. Specific case studies illustrate examples of interdependence to show how the religious "other" is always present when considering and formulating one's self-understanding. These studies become systematically significant when these entanglements are attributed to theological meaning. To do this, we need to first look into the specific areas where these interconnections manifest in distinctive ways. For example, the role of music in interreligious prayers, shared religious spaces, or interfaith marriages. Above all, Intertheology seeks to systematically understand how and in what terms these interrelations have been and can be conceptualised.

Beyond academic research, the Intertheology project also has a significant social mission. It emphasises that the central question for successful coexistence is not about similarities and differences. Common understanding often holds that the more similarities exist, the better the understanding. While recognising similarities can indeed be the first step to enabling an encounter, similarities do not guarantee peaceful coexistence in the long term—consider the conflicts between siblings. Differences, too, are not necessarily conflictual; they can be enriching. In this context, the idea of Intertheology is that, it is not similarities and differences that are at odds, but rather isolation (segregation) and relationship that distinguish unsuccessful from successful encounters. The central question is that of segregation versus relationship. Segregation views Christianity and Islam as entirely separate systems. In practice, this means that lived overlaps must be kept apart—think of joint

celebrations, shared spaces, practical and intellectual cooperation, or even interfaith marriages. In contrast, the logic of relationships recognises and considers connections as constitutive: the self is realised in the encounter with the other. Thus, the Intertheology project is more than just research; it is a foundation for dialogue.

Edwin: You have developed teaching modules for the bachelor's program in theology titled: "Church Practice in Secular Society". Additionally, you also oversee a certificate program on "Christian-Muslim Dialogue". How do these programs play a pivotal role in addressing ecological concerns at the global and local levels and fostering peaceful relationships within Germany's diverse religious and cultural communities?

Specker: Concerning ecology, it is noteworthy that humanity lacks neither information nor concrete action plans in response to the dramatic situation. Despite our knowledge of what needs to be done, there are great difficulties in transforming our behaviour. Therefore, solving ecological problems requires more than technical advancements; it demands a profound shift in thinking. Pope Francis has provided significant impetus in this regard, which also contributes to a deeper understanding of interreligious dialogue. Francis broadens and transforms the dialogical perspective of encounter into a perspective of interconnectivity. Both encyclicals, *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*, present a vision of humanity that places the "social meaning of existence, [the] fraternal dimension of spirituality" (§ 86) at its core. Contrary to modern individualism, the encyclicals emphasise that human beings live fundamentally in relationships and that social existence is interconnected. According to Francis, human beings are fundamentally related to one another in their entire bodily existence. Our interdependence is not a weakness but rather the great grace of human life. While *Fratelli Tutti* interprets this interconnectedness in terms of social existence, *Laudato Si* extends the view to include interconnectedness with non-human life. Together, these dimensions can be captured by the term "interconnectivity," which *Laudato Si* has introduced into the debate.

In the education of young theologians, we strive to show that understanding God as Creator is a significant theme in both Islam and Christianity—that these religions are intertwined within the worldview of this world as Creation. For this reason, a "Green Islam" movement has already emerged in Germany, focusing on ecology as its central theme, and we aim to raise awareness among our students about this issue.

Edwin: In your estimation, how does the SJ confront the challenges of Christian-Muslim relations on a global scale?

Specker: In my view, the global networking among Jesuits involved in Christian-Islamic dialogue is already quite strong, although there is always more to learn from each other. However, it is important to prepare Jesuits for dialogue within our provinces. If we Jesuits wish for any topic, be it interreligious dialogue, ecology, or commitment to refugees, to be taken seriously and discussed in our provinces, two things are essential.

First, there must be at least one place where the issue is practised exemplarily. In this context, it means a place where Jesuits share life with Muslims. Secondly, there must also be a space for reflecting on the topic. This means that we still need Jesuits who study Islamic studies or Islamic theology and who engage with the religion and culture of Islam with empathy and critical insight. Pope Francis summarised the aim of this endeavour when he said, "The future lies in a respectful coexistence of differences, not in alignment with a theoretically neutral unity of thought."

MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE REQUIRES PATIENCE, HUMILITY AND EXTENSIVE STUDY

By Prof. Dr. Fr. Wasim Salman

The Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI) is committed to fostering interreligious dialogue with Islam through high-quality education and research programs across all levels of society. Pope Francis has emphasized the Institute's significance within the academic institutions of the Holy See, expressing the need for it to gain greater recognition. During a conversation, **Prof. Dr. Fr. Wasim Salman**, the new President of the Institute, discusses the Institute's mission, with Joseph Victor Edwin SJ, his preparation for engaging in dialogue with Muslims, and the current state of dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the world today.

1. Congratulations on being appointed President of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Rome. Tell us about the Institute and its mission in the wider world today.

I am deeply honoured to have been chosen as the president of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, also known as PISAI. This institute plays a crucial role in fostering dialogue between Muslims and Christians. It is dedicated to promoting interreligious dialogue with Islam at all levels of society through top-quality education and research programs. PISAI offers a comprehensive curriculum including Licentiate and Doctorate programs in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Pope Francis encapsulated its mission in his message commemorating the 50th anniversary of PISAI in Rome on January 24, 2015:

The 50 years of PISAI in Rome — after its birth and first steps in Tunisia, thanks to the great work of the Missionaries of Africa — show how much the Universal Church, in the climate of Post-Conciliar renewal, has understood the impending need for an institute dedicated explicitly to research and the formation of those who promote dialogue with Muslims. Perhaps there has

never been a greater need, since the most effective antidote to violence is teaching the discovery and acceptance of difference as richness and fruitfulness. [...] This task is not simple, but is born and grows out of a strong sense of responsibility. Muslim-Christian dialogue requires, in a particular way, patience and humility along with extensive study, because approximation and improvisation can be counterproductive, or can even cause discomfort and embarrassment. A lasting and continuous commitment is needed in order not to be caught unprepared in various situations and in different contexts. For this reason, there is need for a specific preparation, not limited by sociological analysis, but having the characteristics of a journey among members of religions who, although in different ways, refer to the spiritual paternity of Abraham. [...] This Institute is very precious among the academic institutions of the Holy See, and still needs to become better known. My desire is that it increasingly become a point of reference for the formation of Christians who work in the field of interreligious dialogue.

2. Tell us about your training for the ministry of Christian-Muslim Dialogue.

I spent my formative years in Damascus, Syria, where I immersed myself in the culture, education, and work alongside Muslim communities. My studies in dogmatic Theology at the Gregorian University instilled in me the importance of contextual theology for the Eastern Churches. Under the guidance of my Jesuit mentor, I delved into hermeneutics, realizing that interpreting tradition is fundamental in adapting faith to specific geographic contexts. Studying the works of Gadamer and Ricoeur provided me with the philosophical foundation to interpret faith through a hermeneutical lens. My encounter with the French theologian Claude Geffré was enlightening, inspiring me to integrate my theological expertise with my practical and theoretical knowledge of the Arab language and Islam. I became convinced that Christians in the Middle East need a new language to articulate their faith in Jesus Christ and the Trinity within an Arab context.

In 2011, the landscape of the Middle East changed, leading me to work with Muslim migrants in Germany during my summer service in the Archdiocese of Freiburg. Over three years (2012-2015), I dedicated myself to gaining a deeper understanding of Islam, studying the renowned Egyptian scholar, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. His life and writings showcased the tensions within the Muslim community and between Islam and other religious traditions. Abu Zayd's progressive views on Islam and his efforts to reform entrenched traditions for progress and peaceful coexistence led to his exile from Egypt to the Netherlands. Subsequently, I embarked on a new chapter as a Professor of contemporary Arab-Islamic thought at the Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Study. This role provided me with numerous opportunities to immerse myself in Muslim institutions and foster Muslim-Christian relations. The challenges we face in Europe, the Middle East, and the wider Mediterranean region are real, and the future of the region hinges on our ability to build new bridges between peoples and nations.

3. In the field of Christian-Muslim relations today, what do you find most encouraging, hopeful or promising?

Pope Francis' leadership has been very encouraging, marked by a welcoming attitude towards Islam. The Pope has made visits to several Arab countries, including Egypt, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Iraq, aiming to establish a new era of relations with Muslims and Islam. This significant world religion has a rich spiritual tradition. The friendship between the Pope and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyeb, gives us hope for a promising future of dialogue. Their initial meeting at Saint Martha's in the Vatican led to the creation of the Abu Dhabi 2019 document on *Human Fraternity*.

4. In the field of Christian-Muslim relations today, what do you find most difficult, challenging or depressing?

Christians and Muslims are urged to confront extremism and embrace an inclusive mindset that ensures religious freedom for all citizens. Radical religious doctrine rejects human values and

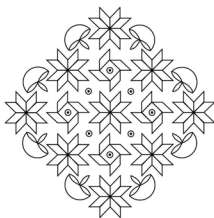
the principles of human fraternity. Moreover, the strategic and economic interests of global superpowers do not always align with our Christian values; they often choose war over peace and division over unity. It is our responsibility to build a world that embraces our common humanity with Muslims, despite the challenges.

5. On the subject of Christian-Muslim relations today, if you could make one brief comment, suggestion or appeal to Christians in general, what would that be?

Dialogue is not just an option, but an essential value based on the commandment of love. Christians must engage in dialogue and collaboration with Muslims, as it is the will of Jesus Christ that we love one another. Additionally, no one is excluded from God's plan for salvation: "God wants everyone to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

6. On the subject of Christian-Muslim relations today, if you could make one brief comment, suggestion or appeal to Muslims in general, what would that be?

I urge Muslims to read the document on *Human Fraternity*, which highlights the shared values and spirituality that unite Christianity and Islam. Both faiths share a rejection of hatred and war, as well as a common concern for the poor and the dignity of all human beings. The Pope and the Grand Imam emphasize that religion is not the cause of wars; instead, they argue that it is the ideological interpretation of religion that seeks to manipulate the sacred message and use it for political purposes. Islam and Christianity both teach respect for human life and the family, while rejecting war and violence.



THE JUDGEMENT IN ISLAM

By A. Francis Kumar

Introduction

In Islam, one of the fundamental beliefs that Muslims hold is the belief in the Day of Judgment. It is the day when the whole world will come to an end and Allah will judge people based on our deeds. The Day of Judgment is a critical concept in Islam, and it is something that Muslims should all be conscious of. In this article, we will take a comprehensive look at the Day of Judgment and what it means for Muslims.

The Day of Judgment in Islam refers to the end of the world when Allah will judge every person based on their deeds. It is the day when the world will come to an end, and everything will be destroyed. The Day of Judgment is also called the Last Day, the Day of Resurrection, and the Day of Reckoning.

The Short Life of Sharafuddin Maneri

Sharafuddin Maneri was a prominent Sufi saint and scholar in India in the 13th century. Born in Maner, near Patna in Bihar, he is renowned for his deep spiritual insights and contributions to Sufism. Maneri was a disciple of the Chishti order and is known for his writings and teachings that emphasize the inner dimensions of Islamic spirituality. His works focused on the purification of the soul and the inner path to God. Despite his relatively short life, his influence persists through his followers and his contributions to Sufi thought.

The Judgement in Islam according to Sharafuddin Maneri: A Comprehensive Understanding

In Sharafuddin Maneri's Hundred Letters, judgment (or "*Hukum*") is discussed in the context of Islamic mysticism and spiritual discernment. Maneri emphasizes that true judgment involves a deep understanding of the divine will and an inner sense of spiritual

reality. It is not merely about making decisions based on external appearances or logical reasoning, but rather about aligning one's actions and thoughts with divine guidance and deeper spiritual truths. Maneri highlights the importance of cultivating inner purity and self-awareness to attain true judgment. This kind of judgment is closely linked to one's spiritual state and relationship with the Divine, rather than merely intellectual or worldly considerations.

Letter 3: Reconciling offended parties

Sharafuddin Maneri emphasizes the importance of reconciling with offended parties as part of spiritual purification and ethical living. He highlights that reconciling with those one has wronged or who have wronged oneself is essential for spiritual growth. This reconciliation is a matter of social harmony and reflects one's sincerity and integrity before Allah. By reconciling with others, believers demonstrate their commitment to justice and mercy, reflecting divine attributes. This is important for personal spiritual development and for being justly judged by Allah on the Day of Judgment. Believers are encouraged to seek forgiveness from others and to forgive, as this aligns with the broader ethical teachings of Islam and prepares one for divine judgment.

Letter 43: Gratitude for the blessing of Islam

Sharafuddin Maneri's reflections on gratitude for the blessing of Islam, particularly to judgment, focus on recognising and appreciating the guidance and framework provided by Islam for moral and spiritual conduct. Maneri emphasises that Islam provides a clear path for understanding and preparing for divine judgment. Understanding that there will be a Day of Judgment is viewed as a blessing because it inspires a sense of accountability and responsibility. This awareness encourages believers to live righteously and to seek forgiveness for their shortcomings, aligning their actions with divine expectations. Following Islamic principles allows believers to purify their hearts, improve their conduct, and prepare effectively for judgment.

Letter 44: Hidden polytheism (*shirk*)

Sharafuddin Maneri's teachings on hidden polytheism (*shirk*) and judgment highlight the importance of maintaining pure monotheism and sincere devotion to Allah. In the context of judgment, hidden polytheism refers to subtle forms of associating partners with Allah that may not be immediately apparent but can affect one's spiritual state and accountability.

This form of hidden shirk involves forgetting Allah's consent, showing off, hypocrisy, or prioritizing the desires of the ego over obedience to Allah. When we give excessive importance to secondary causes or means (such as wealth, strength, or knowledge), believing they have independent power to influence outcomes, it becomes a hidden shirk. For instance, if someone uses their God-given abilities to oppress others, they commit this type of shirk.

Hidden polytheism is problematic because it can invalidate one's actions and intentions. On the Day of Judgment, such subtle forms of shirk can affect how one is judged. Maneri teaches that purifying oneself from hidden polytheism is crucial to being judged favourably by Allah.

Letter 65: Righteousness

Sharafuddin Maneri's teachings, righteousness (*taqwa*) to judgment encompasses a deep understanding of spiritual and moral integrity as it pertains to one's ultimate accountability before Allah. For Maneri, true righteousness involves more than mere external observance of religious duties. It requires a sincere commitment to moral and ethical principles, coupled with an inner purity of heart. This genuine righteousness is crucial for a favourable judgment by Allah. Righteousness in Maneri's view is also about adhering to the teachings of Islam and living according to the moral and ethical guidelines set by Allah. This approach ensures that one's actions and character are aligned with the expectations of divine judgment.

Letter 70: Companionship (*Suhbah*) within a group

In Sharafuddin Maneri's teachings, the concept of companionship (*suhbah*) within a group is closely linked to the ethical and spiritual standards required for favourable judgment by Allah.

Maneri emphasizes the importance of surrounding oneself with righteous and virtuous companions. Such companionship helps individuals adhere to Islamic principles, perform good deeds, and avoid sinful behaviour. Being in the company of those striving for spiritual and moral excellence contributes positively to one's own spiritual state and prepares one for judgment.

Maneri warns against associating with those who might lead one astray or encourage unethical behaviour. Such negative influences can undermine one's spiritual and moral integrity, affecting how Allah judges one.

Letter 89: Grief

Sharafuddin Maneri approaches the concept of grief in the context of spiritual judgment with profound insight. For Maneri, grief is not merely a reaction to loss but a significant aspect of spiritual development and self-awareness.

In Maneri's view, grief may also relate to one's sense of divine judgment. He believes that personal suffering and sorrow can be interpreted as a form of divine assessment, where the experiences of grief are opportunities for individuals to repent, purify their intentions, and seek spiritual growth. This judgment is not necessarily punitive but rather a mechanism for spiritual refinement.

The Judgement in Christianity

In Christianity, judgment generally refers to God's assessment or evaluation of individuals. When we see the final Judgment, this is the belief that at the end of time, God will judge all people based on their faith and actions. The righteous will be rewarded with eternal life, while those who have rejected God or lived sinfully will face separation from Him.

Judgment Day is the anticipated day when Christ will return to judge the living and the dead, as described in the New Testament, particularly in books like Revelation and Matthew. Christians also believe in a more personal, ongoing judgment where individuals are accountable to God for their actions and choices in daily life. This involves striving to live according to God's commandments and seeking forgiveness for sins. Overall, Christian judgment emphasises both accountability and the opportunity for redemption through faith and repentance.

The Bible describes a final judgment where Jesus Christ will judge all people, both the living and the dead. This event is often referred to as the Last Judgment or the Day of Judgment. Key passages include:

- *Revelation 20:12-13: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books."*
- *Matthew 25:31-46: Jesus speaks about separating the righteous from the unrighteous, likening it to a shepherd separating sheep from goats.*

Church Fathers

Church Fathers might have touched upon general themes of judgment and compared these with other religious traditions' views. Islamic views on judgment, particularly the concept of the Day of Judgment, are distinct and detailed within the *Quran* and *Hadith*.

Thomas Aquinas, a prominent Christian theologian and philosopher, discussed the concept of judgment extensively in his works, particularly in the *Summa Theologica*. Aquinas elaborates on the concept of the final judgment, also known as the Last Judgment, where Christ will return to judge all souls. This event will determine each individual's eternal destiny based on their earthly deeds and faith. He also discusses particular judgment, which occurs

immediately after an individual's death. This judgment determines the soul's immediate fate whether it will enter heaven, hell, or purgatory.

Aquinas emphasizes that judgment is based on God's justice and mercy. The ultimate Judgment will reflect divine justice, rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. He also highlights that God's judgment is perfect and infallible. He discusses how human free will plays a crucial role in Judgment. Individuals are accountable for their choices, which will be judged by God's perfect wisdom. Aquinas's views integrate theological and philosophical perspectives, focusing on divine justice and the moral implications of human actions.

Conclusion

On The Day of Judgment, every person who has ever lived will be judged based on their deeds. We must strive to do good deeds and avoid bad deeds, be mindful of our intentions, and seek forgiveness for our sins. By doing so, we can prepare for the Day of Judgment and hope to be rewarded with Jannah (Paradise) in the Hereafter.

According to Maneri, judgment in Islam involves the evaluation of one's actions and intentions in the context of divine justice and mercy. He believed that true judgment goes beyond mere legalistic or ritualistic aspects and encompasses a deeper understanding of ethical behaviour, inner purity, and sincerity before god. Maneri's teachings offer a comprehensive understanding of Judgment in Islam, blending traditional Islamic beliefs with Sufi mysticism. His works continue to inspire and guide those seeking spiritual enlightenment. There is an instruction to guide the people, the instruction applies to the moment when god Almighty opens the eyes of someone to his deeds so that he can judge the good as good and the evil as evil. Judgment in Islam is a comprehensive process involving divine assessment, accountability for one's actions, and the ultimate determination of one's eternal fate.

SHAYKH SHARAFUDDIN MANERI

SUMMARY OF THE 47TH LETTER:

THE SIGNS OF LOVE

By Fr. John Henry Tirkey Sdb

Life of Shaykh Sharafuddin Maneri

Shaykh Sharfuddin Maneri (1263-1381 CE), also known as Makhdum-ul-Mulk, was a prominent Sufi saint of the Chishti order in India. Born in Bihar, he became renowned for his deep spiritual wisdom and contributions to Islamic mysticism. His early education included Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and Sufi teachings.

Shaykh Sharfuddin spent much of his life in meditation, writing, and teaching, gaining a large following. His most famous work, “Maktubat-e-Sadi,” a collection of letters, offers spiritual guidance and insights into Sufi practices. He is credited with spreading Sufism in the eastern regions of India and is buried in Maner Sharif, Bihar, where his shrine remains a site of pilgrimage.

Introduction

Shaykh Sharafuddin Maneri’s 47th letter serves as a comprehensive guide for seekers on the spiritual path. It provides practical advice on how to cultivate inner purity, maintain focus on divine love, and navigate the challenges of spiritual growth with the help of a trusted mentor. The letter encapsulates the essence of Sufi teachings, emphasizing the transformative power of spiritual practices and unwavering devotion to God.

In the Letter 47, “The Signs of Love”, Shaykh Sharfuddin Maneri explores the characteristics and manifestations of divine love in the life of a seeker. He identifies various signs that indicate a person’s genuine love for God and explains the profound impact this love has on their behaviour and spiritual state.

Characteristics/Signs

Six basic signs indicate a seeker's genuine love for God:

1. **Selflessness and Sacrifice:** A true lover of God prioritizes divine will over personal desires. This selflessness often manifests in acts of sacrifice, where the seeker willingly gives up worldly comforts for the sake of God's pleasure. To attain a state of union with God.
2. **Constant Remembrance (Dhikr):** Love for God leads to constant remembrance and mindfulness of Him. The lover's heart is continuously engaged in the thought of God, even amidst daily activities.
3. **Joy in Worship:** Engaging in acts of worship brings immense joy and satisfaction to the lover. The seeker finds solace and happiness in prayer, fasting, and other devotional practices.
4. **Patience in Trials:** A lover of God remains patient and content during trials and tribulations, viewing them as opportunities to demonstrate steadfastness and faith.
5. **Detachment from Worldly Pleasures:** Worldly attachments can distract and mislead a seeker by practicing detachment, one can avoid these pitfalls and remain focused on the spiritual goal. The Divine love causes a natural detachment from worldly pleasures and material possessions. The seeker's focus shifts from temporal gains to spiritual fulfilment.
6. **Compassion and Kindness:** Love for God translates into love for His creation. The lover exhibits compassion, kindness, and empathy towards others, seeing them as reflections of the divine.

Related Letters and Themes

There are five letters which directly or indirectly speak and highlight the attributes of those who are close friends of God, describing all the encompassing force that drives the seeker's spiritual journey:

1. **Letter 12: The Signs of True Friendship with God.** (Page 32-35)

Summary: This letter discusses the attributes of those who are close friends of God (Auliya). It highlights qualities such as sincerity, humility, and devotion.

Explanation: True friendship with God entails a deep, abiding love that transforms the individual's character and actions. Friends of God exhibit qualities that align closely with the signs of divine love.

2. **Letter 29: The Nature of Divine Love.** (Page 89-93)

Summary: Shaykh Maneri elaborates on the nature and essence of divine love, describing it as an all-encompassing force that drives the seeker's spiritual journey.

Explanation: Divine love is portrayed as the highest form of love, surpassing all earthly attachments. It is a transformative force that purifies the heart and elevates the soul.

3. **Letter 55: The Path of the Lover.** Page (157-161)

Summary: This letter outlines the path that a lover of God must tread, emphasizing the importance of perseverance, devotion, and spiritual discipline.

Explanation: The path of the lover is marked by continuous striving and dedication to seeking God's pleasure. It requires the seeker to overcome obstacles and remain committed to the journey.

4. **Letter 68: The Impact of Love on the Heart.** (Page 201-205)

Summary: Shaykh Maneri discusses how divine love affects the heart of the seeker, leading to inner peace, joy, and a profound sense of fulfilment.

Explanation: Love for God brings about a transformation in the heart, filling it with light and driving away darkness. The seeker experiences a deep, abiding peace and contentment.

5. **Letter 87: The Ultimate Union.** (Page 267-272)

Summary: This letter describes the ultimate union with God that the lover seeks, portraying it as the culmination of the spiritual journey.

Explanation: The ultimate union is the highest state of spiritual attainment, where the seeker's will, is completely aligned with God's will. It represents the fulfilment of divine love.

Christian Resonances

The themes explored in Shaykh Sharfuddin Maneri's Letter 47 and related letters resonate deeply with Christian spirituality, particularly in the context of love and devotion to God. Several aspects can be compared to Christian teachings:

1. **Selflessness and Sacrifice:** In Christianity, the concept of agape love emphasizes selfless, sacrificial love. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ exemplify this, particularly in his sacrifice on the cross.
2. **Constant Remembrance:** Like the Islamic practice of Dhikr, Christians are encouraged to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and maintain a constant awareness of God's presence.
3. **Joy in Worship:** The Psalms, particularly Psalm 100, highlight the joy and gladness that come from worshipping God.
4. **Patience in Trials:** The New Testament often speaks of rejoicing in suffering and trials as a testament to one's faith and love for God (James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5).
5. **Detachment from Worldly Pleasures:** In the Gospel of (Matthew 6:19-21) we find where Jesus teaches about the importance of storing up treasures in heaven rather than on earth.
6. **Compassion and Kindness:** The commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself which we find in the Gospel of (Matthew 22:39) mirrors the Islamic teaching that divine love translates into compassion for others.

Conclusion

In both traditions, the transformative power of divine love is evident, leading individuals to live lives marked by selflessness, devotion, and a deep connection to God. The parallels between the two highlight the universal nature of spiritual love and its ability to transcend religious boundaries.

Shaykh Sharfuddin Maneri's Letter 47 and related writings resonate with Christian spirituality in several ways. His emphasis on selflessness and sacrifice aligns with the Christian concept of agape love, exemplified by Jesus Christ. The Islamic practice of Dhikr parallels the Christian call to "pray without ceasing," fostering continuous awareness of God. Both traditions find joy in worship and encourage patience in trials, reflecting shared values of steadfast faith and spiritual joy. Additionally, Maneri's advocacy for detachment from worldly pleasures and compassion towards others mirrors Jesus' teachings on heavenly treasures and loving one's neighbour. These themes highlight the deep spiritual and moral commonalities between Islam and Christianity.

Both the Islam and Christian traditions emphasise a continuous, joyful, and disciplined approach to worship, integrating both personal and communal practices to foster a deep and abiding relationship with God.

Finally, I must acknowledge that the personal reading and research work on 100 letters of Shaykh Sharfuddin Maneri" translated by Paul Jackson S.J. has led me through the process of renewal and affirmation of my Christian faith as there are resonances with the Christian teachings.

This course has helped me to overcome the biased notion I had of Islamic Jihad. There is a paradigm shift of the notion I had of Jihad from war to the greatest struggle. It helped me to understand my faith in an even better and deeper way.

THE CONCEPT OF PURITY ACCORDING TO SHARAFUDDIN MANERI

By Basant Kerketta

Introduction

Sufism places great importance on both physical and spiritual cleanliness. They consider it an essential aspect of life. According to *Sahih Muslim Book 2*, Number 0432, Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari, a companion of the Prophet, reported that the Messenger of Allah said, "Cleanliness is half of *Iman* (faith)." The Quran also highlights the significance of purity in chapter 2:222. The holy Quran says, "Truly, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and loves those who purify themselves." (Quran 2:222).

Brief Life Sketch of Paul Jackson: "The Hundred Letters of Sharafuddin Maneri" was translated by Paul Jackson who was a Jesuit. He was born in Australia and came to India in 1961 as a Jesuit Missionary. He went to Delhi for a Master's degree and to complete a diploma in Urdu. It was during a seminar, that he got an inspiration to study some great Indian Sufi saints. He studied Persian in Shiraz, Iran and learned about Sharafuddin Maneri, the famous Sufi saint of Bihar. He was not satisfied with the secondary materials, therefore he began to translate the *Maktubat-I* (The Hundred Letters). Soon it was published amongst the Classics of Western Spirituality series.

1. Concept of Purity in Islam

The virtue of purity is highly valued in Sufism, with certain practices being compulsory. The concept of *Tahara* in Arabic refers to being free from both physical and spiritual filth. Spiritual cleanliness, which involves being free from sin, arrogance, and hypocrisy, is as crucial as physical cleanliness. Before engaging in prayer, Muslims must ensure that their heart is free from sin and cleanse themselves physically, by using water. The process of '*wudu*' (ablution)

involves washing the hands, rinsing the mouth and nose, washing the face, and arms up to the elbows, wiping the head, and washing the feet up to the ankles (Quran 5:6).

In addition to maintaining personal hygiene, Islam requires Muslims to keep their clothes, homes, and surroundings clean. Prayers cannot be offered with an unclean body, clothes, or in dirty premises. Islam also emphasizes the cleanliness of the inner self—heart, mind, and soul—as the ultimate goal of the religion.

2 Purity according to the letter of Sharafuddin Maneri (Letters 29 and 30)

According to the letters of Sharafuddin Maneri, purity encompasses both external and internal aspects and is essential for spiritual advancement and attaining genuine mystical knowledge of the Divine Unity.

2.1 External Purity

- 1. Physical Cleanliness:** Maneri emphasises the importance of maintaining the purity of the body, clothes, and food. This external purity is necessary for the correctness of one's prayers and other acts of worship. (Page: 115)
- 2. Ablutions and Bathing:** Regular ablutions (ritual washing) and bathing, especially towards dawn, are recommended as acts of external purification. These practices remove physical impurities and prepare the individual for worship and spiritual activities. (page 116)
- 3. Attention to Appearance:** Cleanliness of one's attire and maintaining a presentable appearance are also part of external purity. This includes ensuring that clothes are clean and free from impurities. (116)

2.2 Internal Purity

- 1. Purity of the Heart:** Internal purity involves cleansing the heart of negative qualities such as hypocrisy, avarice, jealousy, and hatred. A pure heart is essential for true insight

into Divine Unity and mystical knowledge of God. "... God loves the pure of heart" (Quran 22:222). (page 116)

2. **Purity of Intentions:** One's actions should be free from selfish motives and directed towards pleasing God. Purity of intention is crucial for spiritual sincerity and authenticity. (page 120)
3. **Purity of the Soul:** The soul must be purified of sinful tendencies and rebellion against God. This purification is a continuous process, involving repentance and striving to overcome internal faults. It is related to what Khwaja Bayazid said: "Whenever any thought of the world enters my heart, I cleanse myself, and whenever any thought about the world to come enters my heart, I take a bath." (page 118)

2.3 The Spiritual Journey

1. **Stages of Purity:** Maneri describes purity as evolving in stages, where one progresses from a state of uncleanness to one of purity. Each stage represents a deeper level of repentance and spiritual growth.
2. **Mirror-like Heart:** The ultimate goal is to make the heart as reflective as a mirror, capable of reflecting the qualities of God. (118)
3. **Divine Unity and Purity:** True belief in divine unity requires internal purity. Without it, religious practices remain mere habits and customs, lacking spiritual depth. "Knowing the divine Unity is not for dust and water; It requires something more: a clean heart and a pure soul!" (page 117)

2.4 Divine Grace and Human Effort

1. **God's Selection:** Maneri acknowledges that while human effort is essential, achieving true purity and spiritual wealth also depends on God's grace. He says God bestows spiritual

riches on whom He wills and transforms even the most sinful individuals. (118)

- 2. Endurance and Transformation:** The journey to purity involves enduring hardships and trials. These experiences are necessary for spiritual growth and transformation. Maneri says, “If you had not experienced these pains, calamities, griefs, and exertions, and were simply taken off to heaven, not a particle of pleasure would be found therein!” (page 119)

2.5 Final Union with the Divine:

- 1. Culmination of Purity:** The culmination of purity is reaching a state of union with the Divine, where all religious anxieties cease, and the servant is in complete harmony with the Lord.
- 2. Beyond Worldly Concerns:** Pure individuals are not disturbed by thoughts of hell or excited by thoughts of paradise. Their focus is solely on maintaining purity for the divine presence.

3 Christian Resonances

The concept of purity in Sufism shares several resonances with Christian teachings on holiness and cleanliness, emphasising both external and internal purity as essential for spiritual growth and closeness to God. In Christianity, the practice of baptism symbolises spiritual cleansing and rebirth. Jesus emphasised the importance of inner purity, saying, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

3.1 External Purity

3.1.1 Personal Modesty: Modesty guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their solidarity (CCC 2521). The Catechism discusses modesty in actions, speech, and dress. It helps to safeguard the mystery of

persons and their love, and it encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships (CCC 2522-2523).

3.1.2 Purity of Family and Society: Families are the first schools of human virtues where children learn the importance of purity, chastity, and modesty. Parents are responsible for guiding their children in these virtues by example and instruction (CCC 2223, 2526). The Catechism emphasises the role of education in helping children and young people grow in maturity and purity (CCC 2526).

The Catechism addresses purity of culture. It calls for a culture that respects human dignity and promotes true human growth (CCC 2525). Christians are encouraged to transform the culture by promoting values that uphold human dignity and purity (CCC 2526).

3.2 Internal Purity

Similar to Sufi practices of *wudu* and physical cleanliness, Christianity gives more value to internal cleanliness. Jesus taught that internal purity was even more crucial. He criticized the Pharisees for focusing on outward cleanliness while neglecting the heart: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence” (Matthew 23:25-26).

3.2.1 Purity of the Heart: The concept of internal purity in Islam resonates with the Christian idea of a pure heart. David’s prayer in Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,” underscores the importance of inner purity.

1. **Blessed are the pure in heart:** The Catechism echoes the Beatitudes, particularly “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). This beatitude calls believers to a purity of heart, which is essential for seeing God and living in His presence (CCC 2518).
2. **Purity and Charity:** Purity of heart is achieved through charity, chastity, and love of truth. It involves an integral

whole of these virtues that help to maintain the purity of the body, mind, and soul (CCC 2519).

3.2.2 Purity of Intentions: The emphasis on purity of intentions in Islam aligns with Jesus' teaching about doing good deeds for the right reasons. In Matthew 6:1-4, Jesus instructs His followers to give to the needy, pray, and fast in secret, focusing on God's approval rather than human praise.

1. **Guarding the Mind and Heart:** The faithful are encouraged to maintain purity in their thoughts, desires, and imaginations. This includes avoiding occasions of sin and impure thoughts (CCC 2520).
2. **Intentions and Actions:** The interior and exterior acts should be aligned with purity. This means that one's intentions, thoughts, and actions must all be directed toward the good and true (CCC 2521).

3.3 Purity and Divine Union

Both religions view purity as a means to draw closer to God. In Christianity, this is seen in the pursuit of holiness: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

3.4 Endurance and Transformation

The process of enduring hardships and trials for spiritual growth is echoed in Christian teachings. James 1:2-4 encourages believers to consider trials as opportunities for joy and growth, leading to maturity and completeness in faith.

3.5 Divine Grace and Human Effort

Both Sufism and Christianity acknowledge the role of divine grace in achieving spiritual purity. In Christianity, Paul emphasises that salvation and spiritual growth are gifts of God's grace, not just results of human effort: "For it is by grace you have been saved,

through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

3.6 Final Union with the Divine

The Christian concept of ultimate union with God is reflected in the promise of eternal life and the believer’s ultimate hope of being in God’s presence. Revelation 21:3-4 describes a time when God will dwell with His people, and they will experience complete peace and purity.

Conclusion

Sharafuddin Maneri’s letters highlight that purity is multifaceted, involving both external cleanliness and internal purification. It is a foundational aspect of the spiritual journey, essential for attaining true knowledge of God and achieving a state of divine unity. By exploring these resonances, it becomes evident that both Islam and Christianity place a high value on purity as a pathway to spiritual growth and a deeper relationship with God.

“In this context, and precisely here in the land of encounter and dialogue, and before this distinguished audience, I wish to reaffirm the Catholic Church’ s respect for Islam, for authentic Islam: the Islam that prays, that is concerned for those in need. Recalling the errors of the past, including the most recent past, all believers ought to unite their efforts to ensure that God is never made the hostage of human ambitions. Hatred, fanaticism and terrorism profane the name of God and disfigure the true image of man.”

John Paul II, address on Culture, Art and Science,
Astana, Kazakhstan, September 24, 2001

WISDOM IN ‘THE HUNDRED LETTERS’ OF SHARAFUDDIN MANERI

By Anil Joseph

Introduction

Sharafuddin Maneri was a prominent Islamic scholar and Sufi saint from the 13th century. He was born in Maner, a town in present-day India, around 1263 CE. Maneri is well-known for his deep spiritual teachings and writings on Sufism, a mystical branch of Islam. His works focus on the inner dimensions of faith, emphasizing personal experience and connection with God. His teachings have influenced many followers and scholars in the Islamic world.

“The Hundred Letters” is a collection of writings by Sharafuddin Maneri and is primarily a work of Sufi literature. It falls within the genre of mystical writings and spiritual guidance. The book consists of letters that provide spiritual advice and insights into Sufi practices, making it a significant text in the field of Islamic mysticism and Sufi philosophy.

In this book, Maneri shares his spiritual insights and advice through a series of letters. These letters address different aspects of Sufi practice and personal development. They offer guidance on how to live a devout and meaningful life, focusing on inner purity, devotion to God, and ethical behaviour. The work is valued for its deep spiritual wisdom and practical advice, making it important for those studying Sufism and Islamic spirituality. The key teachings on wisdom found in his letters are:

1. Seeking Divine Wisdom

Maneri emphasizes the importance of seeking wisdom from God. He encourages his disciples to ask God for wisdom and guidance in their spiritual journey. This wisdom is seen as essential for understanding deeper spiritual truths and attaining closeness to God.

2. Humility and the Path to Wisdom

Maneri teaches that humility is a prerequisite for acquiring wisdom. He advises his followers to cultivate humility before God and others, as it opens the heart to receive divine wisdom. Without humility, one cannot progress on the path of spiritual enlightenment.

3. Knowledge of the Self

According to Maneri, true wisdom begins with self-awareness and self-knowledge. Understanding one's own faults, weaknesses, and limitations is crucial for spiritual growth. This self-knowledge leads to humility and a deeper understanding of one's relationship with God.

4. Inner Silence and Contemplation

Maneri teaches the importance of inner silence and contemplation as means to attain wisdom. He encourages his disciples to engage in spiritual practices such as meditation and reflection, which help in quieting the mind and opening the heart to divine guidance.

5. Living Wisely

Wisdom, for Maneri, is not just theoretical knowledge but practical guidance for righteous living. He emphasizes living ethically, treating others with kindness and compassion, and avoiding actions that lead away from spiritual growth. This ethical wisdom is grounded in love for God and love for humanity.

6. Wisdom as Divine Grace

Maneri often speaks of wisdom as a gift and grace from God. It is not something one can achieve solely through intellectual effort but bestowed upon the sincere seeker by God's mercy. This perspective encourages humility and reliance on divine guidance in the quest for wisdom.

7. Integration of Knowledge and Action

Wisdom, according to Maneri, involves integrating spiritual knowledge with righteous action. It is not enough to know spiritual truths intellectually; one must embody them in daily life. This integration leads to inner harmony and alignment with God's will.

In short, Sharafuddin Maneri's teachings on wisdom emphasize seeking divine guidance through humility, self-knowledge, inner silence, ethical living, and reliance on God's grace. These teachings reflect a deep Sufi understanding of wisdom as both a spiritual gift and a practical guide for living a meaningful and righteous life.

Some Important Quotes from 'The Holy Quran' on Wisdom and Its Christian Resonance from 'The Holy Bible'

The teachings of Sharafuddin Maneri on wisdom can resonate with Christian perspectives, particularly through principles found in the Bible that emphasize humility, seeking God's guidance, self-reflection, and the integration of knowledge with ethical action.

1. Humility and Seeking Guidance

Quran 3:159: "It is part of Mercy of Allah, that you deal gently with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you: so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)."

This verse illustrates the importance of humility and seeking divine guidance when making decisions or interacting with others, which aligns with Maneri's emphasis on humility before God.

James 4:6: "But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" (Nelson NT 231)

Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (Nelson OT 671)

These verses emphasize the importance of humility before God and reliance on His guidance, similar to Maneri’s teachings that highlight the need for humility and seeking divine wisdom in decision-making.

2. Self-Knowledge and Reflection

Quran 59:18: “O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul look to what (provision) he has sent forth for tomorrow. Yes, fear Allah: for Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do.” (Ali 377)

Quran 50:16: “It was We who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.” (Ali 354)

These verses highlight the Quranic emphasis on self-reflection, self-awareness, and accountability, which are foundational to Maneri’s teachings on understanding one’s own faults and limitations.

Psalms 139:23-24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Nelson OT 669)

1 Corinthians 11:28: “Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” (Nelson NT 173-174)

These passages encourage introspection and self-awareness before God, aligning with Maneri’s teachings on understanding one’s inner state and seeking purification.

3. Wisdom as Divine Gift:

Quran 2:269: “He grants wisdom to whom He pleases; and he to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overflowing;

but none will grasp the Message except men of understanding.” (Ali 28)

Quran 31:12: “We bestowed (in past) wisdom on Luqman: “Show your gratitude to Allah.” Any who is (so) grateful does so the benefit of his own soul: but if any is ungrateful, surely, Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise.” (Ali 276)

These verses affirm that wisdom is granted by Allah to whom He chooses, underscoring Maneri’s teaching that wisdom is a divine gift that cannot be achieved through mere human effort alone.

James 1:5: “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.” (Nelson NT 228)

Colossians 2:2-3: “I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Nelson NT 200)

These verses affirm that wisdom is a gift from God, given generously to those who seek it, echoing Maneri’s teaching that true wisdom comes from divine grace rather than human effort alone.

4. Integration of Knowledge and Action

Quran 2:286: “On no soul Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray:) “Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us; our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us You are our Protector; help us those who stand against Faith.” (Ali 30)

This prayer illustrates the Quranic principle that knowledge and action should be aligned with one’s capacity and understanding, emphasizing the importance of ethical living and practical application of wisdom.

James 1:22: “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.” (Nelson NT 229)

Matthew 7:24: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.” (Nelson NT 7)

These passages emphasise the importance of putting knowledge into action through ethical living and obedience to God’s commands, similar to Maneri’s teachings on integrating spiritual knowledge with practical righteousness.

In short, the teachings on wisdom from Sharafuddin Maneri’s ‘The Hundred Letters’ and the wisdom found in both the Holy Quran and the Holy Bible reveal a profound alignment in spiritual principles across these traditions. Maneri’s emphasis on seeking divine guidance, embracing humility, and integrating knowledge with ethical living echoes the wisdom expressed in the Quran and the Bible. Both traditions highlight that true wisdom is a divine gift, encouraging followers to reflect deeply on their inner selves and live according to God’s will. This shared focus on spiritual growth, humility, and practical righteousness underscores a universal quest for wisdom that transcends individual religious boundaries. Through these teachings, we see a common call to seek wisdom from God, live with integrity, and continually strive for spiritual enlightenment. These parallels illustrate a common spiritual foundation centred on the pursuit of God’s wisdom and the transformation of the inner self in accordance with His will.

Conclusion

In summary, the important teachings on wisdom shared by Sharafuddin Maneri, the Quran, and the Bible shows a powerful common thread: they all call us to seek divine guidance, practice humility, and live ethically. These teachings emphasise that true wisdom is a gift from God, encouraging us to look within, act with integrity, and grow spiritually. Despite the challenges of

shifting from self-reliance to trusting a higher power, following these principles helps us live with greater purpose and connection. Embracing these insights enriches our lives and our relationships, showing that the pursuit of wisdom bridges different faiths and deepens our spiritual journey.

These teachings on wisdom offer valuable guidance for personal growth by highlighting the importance of seeking divine wisdom, practicing humility, living ethically, and integrating spiritual knowledge with daily actions. While these principles can be challenging—requiring a shift from self-reliance to trust in divine guidance, and demanding ongoing self-reflection and ethical living—they provide a path to deeper spiritual understanding and a more meaningful life. By embracing these teachings, individuals can foster a greater sense of purpose, integrity, and connection to a higher power, enriching their personal journey and interactions with others.

“To pray is not to escape from history and the problems which it presents. On the contrary, it is to choose to face reality not on our own, but with the strength that comes from on high, the strength of truth and love which have their ultimate source in God. Faced with the treachery of evil, religious people can count on God who absolutely wills what is good. They can pray to him to have the courage to face even the greatest difficulties with a sense of personal responsibility, never yielding to fatalism or impulsive reactions.”

John Paul II, address on the Day of Prayer for
Peace, January 24, 2002

BOOK REVIEW

Mansoorah Khalilizand, ed., *The Attributes of God in Islamic Thought Contemplating Allah*. Routledge: London and New York, 2024. xi plus 261 pages.

Review by Sam T Rajkumar

Mansoorah Khalilizand's edited collection focuses on the intellectual history of Islam, specifically debating the attributes of Allah. It aims to explore various aspects of this debate within their original contexts, drawing from primary Islamic literature. The central theme is the ambiguity and polysemy (multiple meanings) inherent in the concept of Allah, challenging the notion of a straightforward understanding. By highlighting the plurality in Islamic thought, the book delves into philosophical and theological reflections on Allah, contrasting this with a purely juristic view that emphasizes divine law and judgment. The aim is to demonstrate the ongoing relevance and contemporaneity of Islamic traditions, particularly through philosophical and theological lenses.

The first part of the book, "Allah of the Philosophers," explores various perspectives within medieval Islamic philosophy regarding the nature and attributes of God. It begins with Mehmet Fatih Arslan's analysis of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, highlighting his use of philosophical methods to discuss divine attributes, which diverges from traditional Sunni theology and raises critiques from figures like Ibn Taymiyya. Arslan navigates through al-Rāzī's evolving views on divine attributes, emphasizing his attempt to reconcile philosophical insights with orthodox theology. Mansoorah Khalilizand then examines Mullā Sadrā's ontology in depth, focusing on his hierarchical model of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*) and its implications for divine attributes. Khalilizand discusses how Mullā Sadrā's framework balances divine transcendence with immanence, though critics may question the introduction of gradations within God's essence. Colin Fitzpatrick Murtha explores the concept of

divine love across medieval Islamic philosophers like al-Fārābī, Miskawayh, and Avicenna. Murtha highlights their differing interpretations of divine love and pleasure, offering a historical perspective on how these ideas shaped Islamic philosophical discourse. Finally, Sajjad Rizvi focuses on Mullā Sadrā's philosophical theology within Shi'i Islam, examining concepts such as divine simplicity and the mediation of divine attributes through the Imams. Rizvi contextualizes Mullā Sadrā's ideas within broader Islamic intellectual history, demonstrating their synthesis of Avicennian philosophy and Sufi mysticism. Together, these four chapters provide a comprehensive exploration of medieval Islamic philosophers' diverse approaches to understanding and discussing Allah, offering insights into theological debates, philosophical methodologies, and their implications for Islamic thought.

The second part of the book, "Allah of the Theologians," explores the diversity of theological perspectives within Islamic thought, ranging from Mu'tazilite rationalism to Ash'arite and Māturīdite formulations, as well as contemporary interpretations within the Wahhābī tradition. Abdulhakeem Yousuf Alkhelaifi explores the Mu'tazilite theologian Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf's doctrine of divine attributes, focusing on divine simplicity and categorizing attributes into essential, non-real, and attributes of act within Mu'tazilite theology. Angelika Brodersen explores Sunni theological debates on God's endurance ('baqā'), contrasting Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Ash'arite perspective with Nūr al-Dīn al-Sābūnī's Māturīdite views. Brodersen also provides an overview of al-Sābūnī's contributions within Māturīdite Kalām, detailing his theological doctrines concerning divine speech, creation, God's will, and ethical considerations. Alnoor Dhanani examines Mu'tazilite theology through the lens of the Bahshamiyya school, focusing on their discourse on divine attributes. Ahmed Husić delves into Sayf ad-Dīn al-Āmidī's Ash'ariyya theology, exploring his nuanced views on God's will as both eternal and created. Mohammad Gharaibeh analyzes Ibn 'Uthaymīn's Wahhābī theological stance on anthropomorphic expressions in Islamic texts, emphasizing

his literal interpretation and rejection of allegorical approaches. Mehmet Emin Gulecyuz examines Mu'tazilī interpretations of anthropopathic terms attributed to God, focusing on theologians like Abū 'Alī and Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāi. Kutlu Okan reviews Ismā'īl Gelenbevī's theological and philosophical discussions on God's knowledge and attributes. Gelenbevī introduces the concept of paradigms ('mithāl') to reconcile comprehensive divine knowledge with God's unity, responding to earlier critiques and offering a nuanced perspective on Islamic theological debates. These eight chapters collectively provide deep insights into various theological perspectives within Islamic thought, spanning historical, philosophical, and doctrinal dimensions of understanding divine attributes and their implications.

The book places the discussion within the broader context of Islamic intellectual history, aiming to deepen understanding through primary sources rather than modern interpretations alone. Emphasizing that the concept of Allah is not monolithic but multifaceted, the collection challenges readers to reconsider their assumptions about the nature and attributes of God in Islam. By exploring diverse philosophical and theological perspectives, the book highlights the richness of Islamic thought beyond legalistic frameworks, encouraging a nuanced approach to understanding Allah. It argues for the continued relevance of Islamic traditions in contemporary discourse, suggesting that philosophical and theological engagements with Allah can offer insights that transcend historical boundaries. The volume aims to serve as a resource for students and scholars of Islamic theology, philosophy, and studies, providing both primary texts and secondary analyses that facilitate a deeper engagement with the debate over Allah's attributes.

Mansoorh Khalilizand's edited collection seeks to enrich the scholarly discourse on Islamic theology and philosophy by offering a comprehensive exploration of the attributes of Allah, challenging conventional interpretations, and emphasizing the enduring relevance of these discussions in today's world.

INTERCULTURALITY IN INDIAN CONTEXTS

Joseph Victor Edwin SJ, who serves as a lecturer of Theology and Christian-Muslim Relations at the Vidyajyoti Institute of Religious Studies in Delhi, shared his thoughts on “Interculturality in Indian Contexts” on August 23, 2024, online for the faculty, students, and supporters of the Institute of Mater Dei (IMD) in Goa. This presentation was part of the ongoing series on “Intercultural Fellowships and Wellbeing” organized at IMD.

The evening program commenced with a welcome from Sr. Julie, the superior of IMD. She emphasized the importance of harmonious interaction between people of diverse traditions, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among people of different religions in today’s global religious landscape. Sr. Stell Balthasar, the program coordinator, emphasized the concept of unity coexisting within diversity, stating that all beings are interconnected through the divine energy present in the universe. She highlighted the core realization of unity within diversity as a consistent pursuit within our hearts and souls.

Edwin started his presentation by briefly defining the terms “multicultural” and “cross-cultural” before delving into the concept of “interculturality.” In multicultural societies, he said, different cultural groups coexist in apparent harmony, but often without truly understanding one another. Such societies lack cohesion and can harbor underlying prejudices and biases that, when provoked, could lead to serious conflicts. Edwin cited the recent unrest in the UK as an example, where unfounded rumors about a Muslim asylum seeker in the tragic killing of three children resulted in over 1,000 arrests and nearly 600 charges related to far-right riots across England and Northern Ireland, causing attacks on mosques, refugee centers, and Muslim healthcare workers.

On the other hand, “cross-cultural” studies involve the comparison of different cultures. In cross-cultural communication, differences are recognized and respected. This understanding can lead to individual

perspective shifts and openness to better understanding between people, although it may not spark a collective transformation. Cross-cultural studies often consider one culture as the standard by which all others are assessed and juxtaposed.

Intercultural studies or Intercultural training play a pivotal role in fostering deep respect and profound understanding of diverse cultures. Intercultural communication emphasises the reciprocal exchange of ideas and cultural norms, aiming to nurture and strengthen profound relationships. In an intercultural society, individuals undergo transformative experiences as they learn and grow from their interactions, leading to a rich tapestry of shared knowledge and understanding.

India is a beautiful bouquet of diverse cultures, languages, religions, and traditions, and is more than just a 'multicultural' nation. Over the centuries people of diverse cultural and religious traditions interacted harmoniously. The Constitution of India unites us as one nation and celebrates the harmonious coexistence of various cultures and the value of diversity. However, the presence of prejudices, biases, and narrow-mindedness threatens to undermine the unity and strength of our nation.

India should strive to foster a culture of 'interculturality'. As Edwin highlighted, interculturality thrives on dialogue among people from different backgrounds. It is a dynamic process in which individuals from diverse cultures engage in interactions to understand and challenge their own and others' cultures. This can lead to potential cultural changes, while also promoting mutual respect and recognizing human rights.

Edwin pointed out that in the writings of Plato, Plato dramatized discussions in philosophy, in the form of Dialogue in which he used Socrates as his principal character. In the aftermath of two world wars, European philosophers introduced Dialogue as a fundamental human activity. In the Papal Magisterium, the word 'dialogue' appears for the first time in the inaugural Encyclical of St. Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964).

Based on Felix Körner SJ's work "Political Religion: How Christianity and Islam Shape the World" (Paulist Press, 2020), Edwin pointed out that interpersonal relations are more than just conversation; it involves the dynamics of conversing. This relationship has four key characteristics: Encounter, where one attentively considers the other, embracing differences with curiosity and respect; Dependence, where each "I" owes itself to a "thou"; Honesty, the risk of fully revealing oneself to the other; and Reconciliation, an approach opposed to combativeness.

The gathering was filled with vibrant discussions, where participants passionately shared their perspectives and sought clarifications. It was a deeply profound experience of cultural exchange and understanding. We recognized the immense value of such meetings and eagerly look forward to more of such enriching moments in the future. The session concluded with an inspiring message from Sr. Nirmalini, CRWI President, highlighting the significance of interfaith collaboration in line with the Synod on Synodality. Her words served as an invitation for us to walk together, learn from one another, respect different beliefs, and collectively embrace the diversity of religions. Moreover, the delightful musical arrangements by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Fernandez added an extra layer of enjoyment to our gathering.

Sr. Stella Balthasar FMM

"When the religious sense reaches maturity it gives rise to a perception in the believer that faith in God, Creator of the universe and Father of all, must encourage relations of universal brotherhood among human beings."

Benedict XVI, message for the XX anniversary interreligious prayer meeting for peace, Assisi, Italy, September 2, 2006

ONLINE LECTURE: THEOLOGICAL THINKING OF MAULANA WAHIDDUDIN KHAN

Professor Irfan Omar (Marquette University, Milwaukee, USA) presented an online lecture on the Theological Thinking of Maulana Wahiddudin Khan. This lecture was organised by the Islamic Studies Association (Delhi) for the students who have taken a seminar on the writings of Maulana Wahiddudin Khan.

Professor Omar pointed out:

1. Maulana Wahiddudin Khan's writings on Islam in the contemporary world were impacted by his serious efforts to understand the message of the Qur'an and the significance of Hadith for our times but also from his struggles with contemporary Muslim scholars' faith expression of Islam. He reflected from the margins of Muslim society; one may say that his writings did not appeal to many religious scholars of his times. His writings focused on finding out what it means to live as a Muslim in this world and prepare oneself to stand before God at the end of times. His theological writings not only engaged in confessing his Islamic faith for the present but also demonstrated bold theological reflections even if it is not well accepted by the Islamic scholarship of his times.
2. Maulana Khan revealed his heart in his native Urdu in his writings. Later translations into English did not capture the spirit of his writings. In Urdu, he writes not in a dense language but completely in a different style where his ideas flow like a river and he uses words exactly what he thinks. His journal *al Risala* was glossless among the shinier Muslim magazines but powerfully carried his message. In most of his writings, Maulana reflected on simple stories from life, that he interpreted in the light of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him.

3. Maulana Wahiddudin Khan invites Muslims to give up the confrontational attitude and follow the model of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. He presents the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah as the model. In 628 CE, a peace treaty known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was signed, marking a significant event in the history of Islam. The treaty was signed in the village of Hudaibiyyah, about nine miles outside Mecca. It acknowledged the equality of Muslims as negotiating partners. The treaty was signed by the Meccans who opposed Muhammad, the prophet of Islam and the Muslims. The Muslims, led by Prophet Muhammad, were eager to visit the Holy Kaaba, though strong enough to resist the Meccans, Prophet Muhammad decided not to enter conflict with enemies. The treaty of Hudaibiyyah established a model of engagement for Muslims, as demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad's approach to dealing with the people of Mecca. It is considered a milestone in the history of Islam, demonstrating a departure from confrontational thinking in favour of peaceful negotiation.
4. Maulana Wahiddudin Khan initially joined Jamaat e Islami as a follower of Maulana Maududi. However, he soon realized that the essence of Islam lies in guiding people to lead a life following God's will and preparing them to face God. According to him, a truly Islamic movement should stem from a sense of compassion for all of humanity. Additionally, Islam doesn't begin with criticism, but rather with expressions of gratitude to God and concludes with the need to seek refuge in God. Maulana Khan criticizes scholars like Jamaluddin Afghani, Sayyed Qutb, and Sayyed Abul Ala Maududi for promoting the idea of establishing or reinstating an Islamic State, known as Daulah Islaiyah.
5. Professor Omar highlighted Maulana Khan's God-centered life, emphasizing how Maulana Khan encouraged his followers to lead sincere and introspective lives. Maulana Khan emphasized the importance of serious reflection and introspection as a means

to stay on the path of taqwa and avoid distractions. Taqwa, according to a tradition (Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 2564), pertains to the heart, signifying one's internal state, taught Maulana Khan. It's not merely about outward appearances; rather, it's about being God-conscious internally.

6. The Professor emphasized the significance of 'dawa' in Maulana Khan's teachings. According to Maulana Khan, Muslims are the Ummah of the final prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him). This belief shapes the responsibility of Muslims in the modern world. They must invite people to God, a role previously fulfilled by prophets. While the era of prophethood has ended, the mission of the prophets continues. Post the finality of prophethood, Muslims have been entrusted with the task of carrying forth the legacy of prophethood. Their primary responsibility is to call people to God, and no other duty can substitute for this crucial mission as the Ummah of the final prophet.

Professor Omar's thought-provoking presentation sparked a deep interest in the works of Maulana Wahiddudin Khan. One significant aspect is the promotion of the 'dialogical approach' over the 'confrontational approach'. In today's world, these teachings are especially relevant due to ongoing global conflicts. Comparing the dialogical approach with the prophet's model reveals a strong connection.

However, William Allen White's viewpoint raises an important question which is not irrelevant to our conversation. The question is: "Is peace without justice a form of oppression?" White emphasizes the inseparable link between peace and justice, stating that genuine peace cannot exist without a foundation of justice.

Pope Paul VI further expands on this connection, defining peace as a state of harmonious and properly ordered affairs, embodying tranquillity and a sense of balance in the world. Pope Paul VI's explanation delves into the true concept of peace, highlighting its

deeply human nature. This genuine understanding of peace is rooted in a sincere regard for humanity, known as justice. According to the pontiff, justice involves genuine consideration for others, and any behaviour or situation that diminishes human worth is considered unjust. Some conflicts in the world are unjust and border genocide. Can unilaterally accepting unjust conditions effectively address injustice? This last question stays in my heart. The lecture presented a captivating precursor to the profound and thought-provoking ideas of Maulana Wahiddudin Khan, which merit further exploration.

Joseph Victor Edwin SJ

"...I should like now to greet the young Muslims who are with us this evening. I thank you for your presence, which is so important. Together with the young Christians, you are the future of this fine country and of the Middle East in general. Seek to build it up together! And when you are older, continue to live in unity and harmony with Christians. For the beauty of Lebanon is found in this fine symbiosis. It is vital that the Middle East in general, looking at you, should understand that Muslims and Christians, Islam and Christianity, can live side by side without hatred, with respect for the beliefs of each person, so as to build together a free and humane society..."

Benedict XVI, Apostolic Journey to Lebanon,
Message to Young People, Square across from the
Maronite Patriarchate of Bkerké,
September 15, 2012 (excerpt)



“The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God.”

(Nostra Aetate, no. 3).



**Christians and Muslims are brothers
and sisters, and we must act as such.
-Pope Francis**

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