The Second Islamic Philosophy and Theology Conference

Islamic Perspectives on Prophecy and Revelation

24 - 25 July 2025

Duke University, Rubenstein Library, Holsti-Anderson Family Assembly Room (153),
403 Chapel Drive, Durham, NC, 27708

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INTRODUCTION

Together with the belief in one God and that life here and now is a mere prelude to an eternal afterlife, the belief in prophecy is regarded as one of the fundamental tenets of Islam. Indeed, it is through the revelatory experiences of Muḥammad that Muslims derive the fundamental articles of faith concerning the nature of God, afterlife, resurrection, and notions such as heaven and hell. Prophecy and revelation thus constitute the principal epistemological foundation of Islam. However, unlike other doctrinal issues, the phenomenon of prophecy in Islam has not been sufficiently problematised or discussed in secondary literature in Western languages.

This conference aims to shift the focus and methodology of studying prophecy in Islam from the historical study of the Prophet Muḥammad to the phenomenon of prophecy/revelation itself, thereby directing attention to the vast body of literature in Islam that investigates the philosophical dimensions of prophecy across different Islamic disciplines. The Prophet was both the recipient of a personal revelation and the primary interpreter of that revelation's contents. His experiences and subsequent teaching constitute one of, if not the main, sources of religious knowledge for Muslims. In the modern period, contemporary scholars of Islam have challenged traditional concepts and theories of prophecy by placing greater emphasis on the Prophet's own subjectivity and contextual setting thereby challenging previously held notions about how revelation and scripture ought to be interpreted.

To achieve a more holistic and nuanced understanding of prophecy in Islam, this conference explores the philosophical issues surrounding prophecy and revelation as these have been discussed in various Islamic disciplines. By engaging with modern critiques and philosophical dilemmas, the conference aims to provide deeper insights and responses to these issues, reaffirming the significance of prophetic experiences in a rapidly changing world. This dialogue is crucial for fostering a nuanced understanding of how these ancient concepts can be meaningfully integrated into modern thought and practice, helping to bridge the gap between traditional beliefs and contemporary intellectual concerns.

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Dr Nazir Khan (University of Nottingham)
Ibn Taymiyya's Epistemology of Prophethood and Miracles

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The Veridicality of Perceptual Prophetic Experiences: A New Proposal

Dr Halim Calis (Respect Graduate School)
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17:30 – 19:00   Dinner

Dr Muhammad Fariduddin Attar

Ghazālī and Rāzī on Miracles and the Occult

Miracles, according to some Muslim thinkers, cannot verify the prophets' claim to receiving Divine guidance. In fact, miracles have no evidentiary status at all. It serves only to persuade people by the sheer display of otherworldly power that the performer is telling the truth. But power has only an incidental relation with the truth, unless it can be that the two are essentially related, in which case the former does not on its own terms guarantee the latter. This paper will examine the relationship between miracles and prophets in the thought of Abū Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), two theologians who argued against the evidentiary status of miracles. One of the important considerations they had for this position, but which is rarely discussed, is that both thinkers affirm the naturalistic basis of occult phenomena, such as magic and thaumaturgy. The impression that a miracle has happened is something that can be manufactured by a skilled practitioner of the magical arts or one invested with occult powers. Furthermore, I will examine why Ghazālī and Rāzī held instead that the veracity of the prophets' claim to receiving Divine guidance should be judged on their skill as the physicians of the heart, whose teachings lead to human perfection. Finally, I shall show that miracles are best conceived within an Avicennian framework as the effect of the actualized prophetic soul, which can be taken as a physiognomic sign (*āya*) of this special status, but which does not constitute its substance.

Dr Muhammad Fariduddin Attar
Carleton University

Muhammad Fariduddin Attar received his PhD from the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, in 2023 with a dissertation on cosmology and metaphysics in Avicenna and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He now holds a postdoctoral fellowship from the FRQSC (Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture) and is based in Carleton University, Canada. His present research deals with the interaction between metaphysics, theology, and the occult sciences in Islamic philosophical thought. He is co-author of *A Comprehensive, Annotated, and Indexed Bibliography of the Modern Scholarship on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (544/1150–606/1210) (Brill, 2023).

Dr Nazir Khan

Ibn Taymiyya's Epistemology of Prophethood and Miracles

Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Nubuwwāt* represents a comprehensive epistemological examination of belief in prophets, particularly in relation to miracles as proof of prophethood. He asserts that just as multiple signs indicate the existence and attributes of God, a similar plurality of indicators establishes the truth of prophets. Rejecting the exclusivity of miracles as the sole proof of prophethood, Ibn Taymiyya expands the scope of relevant evidential considerations that authenticate prophetic claims. He critiques the *kalām* theologians' reliance on miracles as the primary proof of prophethood. While Muʿtazilites deny supernatural acts by non-prophets to safeguard miracles as exclusive prophetic signs, Ashʿarites concede that extraordinary feats can occur at the hands of saints (*awliyāʾ*), sorcerers (*saḥara*), and soothsayers (*kuhhān*). The Ashʿarī criteria for distinguishing prophetic miracles—(a) a claim to prophethood, (b) citing the miracle as proof, and (c) issuing a challenge—are problematized by Ibn Taymiyya, who argues that proof cannot be established merely by the claim of the performer. Furthermore, he critiques Ashʿarī theology for its inconsistency in divine omnipotence, by examining whether God could allow a false claimant to perform miracles indistinguishable from those of true prophets. To refine the concept of miracles, Ibn Taymiyya prefers the Quranic terms *āyāt* (signs) and *barāhīn* (proofs) over the *kalām* terminology of *muʿjiza* (miracle) and *khāriq lil-ʿāda* (extraordinary act). He argues that prophetic miracles must be uniquely beyond the capabilities of non-prophets and must be distinguished from supernatural feats of sorcerers and saints. Notably, he posits that feats assisted by angelic intervention are exclusive to prophets, while jinn-assisted feats may be attempted by false claimants to prophethood. Beyond miracles, Ibn Taymiyya introduces an ethical dimension to verifying prophetic truth. A true prophet's teachings align with rationality and *fiṭra,* advocating justice, monotheism (*tawḥīd*), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), and righteousness, whereas a false claimant promotes deceit and oppression. He critiques the Ashʿarī commitment to Divine Command Theory, which precludes moral discernment as a criterion for evaluating prophets. While acknowledging that Avicennian philosophers correctly considered virtue in distinguishing prophets from sorcerers, he integrates this insight into a broader synthesis that upholds prophetic infallibility in divine communication. In summary, Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology of prophethood constructs a framework wherein belief in prophets is not solely contingent on miracles but is reinforced by moral integrity, rational coherence, and alignment with human nature.

Dr Nazir Khan
University of Nottingham

Nazir Khan is a medical doctor and Assistant Professor at McMaster University, as well as a doctoral candidate in theology at the University of Nottingham. Following his completion of medical school at McMaster University, he completed his radiology residency at the University of Manitoba and a fellowship in Diagnostic Neuroradiology at the University of Calgary. He is a Senior Fellow at the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research.

Professor Mahmoud Morvarid

The Veridicality of Perceptual Prophetic Experiences: A New Proposal

One of the key features of prophecy, according to Islamic sources, is the perceptual experiences prophets undergo—such as 'seeing' fire in a tree or the angel Gabriel, or 'hearing' voices reciting revealed verses. These experiences exhibit perceptual phenomenology; for instance, it appears to the prophet that he has encountered a 'person' or 'fire' with specific visual properties. This raises a question regarding their veridicality. Typically, a visual experience is considered veridical only if the subject actually encounters an object with the properties represented in the experience, such as a specific shape, size, or lighting. However, presumably no such physical object was present in the prophet's surroundings during these experiences.

To address this challenge, two main theories have been proposed in the Islamic philosophical tradition. The first, articulated by Al-Farabi and later endorsed by Ibn Sina and others, holds that during revelation, the prophet's soul acquires intelligible forms from the active intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*) sometimes identified with the angel Gabriel. Since the prophet's imaginative faculty (*al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah*) is highly perfected, it receives these intelligible forms as well, and then symbolize (*muḥākāt*) them as perceptual experiences. While the prophet does not actually encounter an external object with the perceived properties, the experience is not entirely illusory, as it symbolically represents intelligible truths through perceptual and imaginative forms.

The second theory, championed by Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra, seeks to assign a stronger notion of veridicality to prophetic experiences. According to this view, the objects of these experiences belong to the world of images (*ʿālam al-mithāl*). Though not material, these entities possess certain physical properties such as shape and size. Thus, when it appears to the prophet that he perceives an entity with specific shape and size, he is indeed encountering an external, mind-independent entity with those properties—albeit one that exists in the world of images rather than the material world.

After briefly examining these two theories, I propose an alternative approach to encounter the veridicality challenge, which is much less ontologically demanding. Drawing on David Chalmers' work (2010), I suggest that prophetic experiences, like ordinary perceptual experiences, contain two types of content: perfect content and imperfect content. While the perfect content of prophetic experiences is not veridical, this does not pose a unique veridicality problem, as even ordinary experiences often (or perhaps, always) have falsidical perfect content. However, the imperfect content of prophetic experiences can still be veridical due to its disjunctive nature. I will then explore some implications of this framework for interpreting revelation.

Professor Mahmoud Morvarid
Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences, Tehran

Mahmoud Morvarid pursued Islamic studies at the Seminaries of Mashhad and Qom in Iran before earning a PhD in analytic philosophy from the School of Philosophy at the Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM) in Tehran, where he currently serves as a faculty member. His research interests include metaphysics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of mind, Islamic philosophy, and Shiite Principles of Jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Additionally, he is interested in exploring connections between various branches of analytic philosophy and the intellectual heritage of the Islamic tradition, including philosophy, *kalām*, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. He has published works in both English and Persian.

Dr Halim Calis

From the One to the Many: Divine Speech, Revelation, and Prophethood in Akbarī Thought

In the Akbarī School of Philosophical Sufism, revelation (*waḥy*) is understood not merely as a historical event but as an ontological process—a manifestation of the Divine within the very structure of existence. This ontological framework situates divine revelation as a progressive self-disclosure (*tajallī*) of the Divine Essence through the attribute of *kalām* and the divine name *al-mutakallim*. Following the hierarchical descent through ontological levels (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-khams*), divine speech gradually unfolds from its pre-eternal reality into the perceptible form of the Quran, mirroring the process by which existence emanates from the One into multiplicity in Akbarī ontology.

This paper explores the philosophical implications of Akbarī prophetology, particularly in light of the School's nuanced theory of divine speech and revelation. I analyze how Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1270), and Shams al-Dīn al-Fanārī (d. 1431) conceptualized prophecy within a framework that integrates ontology, epistemology, and spirituality. Central to this discussion is Ibn al-ʿArabī's distinction between *risāla* (messengership) and *wilāyah* (sainthood), a key component of his prophetology developed within the broader metaphysical paradigm of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. This distinction has often been misinterpreted as asserting the superiority of *wilāyah* over *risāla*, leading to accusations of heresy against Ibn al-ʿArabī. However, through closer examination, I argue that he envisioned *risālah* and *wilāyah* as two complementary aspects of prophethood: *wilāyah* represents the Prophet's inherent capacity for divine communication, while *risāla* refers to the externalized manifestation of this capacity in the form of scripture and guidance.

The paper also discusses the contemporary relevance of Akbarī hermeneutics in addressing modern debates on the nature of prophecy and revelation. By reframing revelation as an ontological unfolding rather than a mere historical transmission, Akbarī thought provides a unique epistemological model that bridges traditional Islamic perspectives with contemporary philosophical inquiries into the nature of divine communication. Ultimately, this study contributes to broader discussions on the philosophy of revelation by demonstrating how *waḥdat al-wujūd* informs Islamic prophetology, Quranic hermeneutics, and theological discourse on divine speech. It offers a fresh perspective on how Ibn al-ʿArabī and his intellectual successors engaged with the Quranic text—not merely as scripture but as an extension of Divine Reality itself.

Dr Halim Calis
Respect Graduate School

Halim Calis is Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies at Respect Graduate School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA). He received his PhD from the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he focused on Akbarī hermeneutics in the Quranic commentary of Shams al-Dīn al-Fanārī (d. 1431). His research interests include Quranic studies, Sufism, Islamic theology, and Ottoman intellectual history. Dr. Calis regularly publishes in scholarly journals and edited volumes, and he presents at international academic conferences. His current projects include a multi-volume textbook on Quranic Arabic and a critical edition of al-Fanārī's Quranic commentary.

Dr Jamie Turner

Where Falsafa Meets Analytic Philosophy of Religion: A Farabian-Hickian View of Prophecy

The Muslim philosopher, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, outlined a view of prophecy tied to a Neoplatonic framework that emphasised the acquisition of prophecy as a human intellectual achievement through a connection with what he termed the "active intellect" (*al-ʿaql al-faʿāl*). This Farabian account of prophecy runs contrary to the mainstream view in the Islamic tradition, which conceives of prophecy and revelation as a direct bestowal by God. However, the Farabian account—at least when stripped from its controversial Neoplatonic metaphysics—arguably provides a more intellectual satisfying one, especially to someone engaged in contemporary analytic philosophy of religion.

To examine how this might be so, I want to bring into conversation the Farabian account of prophecy in Islam with John Hick's broader theory of religion. According to Hick, the revelations or prophecies central to the world's great religions, develops from a "bottom-up" as opposed to "top-down" way. In other words, the major figures of these religions acquired prophecy—understood in terms of religious encounters with the ultimate reality that are shaped by the conceptual framework of the individual—due to their profound or heightened levels of spiritual awareness and moral character. Hick's theory of religion bears similarity with al-Fārābī's because both understand prophecy in this more "bottom-up" way. It is the implications of this understanding of prophecy that suggests it provides for a more intellectual satisfying account.

In al-Fārābī's case, it meant that the prophecy or revelation acquired by the prophet—due to his connection with the active intellect—was something comprehensible in itself to the prophet but requires symbolic and allegorical conceptual translation if it is to be understood and function as a means of guidance for the religious community at large. This implies that the teachings of religion are not necessarily true in themselves but simply bear a metaphorical representation of what is true in itself. In many ways this resembles Hick, because in his view, the major world religions are all true paths to the divine as they are all understood as metaphorical human attempts to render in our terms ultimate reality in itself. Both al-Fārābī's and Hick's view, thus provides a framework for religious pluralism, as prophecy or revelation in various traditions are not literally contradictory, for the expressions are metaphorical.

In bringing these two accounts together, I argue that a Farabian-Hickian view provides a potentially more intellectual satisfying account of prophecy than the traditional view. First, the possibility of religious pluralism makes more sense of the epistemic problem of religious diversity. Second, this account does away with many of the moral objections to Islam. And third, despite initial impressions, I argue that we can still salvage much of the traditional Islamic narrative on this Farabian-Hickian account.

Dr Jamie Turner
University of Birmingham

Jamie B. Turner is a post-doctoral researcher in philosophy at the Birmingham Centre for Philosophy of Religion, University of Birmingham. His doctoral work and research publications have focused on topics within contemporary philosophy of religion, approached from the perspective of ideas and concepts within the Islamic tradition. Jamie's work in Islamic philosophy of religion has primarily focused on themes within religious epistemology, such as the rationality of theistic belief and religious disagreement, often in reference to the thought of medieval Islamic theologian, Ibn Taymiyya. More recently, Jamie has been working on topics related to soteriology, theistic metaethics, and the problem of evil.

Professor Imran Aijaz

Hume's 'Of Miracles,' Islam, and Prophetic Revelation

Contemporary Philosophy of Religion has seen philosophers engage significantly with David Hume's influential essay 'Of Miracles' (*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,* Section X). The discussion of Hume's essay by these philosophers, primarily Christian (e.g., Richard Swinburne, William Lane Craig, Timothy McGrew, etc.) or atheistic (e.g., J.L. Mackie, Michael Martin, Michael Ruse, etc.), has centered on the force of Hume's argument concerning reports of miracles. There is a noticeable absence of Muslim philosophers in this discussion. In my paper, I argue that allowing this absence to linger is unwise for Muslim philosophers, especially if they are interested in upholding the intellectual respectability of Islamic belief in the public sphere. More specifically, I argue for the following:

(1) Although Hume's argument is mainly about miracles, which he defines as "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent," the logic of his argument may also be applied to the Islamic notions of prophecy (*nubuwwah*) and revelation (*waḥy*). Indeed, Hume himself, in his essay, thinks his argument has broader applicability, noting that it "may be applied, without any variation, to prophecies." As such, Hume's argument is relevant to prophecy and revelation in Islam;

(2) Once common misinterpretations and misunderstandings of Hume's argument are set aside, the argument has significant force. In his argument, Hume maintains that no report may have such force as to prove a miracle and make it a "just foundation of a system of religion." When scripture and tradition are considered merely as "external evidences," as he puts it, they do not lend themselves to a successful religious apologetic that vindicates the fundamental claims of religion;

(3) Hume's argument succeeds in showing that attempts in Islamic apologetics seeking to establish the truth of prophecy and revelation (e.g., as in the case of Muhammad being a genuine Prophet who received revelations from God) via scripture and tradition do not work; and,

(4) Given the success of Hume's argument, Muslim philosophers should rethink the epistemological foundations of prophecy and revelation in Islam, particularly if they think that these foundations rest on public evidence, examinable by all rational persons, vindicating the truth of Islamic belief and practice.

Professor Imran Aijaz
University of Michigan-Dearborn

Imran Aijaz is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. His research focuses primarily on Analytic Philosophy of Religion and Islamic Philosophy. Across these two areas, he is especially interested in the topics of faith and reason, religious epistemology, religious diversity, and religious pluralism. He also has an interest in Ancient Philosophy and its reception by Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thinkers in the Middle Ages. Aijaz's book, *Islam: A Contemporary Philosophical Investigation* (Routledge, 2018), brings reflection on many of these topics to bear on the Philosophy of Religion. He has also published several essays on these topics in various academic journals and books.

Professor Arash Naraghi

Fazlur Rahman's Approach to Quranic Revelation: An Analysis of the Psychological Dimension

Fazlur Rahman's theory of revelation represents a significant departure from the conventional "Dictation Theory," which posits the Quran as the literal, verbatim word of God, with the Prophet Muhammad serving as a passive recipient. Rahman's framework comprises three interrelated dimensions: metaphysical, pscyhological, and religious. The metaphysical dimension examines the nature of divine engagement with the Prophet, drawing upon philosophical insights from Farābī and Ibn Sīnā concerning revelation. The psychological dimension explores the internal process through which divine communication is experienced by the Prophet and subsequently articulated into language—a perspective influenced by Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi and Muhammad Iqbal. Finally, the religious dimension addresses the challenge of preserving the Quran's uniqueness as prophetic revelation while situating it within the context of divine communication.

This paper focuses specifically on the psychological dimension of Rahman's theory, particularly his account of the mechanism of revelation as received by "the pure heart" of the Prophet. Central to his explanation is the dynamic relationship between three key elements: "feeling," "idea," and "word." However, Rahman does not provide a detailed elaboration on how these elements interact; he merely cites Iqbal's assertion that "the idea and word both simultaneously emerge out of the womb of feeling" without further analytical clarification. Given the foundational role this relationship plays in Rahman's theory, it is imperative to elucidate the precise nature of this "emergence."

To resolve this ambiguity, this paper employs the concept of "inner speech" as developed by the American pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. By applying Peirce's framework, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of the cognitive and linguistic processes underlying Rahman's theory of revelation.

Professor Arash Naraghi
Moravian University

Arash Naraghi is Professor of Philosophy and Global Religions, and director of the Ethics Program at Moravian University in Pennsylvania (USA). His research focuses on Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Moral Theology, and Islamic philosophical theology.

Professor Mohsen Kadivar

Toward an Islamic Model of Revelation

In Islamic tradition, *waḥy* (literally "communication") and *tanzīl* (literally "sending down") refer to revelation as the transmission of God's message, rather than the "unveiling" of God Himself implied by the English term with its Christian connotations. Reflection on revelation across the Abrahamic traditions typically distinguishes between general revelation—knowledge of God derived from nature or human experience—and special revelation, which involves specific events, experiences, or teachings conveyed through prophets or other exceptional religious figures. From a monotheistic perspective, the natural order or natural law may be interpreted as part of general revelation.

This paper focuses on special revelation as understood within the Islamic framework, where faith in God is closely tied to the human response to God's special revelation. While these revelations were initially transmitted orally, all Abrahamic traditions have canonized them in sacred scriptures. Traditionally, special revelation has been viewed propositionally—as the communication of divinely revealed truths that humans are invited to believe. This understanding is commonly referred to as the Doctrine Model or Revelation as Doctrine.

Since the rise of historical-critical approaches to the Bible in the nineteenth century, non-propositional models of revelation have gained prominence. These models emphasize not the transmission of propositions but a relational encounter with the divine: "What God reveals is not information, but God Himself." Such perspectives often blur the line between general and special revelation and challenge the authority of propositional claims. While this paper critically engages with the non-propositional view within an Islamic context, its primary focus remains the propositional model.

Christian theologians have identified four major non-propositional models: the History Model or revelation through divine acts in history (e.g., G. von Rad, W. Pannenberg); the Inner Experience Model or revelation as personal religious experience (e.g., F. Schleiermacher, J. Wesley); the Dialectical Presence Model or revelation as existential encounter (e.g., K. Barth, E. Brunner); and the New Awareness Model or revelation as transformative consciousness (e.g., P. Teilhard de Chardin, P. Tillich). Jewish theologians have added two more: Revelation Without Content or the Interpretive Model (e.g., M. Buber), and Hermeneutical Revelation or the Postliberal Model (e.g., E. Levinas).

This paper advances two main claims. First, none of these six non-propositional Judeo-Christian models adequately captures the Islamic understanding of revelation. Second, while the Islamic model aligns more closely with the propositional Doctrine Model, it significantly diverges from both its Christian (e.g., T. Aquinas, C. Hodge) and Jewish (e.g., S. Gaon, J. Soloveitchik) formulations. An Islamic model of revelation, as proposed here, is one grounded in the principles of the Quran and the Prophetic Tradition.

Professor Mohsen Kadivar
Duke University

Mohsen Kadivar is a research professor of Islamic Studies at the Department of Religious Studies, Duke University (US). His work is at the intersections of "Islamic Studies", the contemporary "Intellectual History" in the Middle East, and the "Philosophy of Religion". His primary interests span both classical and modern Islamic thought. Kadivar is known for his work in advocating for the compatibility of modernity with reformist Islam. His books, "*Blasphemy and Apostasy in Islam: Debates in Shi'a Jurisprudence*" as well as "*Human Rights and Reformist Islam*," (both Edinburgh, 2021), reflect his arguments in this regard. He has authored numerous books and scholarly articles in Persian, some of his works translated into other languages. Kadivar's forthcoming books are titled "*Governance by Guardianship*," (Cambridge), and "*The Illusion of Islamic Theocracy*," (UNC).

Dr Amir Saemi

The Moral Function of Revelation in an Age of Reason

Modern believers often encounter scriptural passages that seem to be in tension with their independent moral judgments. The possibility of a clash between revelation and independent moral reasoning is vividly illustrated in Qur'anic stories such as Abraham's sacrifice and the encounter between Moses and Khidr.

This paper consists of two parts. In the *first part*, I argue that when revelation conflicts with our independent moral judgments, it is rational to rely on the latter. My argument is based on the idea that a conscientious believer must *minimize the wrongness of their actions* when faced with such a clash. Specifically, if a believer recognizes that complying with revelation would be seriously wrong, should revelation turn out to be mistaken—but does not know to what extent disobedience would be wrong if revelation proves true—then the principle of minimizing wrongdoing, I argue, would direct them to act in accordance with their independent moral judgments.

However, this conclusion raises an old and pressing concern, which I address in the *second part* of the paper. The worry is that if we should always rely on our independent moral judgments, revelation would become morally *redundant*. This concern has been addressed in numerous Islamic classic books of theology. For instance, al-Ghazālī refers to it as the *Brahima objection* to prophecy, formulating it as follows: "If a prophet is sent to relate something that agrees with the intellect, then it is dispensable for the intellect. In this case, the sending of the prophet is frivolous. If he is sent to relate something that does not agree with the intellect, then it would be impossible to believe and accept it."

This concern is particularly pressing for my account because, like the first horn of the dilemma, I argue that we must always rely on our independent moral judgments. In response, I contend that revelation not only provides motivational assistance but can also serve as a *religious extension of morality*—meaning that revelation can produce genuinely new reasons for believers.

These reasons align with a principle akin to Raz's "dependence thesis", which holds that new reasons generated by revelation should be based on reasons that independently apply to believers. In particular, revelation can generate two types of new reasons: *underdetermination-solving reasons* and *relationship-based reasons.* The former helps believers address *coordination, arbitrariness,* and *under-specification* problems in spiritual domains. The latter arises from the *special relationships* we have; since we already have reasons to comply with the wishes of those with whom we share significant relationships, revelation can assist believers in fulfilling those reasons by making God's wishes known to them.

However, I argue that the religious extension of morality must not conflict with our independent moral judgements. Religious morality should, therefore, *preserve* its core, which is the common- sense morality discovered by reason alone.

Dr Amir Saemi
Independent Scholar

Amir Saemi holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Santa Barbara, specializing in moral philosophy, philosophy of religion, and Islamic philosophy. His research has been published in leading philosophy journals, including *Ethics, Philosophical Quarterly, Analysis, Philosophy, Canadian Journal of Philosophy,* etc. His latest book, *Morality and Revelation in Islamic Thought and Beyond: A New Problem of Evil* (Oxford University Press, 2024), examines a new problem of evil raised by the tension between Scripture and morality. He has been an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM) and an adjunct professor of philosophy at Rutgers University, Rowan University, The College of New Jersey, and Temple University.

Dr Wahid M. Amin

The Quran as Divine Speech: Shīʿī *Uṣūlī* Thought and Speech Act Theory

Muslims believe that the Quran is the revealed speech of God (*kalām Allāh*), a "divine speech act" whose illocutionary force, it might be said, is to "guide those who are pious" (*hudā li-l-mutaqqīn*). This guidance operates through a complex array of speech acts: commands, prohibitions, promises, threats, reassurances, and more. In this paper, I examine divine speech acts in which God addresses specific audiences and ask the question: do *addresses* to specific audiences extend to others not directly addressed? To achieve this, I engage Shīʿī *uṣūlī* legal theory with contemporary philosophy of language, particularly focussing on the problem of *al-khiṭābāt al-shafāhiyya*. Do the commands and prohibitions that were initially addressed to a specific audience extend beyond their immediate contexts? How can divine speech maintain normative force for audiences who were not directly addressed at the time of revelation? These questions, central to Shīʿī *uṣūlī* thought, have engaged Imāmī legal theorists such as Mīrzā Qummī (d. 1231/1816), Ākhund Khurāsānī (d. 1329/1911), and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾinī (d. 1355/1937), to name but a few. Their explorations touch upon the universality of divine law, the contextuality of meaning, and the mechanisms by which legal norms transcend temporal and spatial boundaries. Drawing on modern philosophy of language, particularly John Searle's theory of speech acts and debates on the context-dependence of meaning, this study investigates how *uṣūlī* insights resonate with or challenge these contemporary frameworks. Ākhund Khurāsānī's emphasis on the rational intelligibility of divine discourse, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾinī's exploration of collective address and the forms these take in different propositional contexts, and Mīrzā Qummī's views on interpretive boundaries provide fertile ground for rethinking the hermeneutics of divine commands. By analyzing their approaches through the lens of modern linguistic philosophy, this paper argues that *uṣūlī* hermeneutics offers valuable perspectives on enduring debates about context-dependence in meaning and the universalizability of speech acts, thus illuminating the sophisticated mechanisms by which religious traditions navigate the tension between contextual specificity and universal application.

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Wahid M. Amin is Senior Lecturer in Islamic Philosophy at Al-Mahdi Institute and the Head of Publishing for AMI Press. He holds a BSc in Physics from Imperial College, London, and MPhil and DPhil degrees from the University of Oxford. His main interests lie in Islamic philosophy, Islamic intellectual history, Quranic studies, Shi'ism, and post-classical Islamic legal theory.

Shaykh Arif Abdul Hussain

An Inter-Quranic Contextual Analysis of the Nature of Revelation and the Revealer

The nature of Quranic revelation has occupied a central position within Islamic scholarship throughout history. Various theories have been proposed, ranging from the Prophet functioning as a mere conduit for the delivery of a predetermined text to the Prophet playing a crucial role in shaping both the content and the phraseology of the revelation.

Employing the inter-Quranic contextual method, this paper analyses key Quranic terms related to revelation and argues that the Quran is an articulation of amorphous meanings contained within the *Umm al-Kitāb*, delivered in the moment. In this framework, no fixed text precedes the Quran; rather, its physical words serve as verbal expressions of formless meanings, shaped by the Prophet's physical and psychological context as well as the broader community.

Through a literalistic analysis of key terms—*tanzīl, inzāl, rūḥ, talaqa, Qurʾān,* and *waḥī*—this paper contends that the Quran's production as a recital is enacted by God qua God. However, the speaker within the Quran is an agency distinct from God qua the ineffable. This agent of revelation speaks both individually and collectively, using pronouns such as "I" and "We," as well as "the Lord," whereas references to God—the ineffable—appear through the pronoun "He" and the designation "the Lord of the worlds."

In this respect, this paper situates the thoughts of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī on the nature of revelation and the revealer, highlighting his commitment to inter-Quranic contextualization and a literalistic interpretative method, as an introduction to its own thesis.

Shaykh Arif Abdulhussain
Al-Mahdi Institute

Arif Abdul Hussain is is the director and founder of the Al-Mahdi Institute, where he lectures in *uṣūl al-fiqh* and philosophy. He has been at the forefront of developing and delivering advanced Islamic studies in the UK and has been lecturing on Islam for over twenty years, having in the process attained an international reputation as one of the most critical thinkers in the contemporary Muslim world. He is also the author of the *Islam and God-centricity* series, a collection of works exploring the author's own existential philosophy and its application across a wide variety of theological and legal issues in Islam, as well as many other academic publications.

Dr Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari

Prophetic Wisdom in the Quran: Bridging Divine Revelation and Universal Ethical Principles

Divine revelation (*waḥy*) is central to Islamic tradition. A distinctive feature of this revelation in the Quran is its emphasis on the parallel workings of the *kitāb* (the Book) and *ḥikma* (wisdom). This integration highlights the prophets' mission to deliver divine law alongside nurturing ethical and spiritual consciousness. This integration positions wisdom as essential for contextualizing and internalizing divine commandments, bridging guidance's practical and philosophical dimensions.

The Quran explicitly attributes to all prophets the responsibility to teach both the divine law and wisdom. This pairing highlights the holistic nature of revelation, which not only prescribes rules but also cultivates an ethical and spiritual consciousness that transcends specific legal codes. Wisdom (*ḥikma*) in this context is more than a practical adjunct to law; it illuminates the purpose behind the divine commandments. Through wisdom, the prophets guide their communities in contextualizing divine laws, fostering a balance between external compliance and internal moral growth. This dimension of revelation invites humans to engage their *ʿaql* (intellect) and *fiṭra* (natural disposition) to harmonize their actions with universal ethical truths.

This paper investigates how the Quranic concept of prophetic wisdom (*ḥikma*) serves as a bridge between revelation (*waḥy*) and human understanding. It addresses questions: How does the Prophet teach wisdom—is it rational, spiritual, or both? How does the Quran articulate wisdom's universality and its role in uniting diverse cultures and religions to address shared human challenges? By exploring the interplay between *al-kitāb* (the Book) and *ḥikma*, the study emphasizes the Prophet's dual mission of delivering divine law (*shariʿa*) and cultivating a universal language of wisdom that transcends religious and cultural boundaries.

The Quranic emphasis on wisdom as a universal principle provides a foundation for addressing challenges at all times. Wisdom offers guidance for justice, environmental stewardship, and social harmony, enabling humanity to ground moral decisions in universal ethical principles. Moreover, the universality of wisdom fosters interreligious dialogue, offering pathways for collaboration to address global issues, transcending theological and cultural boundaries. Revisiting the Quranic paradigm of revelation and wisdom underscores its enduring relevance for contemporary society, enriching Islamic thought and paving the way for global harmony and understanding.

Dr Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari
Baylor University

Seyed Amir Hossein Asghari is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Baylor University. His main specialisms include interreligious understanding and the Islamic Intellectual tradition, notably Sufism and Shiism. His postdoctoral project involves a collaboration with Dr. Paul Martens on "Natural Law: Islamic and Christian Approaches." Also serving as a Senior Fellow at the Center for the Study of the Middle East at Indiana University, where he earned his PhD, Asghari's upcoming academic publication, "Scholars and Mystics," examines the dialogue between philosophy and Sufism in Shia Seminary.

Dr Celene Ibrahim

Ameliorating Gender Bias in Muslim Prophetology

In the sura of the Quran known as "The Prophets" (*al-Anbiyā'*), Maryam features as the final individual named in a series of over a dozen righteous figures, some of whom are described as "guiding imams," others as recipients of divine mercy or as possessing "judgment and knowledge," and others having been granted gifts and powers by God's leave. Here, Maryam is described as chaste and, alongside her son, "a sign (*aya*) for the worlds" (Q 21:91). Elsewhere in the Quran, Maryam is "purified by her Lord" and "chosen" for the unique task of giving birth to a "Word" from the divine (Q 3:42). To be sure, other individuals in the Quran are given the task of delivering God's revelatory "Word" (*kalima*) in the form of scripture: Maryam delivers this Word incarnate. Aside from the Prophet Muhammad, to whom, in an immediate sense, the whole of the Quran is directed, Maryam is the Quranic figure who has the most extensive conversations with divine messengers who announce her lofty status, foretell her miraculous pregnancy, and so forth. Maryam "was among the devoutly obedient" and "confirmed (*ṣaddaqat*) the words of her Lord and His books" (Q 66:12). In her youthful piety, she enjoys abundant divine provisions to the extent that they strike wonder in her prophetic caretaker (Q. 3:37). Given the example of this female figure, and others, what, then, is the nature of prophethood in the Islamic interpretive tradition such that an overwhelming majority of exegetes and theologians throughout Islamic history confidently exclude females from a category that is given admiration and the loftiest regard in Islamic sacred history? Are the rationales theologically and textually consistent, or do logical inconsistencies proffer grounds for alleging gender bias? Through an intra-textual reading of the Quran, including verses that touch on prophetology generally, such as Q. Yūsuf 12:109, al-Naḥl 16:43, and al-Anbiyā' 21:7, I offer suggestions for ameliorating religiously grounded sexism.

Dr Celene Ibrahim
Groton School

Celene Ibrahim is a multidisciplinary scholar whose works span Islamic intellectual history, gender studies, interreligious studies, and Muslim public theology. She is best known for *Women and Gender in the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 2020), which won the Association of Middle East Women's Studies Book Award and is forthcoming in several languages. She is the author of *Islam and Monotheism*, an accessible primer on Islamic theology (Cambridge University Press, 2022) and the editor of *One Nation, Indivisible: Seeking Liberty and Justice from the Pulpit to the Streets* (Wipf & Stock, 2019). Ibrahim is a trusted media commentator and is featured in the Netflix docudrama *Testament: The Story of Moses* (2024), among other films. She holds degrees from Brandeis University (MA/PHD), Harvard University (MDiv), Princeton University (AB), and serves on the Groton School faculty in Religious Studies and Philosophy.

PREVIOUS CONFERENCES

The Department of Islamic Philosophy and Theology held its inaugural academic conference on 20–21 February 2023, exploring Islamic Perspectives on God and (Other) Monotheisms. The two-day conference brought together leading scholars from around the world to examine the doctrine of divine unity (*tawḥīd*) from a range of historical, theological, philosophical, and contemporary perspectives. Through a series of panels, the conference addressed both intra-Muslim debates and interfaith encounters, engaging critically with the emergence of early theological schools, polemics with other religious traditions, and evolving understandings of God within Islamic thought.

The conference featured 17 papers presented across seven panels, covering a rich diversity of approaches—from classical Sunni and Shīʿī theology to Sufi theopoetics, and from philosophical critiques to comparative and interreligious dialogue. Participants offered fresh insights into figures such as Ibn Taymiyya, Suhrawardī, Ibn ʿArabī, and Rūmī, as well as reflections on contemporary challenges in a pluralistic world.

The papers from the conference have now been published into an edited volume titled "Islamic Perspectives on God and (Other) Monotheism(s)" available in paperback and hardback editions at **amipress.co.uk** and Amazon.
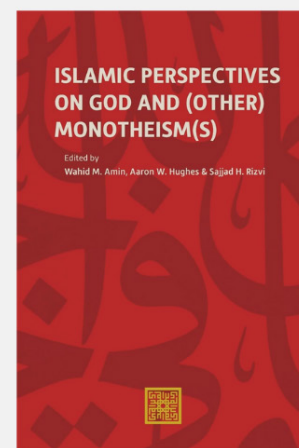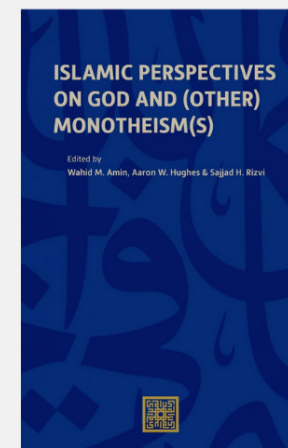
PAPERBACK EDITION **HARDBACK EDITION**

Islamic Perspectives on God and (Other) Monotheism(s)
edited by Wahid M. Amin, Aaron W. Hughes, and Sajjad H. Rizvi

Islamic Perspectives on God and (*Other*) *Monotheism*(*s*) examines the rich and often contested discourse surrounding the belief in God's oneness. Despite being a foundational tenet of faith, this doctrine has been the subject of intense debate across Islamic history, with scholars disagreeing on its precise nature, implications, and theological boundaries. Bringing together leading experts in theology, philosophy, and religious studies, this volume explores how different Islamic traditions have understood God's uniqueness. It addresses key debates surrounding divine attributes, God's relation to creation, and the problem of religious language, alongside the enduring tensions between philosophical reasoning and scriptural interpretations. The book also highlights intra-Muslim disagreements on the meaning of God's oneness, from disputes between Sunni and Shia scholars to competing perspectives within kalām, legal thought, and philosophical theology.

As the first in a three-part series on core Islamic doctrines, this volume offers a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the belief in divine unity, shedding light on both historical and contemporary discussions. Essential for scholars, students, and those interested in Islamic thought, it showcases the complexity of a doctrine that unites Muslims in belief yet remains a site of deep intellectual and theological engagement.

ABOUT AL-MAHDI INSTITUTE

Established in 1993, Al-Mahdi Institute (AMI) is an independent higher Education and Research Institute. Its primary focus is to provide a platform for open and critical scholarship that addresses the contemporary concerns of Muslims around the globe.

Through its educational programmes, AMI provides a platform for critical, innovative, and thought-provoking Muslim scholarship that bridges the gap between traditional Muslim seminaries and the contemporary study of Islam in modern academia.

At the core of AMI's research endeavours lies a steadfast commitment to addressing the practical challenges encountered by Muslims in their daily lives while engaging in critical discussions surrounding theoretical and theological issues in Islamic thought. By integrating traditional seminary methods with modern approaches to the study of Islam and Muslim society, AMI facilitates for the development of research that resonates within traditional seminary circles, academia, and society at large.

For more information on Al-Mahdi Institute and its activities, visit: **www.almahdi.edu**

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