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# Table of Contents

The Concept of Logos, Prototokos, and Nūr Muḥammad in Christianity and Islamic Tradition.	5-29
<i>Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin Ungaran@Rashid</i>	
Issues of Islamic Spirituality and Moral Excellence in Higher Education	31-49
<i>Mohd Mumtaz Ali</i>	
A Terminological Issue: Islamic Philosophy or “Philosophy in The Islamic World”?	51-60
<i>Megawati Moris</i>	
Quba’ Mosque through the Eyes of Non-Muslim Travellers and Explorers	61-86
<i>Spahic Omer</i>	
Al-Ma’ mūn’s Strategies on Standardisation of <i>Baytul-Hikmah</i> : An Antidote to the Decaying System of Education in Nigeria	87-100
<i>Muhammad-Busayri, Sulyman Sulaiman, Musa Mohammed</i>	
The Influence of Western Secular Ideas of Liberalism on Some Malay Muslim Intellectual Elites in Malaysia	101-116
<i>Nurul Aminah Mat Zain Che’ Razi Jusoh</i>	
<i>Da’wah</i> to Non-Muslims in Malaysia and Its Compatibility with the Principle of Freedom of Belief in Islamic Thought (الدعوة لغير المسلمين في ماليزيا ومدى انسجامها مع حرية العقيدة في الفكر الإسلامي)	117-131
<i>Masitoh Ahmad Jamil Hashim</i>	

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## The Concept of Logos, Prototokos, and Nūr Muḥammad in Christianity and Islamic Tradition.

W Mohd Azam bin Mohd Amin\*  
Ungaran@Rashid\*\*

### Abstract

This paper discusses the evolution of the doctrine of the first creation in religions of Abrahamic faith, especially Christianity and Islam, Christianity with the concept of *Logos* and *Prototokos*, and Islam with the understanding of Light of Muḥammad (*Nūr Muḥammad* or *Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyyah*). The development of these concepts exerts an impact in shaping the faith of these religions, especially on Christians and Muslims sufis and Shī'ites. This research employs the qualitative methodology in which materials that include holy scriptures, books, journal articles, and others are investigated and compared. Findings reveal that this doctrine exists in each religion, although it is absent in the religious scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, New Testaments, and the Qur'ān. The issue is due to the method of allegorical interpretation of certain verses of the scriptures that originated from Plato. This doctrine develops on the same framework of Neoplatonism despite different names of personalities.

**Keywords:** Logos, Prototokos, Neoplatonism, Theology, Comparative Religion.

### Introduction

The issue of the first creation before this universe was created has been discussed by many, including philosophers and religious people of world religions. The terminologies employed about the first creation after the existence of God are either *Logos* or *Prototokos*. Both terminologies are from the Greek language, and their translations are *Word* and *First Born* or *First Creation*, respectively. These terminologies have been used by religious and followers of Christianity since the early of Christianity until today. Consequently, this led to the emergence of

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varieties of denominations in Christianity. Moreover, the issue is also discussed among Muslims, especially by certain groups of Sufism as well as Shi'ism. Terminologies that connote the concept of first creation are the light of Muḥammad (*Nūr Muḥammad*), the reality of Muḥammad (*Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadī*), the Metaphysics Muḥammad (*Muḥammad al-Bāṭin*). Considerable research has been done on both religions, but only some have attempted a critical comparative analysis of both concepts. Therefore, this writing attempts to trace the concept back to the origin of Neoplatonism and the early development of Christianity, as they evolved together in their history. The Nicene crisis involved Arius (256-336M), who vehemently criticizes the concept of the Trinity defended by Athanasius (d.373M) is also discussed elsewhere in this writing. Prophet Muḥammad came amid the disintegration of Christianity and answered some of the contentious arising issues of this time. However, after almost 200 years of the demise of Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w), the same issue was raised and discussed in the Islamic world.

### **Christian Tradition of the Term *Logos* and *Prototokos***

The New Testament, the guidebook for Christians, mentions *λόγος* (*logos*) and *πρωτότοκος* (*prototokos*) in several letters. Interestingly, these two terms are associated with the person of Jesus, especially in the Gospel of John and the Letter of Colossians.

As widely known by Christians and Muslims, Jesus was delivered by Maryam (Mary) without a father. He also is identified as Messiah, speaking during infancy and performing other miraculous incidents, such as raising the dead body, that challenge man's reason. Furthermore, his mission is to worship One God and not the idols.

The Roman Empire detected Jesus's activities as challenging the government. The mainstream faith of that time is polytheism which includes worshipping goddesses such as Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, and others. Due to this reason, the Roman authority detained him because of the betrayal of his companion, Judas. In the Bible, Jesus died after being crucified, and after a few days, he was resurrected and ascended to heaven. Unlike Biblical understanding, Islamic theology believes that Jesus did not die because of crucifixion but ascended to heaven.

### ***Logos***

*Logos* in Greek is a translation of Hebrew דָבָר (*Dabar*) that connotes the word, speech, utterances, order, decree, action, and others. When the term *dabar* is translated into "word", it frequently employs the phrase

“word of the LORD (Yahweh)”, which rendered the word of God.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, some verses in the Jewish scriptures uses the word (*dabar*) as a figurative language, which means the decree of God. It also refers to the power of creation, the laws of nature or universe, and to punish.<sup>2</sup> In addition, *dabar* explains the unlimited power of God in the establishment of the universe, as well as to judge and to save. Thus, His word covers its implementation.<sup>3</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the Greek Septuagint is the translation of the Hebrew Bible three centuries before the birth of Jesus, and this translation interprets *dabar* as *logos*. One argument for how this Greek term came to be sensed in its New Testament scriptures comes from Philo (20 BCE), a Jewish Hellenist philosopher. Philo was a mystical Philosopher,<sup>4</sup> whose thought was influenced by Platonism dan Stoicism and was among the earliest intellectuals to integrate Jewish religion and philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

The words *dabar* and *logos* have similar understanding. *Logos* usually refers to any thing related to God, and He communicates with others, or invivable inward expression. This implies that the connotation of *logos* covers one’s speech and words, a statement, question, talk and order, proverb, saying, dictation, declaration, teaching, subject of discussion, revelation of God and so on.<sup>6</sup>

John, in his Gospel, states, “In the beginning was the Word (*logos*), and the Word (*logos*) was with God, and the Word (*logos*) was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1: 1-3) These verses raise two significant issues. Firstly, *logos* is equated with God because verse 1 says that the Word (*logos*) was God. Secondly, the third person pronoun should be translated as it, but in verse 3, it is interpreted as him. It would be valuable to discuss the two critical topics so that the understanding of *logos* as God can be seen from another perspective, which is not the status quo of mainstream Christian teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke (Editors), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (vol. 1)*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Ungaran Rashid, *The Meaning of Son of God*, (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press, 2021), p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Sott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity: The First Five Centuries*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> James K. Feibleman, *Understanding Philosophy: A Popular History of Ideas*, (New York: A Condor Book, 1973), p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> Ungaran Rashid, *The Meaning of Son of God*, p. 91.

Firstly, the verse in Greek states, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος (In the beginning was the word [*logos*], and the word [*logos*] was with God, and the word [*logos*] was God). The researchers examine the second and the third phrase. In the second wording, the word was with God (τὸν θεόν/*ton theon*), where the term God comes with the definite article. Meanwhile, in the third phrase, the word God (θεὸς/*theos*) stands without a definite article. Consequently, the meaning of God in the second and third phrases is different. In Greek, the word *theos* refers to many meanings: God, a god; the existence of divine beings; divine in nature; may also be employed figuratively, a human magistrate; or to the devils.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the use of the word *theos* to either God or a human is distinguished by just one article. An example of this is ὁ θεός (*ho theos*) refers to “the God”; ὁ (*ho*) is a definite article, similar to the article “the” in English.<sup>2</sup> Besides, there is another terminology that refers to *theos*, namely *logos*, which is a philosophical concept suggested by Heraclitus (578-480 B.C.E) that connotes the law of nature or the law of God that governs this universe.<sup>3</sup> One must be careful to translate the term *theos*, especially in the third phrase, for it can lead to a misinterpretation of the verse relatively. Choosing the devil or a god in this passage is inappropriate since this can bring to the understanding of false gods, but appointing the term God is also incorrect because the second phrase of the word *theos* is accompanied by a definite article while the third wording is not. So, two other alternatives, “a divine being” or “a divine in nature”, are more relevant.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, almost all English translations of the New Testament interpret *logos*, which should be translated into it; but it is interpreted as him in verse 3. It seems that the use of the third-person masculine pronoun him in this verse is connected to verse 14, which states, “The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” Most Biblical scholars agree that the word became flesh refers to Jesus. Interestingly,

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<sup>1</sup> William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 356-358.

<sup>2</sup> Ungaran Rashid, “A Muslim’s Brief View on the Trinity: The Doctrine of Oneness of God in Christianity”, *Al-Itqān: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*, Vol. No. 5, Issue No. 2, August, 2021, pp. 5-19.

<sup>3</sup> James K. Feibleman, *Understanding Philosophy: A Popular History of Ideas*, (New York: A Condor Book, 1973), p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Ungaran Rashid, *The Meaning of Son of God*, p. 93.

there is nowhere in the New Testament does say verbatim that Jesus is the word. So, personifying logos in all of its occurrences in the New Testament to Jesus is an inappropriate personification.<sup>1</sup> To gain a clearer understanding of the notion of *logos* becoming flesh, as written in John's prologue, further research is needed. However, John writes his Gospel generally to introduce Jesus as the Messiah, as mentioned in John 20: 31.

To examine the Christian teaching of *logos* equal to Jesus, one can relate the work of Philo of Alexandria, who integrated Greek philosophy and Judaism. He was contemporary with John the Baptist (d. 30 C.E) of Jerusalem and St. Paul (5-65 C.E) of Tarsus, Turkiye. Philo is well-versed in the Hebrew Bible and is reputed for Greek philosophy. He attracted disciples, one of whom was Ammonius Saccas (175-242 C.E) of Alexandria. Ammonius disseminated the teaching of Philo to a person by the name of Plotinus (204-270 C.E), to whom Neoplatonism is attributed.<sup>2</sup>

Philo learns Greek philosophy that includes Plato, who suggests that there are two worlds; the world of reason and the world of matter.<sup>3</sup> Although the world of matter suits human senses, Plato proposes two types of material; sensible and intelligible elements. Hence, there are two divisions of materials, the world of *form* and matter, or the spiritual and the physical world.<sup>4</sup> Plato believed the physical world was a prison for the spiritual world or soul. The soul must be freed from the body to function perfectly. Likewise, to attain knowledge, one must free oneself from the attractions of the physical body.<sup>5</sup> The material world basically is good in nature, and Plato suggests that the highest level in man's life is the intellectual and thinking about the forms, which are in the mind or reason.

Philo is well-versed in Judaism and integrates philosophical ideas into his religious framework, especially about the idea of God. He suggests that Plato's concept of the form or world of ideas is something in the mind of God. Furthermore, thinking about ideas and forms is the highest level of human life. The thinking about forms and ideas is the thinking about God. Philo further suggests that if contradiction took

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Navas, *Divine Truth or Human Tradition?*, (Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2007), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> James K. Feibleman, *Understanding Philosophy*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>4</sup> I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1991, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

place between Plato's idea and religion, the latter should be at the upper hand.<sup>1</sup> Since God is one in Judaism, Philo has added the idea of the mind of God which is absent in original teachings of Judaism.

Secondly, according to Plato, the nature of the material world, by nature, is inclined toward goodness. However, unlike Plato, Philo believes the physical world, by nature, tends to be evil. For this reason, man tends toward corruption. Plato is of the notion that evil is perpetrated by man because of mistake or misguide. Unlike Plato, Philo thinks that depravity is committed because of the attraction of lower lust and sensual desire of man. Therefore, man is also inclined toward evil naturally.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, according to Philo, the universe is the emanation of God's goodness. He believes that in the beginning, there is nothing except the God who begets the universe from Himself. He possesses all the attributes of kindness and perfection that later on emanate to bear other creatures. Unlike Philo, Plato believes that the act of creating comes under the jurisdiction of God, and He accomplishes his creation according to the model that already existed, which is the form. All these three views of Philo change the philosophy to the religious philosophy, especially Judaism.<sup>3</sup>

Then, Philo summarises that God is the only Principle of Unity, which led to the idea that He embodies all parts of this universe. There are many layers in Philo's ontological view, such as God and the world of ideas in which Logos is part of the unity of the concepts, divine spirit, angels, mankind, and the material world. Philo seems to have two methodologies in his undertaking; firstly, integrating some ideas of Greek philosophy with Judaism and defending the latter with the former's method. Secondly, he uses the allegorical method or interpretation popularised by Plato to explain some of the teachings of Judaism. Based on these approaches, he outlines some of the frameworks for Neoplatonism.<sup>4</sup>

### **Neoplatonism**

The original idea of Neoplatonism laid down by Philo is further outlined by Ammonius Saccas and systematically developed the framework of Plotinus. Plotinus summarises the reality of existence and suggests two

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<sup>1</sup> James K. Feibleman, *Understanding Philosophy*, hal. p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82-83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

types of beings; divine and non-divine. The highest of the divine hierarchy is God, the One who is the source behind the creation. Every creation will return to Him who possesses the attributes of goodness which emanate to beget other creations. The One emanates another entity which is the mind or intellect. It consists of the forms, the world of ideas, that are to be introduced to this universe. Meanwhile, the intellect is similar to the concept of *logos* which functions as the first principle of cause to the existence of this universe, which is similar to Plato's concept of *Demiurge*.<sup>1</sup>

The emanation continues to bear the third entity, namely the soul, which has two types; the higher and the lower. The higher level surpasses the material world, whereas the lower souls are within nature. That type of soul is in the physical creation or world of phenomena. Each soul is the emanation of the higher level soul. The knowledge of God flows together with the emanation that led one to inherit the divine knowledge (*gnosis*). That is probably a direct influence of the school of Gnosticism (*al-ghunūṣiyyah*) which was rampant during that time. Besides the concept of emanation of the One, Plotinus introduces the understanding of Salvation through the spiritual marriage or mystical union between the soul and the One.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of Neoplatonism evolves in parallel with the writing and compilation of the Gospels in Christianity. Since both of them used the Greek language as a medium of documentation, Neoplatonism exerts an impact on the followers of Christ such as Tertullian (160 C.E-220 C.E), Irenaeus (120 C.E-202 C.E), Clement (d.150-254 C.E), Ignatius (180 C.E), Origen (d. 185C.E), Athanasius (295 C.E-373 C.E) and others. The influence of Philo (20 B.C.E) and Ammonius (175 C.E-242 C.E) on the documentation of the Bible is so immense that the *Logos* has been personified as Jesus. Hence, the doctrine of the Trinity is gradually developed by the figures. Irenaeus holds that John heard the voice of the Father, and the holy spirit

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<sup>1</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> The soul wishes to unite with the One through the suffering and difficulty of climbing toward Him. The process can be attained through good morality and intellectual. Although Plotinus does not regard the world as evil, to achieve a mystical union with the One, one has to renounce worldly affairs to facilitate the intensity of intellectual activities. By practicing this process, one will gain a mystical union through the feeling of ecstasy in which the soul will attain the peak of love of the One. See, Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Philosophy: History & Problems*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), pp. 124-129.

descended like a dove during Jesus was baptized. This incident is called *vestigium trinitatis*, which led to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Tertullian is said to have become the first theologian to use the terminology of the Trinity and suggests three personalities that co-exist in one God; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three hypostases (*uqnum*) in one. The father is identical to the son (*homoousia*).<sup>2</sup>

Porphyry, a disciple of Plotinus, is said to have influenced St. Augustine (354 C.E-430 C.E) of Hippo and equates the concept of the Trinity with three faculties of man; memory, will and understanding, or the thinking, experience, and love. He also suggests some ideas, such as God becoming man, the doctrine of original sin, and others. Augustine develops one of some models of the Trinity by quoting some verses of the Old and New Testaments, for example, Genesis 1:26, “Then God said: Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea...” The words ‘Us’ and ‘Our’, according to Augustine plural in person, yet, God is one, according to Deuteronomy 6: 4, “Hear of Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” In addition, the metaphor of the human mind, knowledge, and love of Augustine is used to explain the theology of the Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian theologians developed the Father, Jesus (word or *logos*), and the Holy Spirit with the same framework of Neoplatonism, which consists of three entities in the mind of One; The One, *logos* (word), and the soul. They replace *logos* (word) with Jesus, the son of God. Hence, Jesus is considered the first existence begotten by God, and they are identical (*homoousia*) in every aspect.

To sum up, from the Hebrew word *dabar* and Greek *logos*, which are employed in the phrase, 'word of God' to mean the laws of God or the planning of God, the connotation changed in the hand of Neoplatonism. The Christian theologians introduce and add the concept of the mind of God or *logos*, which emanates from the One, by replacing

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<sup>1</sup> Origen employed the term *Monad* that refers to God and *Henad* to follow the existence of God. See, Ungaran Rashid, “A Muslim’s Brief View on the Trinity: 11. See also, Istvan Perczel, “God as Monad and Henad: Dionysius the Areopagite and the Peri Archon,” in Lorenzo Perrone in collaboration with P. Bernardini and D. Marchini (eds), *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition/Origene e la tradizione alessandrina: Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27-31 August 2001/Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium*; 164/, (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Uitgeverij Peeters), pp. 1193-1209.

<sup>2</sup> Ungaran Rashid, “A Muslim’s Brief View on the Trinity”, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

it with Jesus, the Son of God. Christian theologians interpret Jesus (word or *logos*) as the first existence that is begotten from God before the creation of Adam, by using the method of allegorical interpretation of Plato and Neoplatonism.

### **Prototokos**

The term *πρωτότοκος* (*prototokos*) is derived from the word *πρωτό* (*proto*), which means firstborn. One can find this term in the Septuagint 130 times, which is translation of *בְּכוֹרִים* (*bekōr*), the firstborn. The Septuagint uses this term to express two aspects, the first is the literal sense, which means the firstborn of man and an animal. The second is figurative, usually to indicate a special relationship with the father, especially with God.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the occurrence of the term *prototokos* in the New Testament is 8 times, which has similar understanding with the Old Testament, a literal and figurative senses. Unlike the Old Testament, the figurative meaning in the New Testament is applied as an appellation to praise Jesus.<sup>2</sup> The title of honouring Jesus is expressed in Colossians 1: 15-18,

“The son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether throne or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”

The concept of the first creation is slightly different from the Logos developed by Philo, Neoplatonism, and some Christian theologians. The understanding of *prototokos* (first creation) suggests that Jesus is the first creation or firstborn. Hence it implies that Jesus is the creation or created by God, and therefore is not begotten or emanated by God. A sound reason suggests that the Father has existed earlier than the son as the former. Through His decree, He created the latter from *ex nihilo*. If the

<sup>1</sup> Colin Brown (Ed.), *Dictionary of the New Testament Theology vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), p. 667.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 668.

Father begets the son, the Father should divide His essence. That will make the son a creature whose existence depends on the parent, or on the Father. In this case, the word beget is synonymous with creating, according to Arius. Hence, the presence of the Father has no beginning, but the son has.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Jesus is a creation of an uncreated God whose essence is indivisible.<sup>2</sup>

Besides, the Father already existed before He created time and minutes. Unlike the Father, the son did not present before other creatures were generated. If the Father and son existed from the beginning of time, there would have been no more monotheism, the belief in the oneness of God as transpired in the Old and New Testaments. Furthermore, the knowledge of Jesus does not exist simultaneously with the father. Unlike Jesus, who is called the word and wisdom, knowledge of the father originates from His essence, eternally, whereas knowledge of the former originated from the latter. In his theology, Arius believes in the pure Oneness of God, who is unique and independent that transcends the creation and universe.<sup>3</sup>

Arius further suggests that Jesus is the first creation (*prototokos*) of God, but his existence came before the creation of the universe. So, his existence is second after God. Therefore, Jesus is a creation and does not deserve to be God. Although Jesus is not similar to God (*homoiousia*), he is almost identical to Him as he is the original image of God, and other creations are created based on his model or prototype. According to Arius, due to this reason, Jesus is regarded as the perfect creature of God or the perfect man and deserves to be called the second Adam.<sup>4</sup> His idea is based on Philippians, 2: 6-9,

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.”

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<sup>1</sup> Ungaran Rashid, “A Muslim’s Brief View on the Trinity”, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 227. See also, Anthony McRoy, “The theology of Arius”, *Foundations: An International Journal of Evangelical Theology*, no.59, 2008, pp. 17-28.

<sup>4</sup> The idea of Second Adam is deduced literally from I Corinthians 15: 45-49 wherein one of the verses mentions “..the First man Adam became a living being; the Last Adam, a life-giving spirit..” The last Adam is taken literally as the Second Adam.

The concept of Logos was defended by one of the bishops of Alexandria, Athanasius (295M-373M), who suggests that God and *Logos* (Jesus) are identical (*homoousia*) as a result of hypostasis. With the help of the Emperor of Constantine the Great, who subscribed to this school, this belief was recognized by the Council of Nicea in 325 C.E and became the faith of some of the Christian followers.

Jesus is a perfect human nature as he humiliates himself to serve God and is regarded as the ideal man and allegorically interpreted as the second Adam. Moreover, his existence is before, nobler and higher in status than Adam esoterically. Thus, Jesus is the original form or idea, the first creation, and other creations exist through him (prototype).<sup>1</sup> Unlike Jesus, who is sinless, Adam, who is also an image of God, ate the forbidden fruit, thus leading to his fallible and fall from the garden. Hence, Jesus is loyal to God, as opined by St. Paul and subscribed by Arius.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, he is “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”<sup>3</sup> The concept of perfect man begins and gives birth to other terminologies, such as the archetype of existence, universal man, primordial lights, and universal logos, borrowed by other religions and groups.

Christianity spread in northern Africa, the Middle East, Turkiye, and Eastern and Western Europe. Various denominations emerged because of the Nicene conflict and other councils, in which the doctrines of Logos and Prototokos remained to become the faith of the Christians. The birth of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) in 571 C.E was a turning point whereby pure monotheism (*risālah al-tawḥīd*) was reemphasized. The propagation started roughly in 610 when the revelation was sent down to Prophet Muḥammad. The Prophet claims that he does not bring a new religion but a continuation of previous religion brought by prophets and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus holds that the intellect of Adam had not reached perfection, but it was much better than an animal's intellect. Without putting a timeline, Irenaeus is of the opinion that human reason would develop until it reaches maturity in accordance with time in the future. Meanwhile, St. Augustine suggests that eating the forbidden fruit started the problem of evil that led to the concept of original sin. Consequently, Adam was expelled from the garden of Eden. See, John H. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 44-48.

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 1:3. *Holy Bible*, New International Version, Colorado, International Bible Society, 1984.

messengers such as Jesus, David, Moses, Abraham, Noah, and Adam as transpired in the Qur’ān.

A western writer once observed that although Islam brought by Prophet Muḥammad propagates a pure monotheism, some of the Muslim figures still employed Philo’s methodology in integrating philosophy and religion. He says,

“All three of the great western world religions employed the same method once Philo showed the way. Philo, as we have already noted, through his pupil, Ammonius Saccas, taught Plotinus, and Plotinus thought that he would defend Greek religion, the religion of Zeus and the other Gods, by means of Neoplatonism, the new version of Plato’s philosophy, in a way that the Greek themselves had never done. Similarly, St. Augustine used Neoplatonism to defend Christianity, and a few centuries later Al Fārābī used Neoplatonism to defend new religion of Islam.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Islamic Tradition on the Concept of the First Creation**

In addition to the topic of Neoplatonism and the two Greek terminologies, *logos* and *prototokos*, this article discusses their influence in the Muslim world. In Islamic philosophy, this discussion comes under the topic of Ontology, and in traditional Islamic speculative theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), it is called *ghaybiyyāt* (metaphysics). From the Islamic point of view, the yardstick of this kind of knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) is the Qur’ān and the *Sunnah* only.

There was no concept of *logos* and *prototokos* in the first two centuries after the birth of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), as they are absent in the Qur’ān and *al-sunnah*. The Qur’ān renounces the similar concept of *logos* in Neoplatonism and Christianity as evident from the Qur’ān: “Say (O Muhammad): He is, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteh not, nor is He begotten; And there none like unto Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, Arius’ concept of *prototokos* (first creation) that differentiates between the *first Adam* and the *second Adam*, or between Prophet Adam (a.s) and Prophet ‘Īsa in terms of their creation, also rejected by the Qur’an, as mentioned in the Qur’ān, which says: “The

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<sup>1</sup> James K. Feibleman, *Understanding Philosophy*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qur’ān, 112: 1-4.

similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: ‘Be’. And he was.”<sup>1</sup>

In a tradition of the Prophet who sent a letter to Flavius Heraclius (d. 641 C.E), calling him to believe in pure monotheism (*risālah al-tawhīd*) said: *Fa in tawallayta fa inna ‘alayka ithma al-arīthiyyīn* (the sin of Arians).<sup>2</sup> The Arians seem to refer to the followers of Arianism who believed in the concept of *prototokos*, or the perfect man in Arian theology.

In the middle of the 3/9 century, some Muslim philosophers replaced the terminology of *logos* (mind of God) with *al-‘aql* (the intellect), but they maintained the framework of Neoplatonism. They are al-Kindī (180/796-259/873), Abū Bakar Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā al-Rāzī (249/863-313/925M), al-Fārābī (255/870- 339/950M), Ibn Sīnā (370/980-428/1037M) and others.<sup>3</sup> Al-Fārābī suggests that God is the intellect (*al-‘aql*) that thinks about Himself. This activity of thinking begets or emanates an entity. Hence, God is the first existence (*al-wujūd al-awwal*), and another entity brought out from it is the second existence (*al-wujūd al-thānī*) or the first intellect (*al-‘aql al-awwal*). Another existence that is from the activity of thinking is the first heaven (*al-samā’ al-ūlā*). The first intellect thinks about God (*al-wujūd al-awwal*), from which bears the third existence (*al-wujūd al-thālith*) or the second intellect (*al-‘aql al-thānī*). From this activity emanates the existence of planets (*al-kawākib al-thābit*). Al-Ghazālī virulently criticizes this way of reasoning.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Al-Qur’ān, 3: 59

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by Bukhārī.

<sup>3</sup> Harun Nasution, *Filsafat dan Mistisisme Dalam Islam*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Ghazālī (450/1058-505/1111) virulently criticized this theory in his books such as *al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl* and *tahāfut al-falāsifah*. Al-Ghazālī sometimes employed the words and referred to emanation (*fayḍ*), intellect (*‘aql*), and light (*nūr*) literally in his writings, but he did not subscribe to this philosophical theory. He suggested the principle of following the sunnah (*ittibā’ al-sunnah*) of the Prophet (s.a.w) in all of his frameworks. This can be seen in his book entitled *Kitāb al-Arba’īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, and others. See, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifah*, translated by Michael E. Marmura, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 68-71. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, translated by Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 85. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Arba’īn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, al-Qāhirah, Maṭba‘ah Kūdistān al-‘ilmiyyah, 1328AH, 102-105. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, 2 vols, (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-salām, 2007), pp. 9-10.

The concept of *logos*, *prototokos*, or the perfect man (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*) was contentious until the advent of Islam. However, other terminologies such as Light of Muḥammad (*Nūr Muḥammad*), the Reality of Muḥammad (*Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammad*), and the Metaphysic Muḥammad (*Muḥammad al-Bāṭin*) are employed in the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> The narrations on *Nūr Muḥammadī* or *Ḥaqīqat Muḥammadī* can be traced back as early as the second century of Hijrah, whereby some of the Shī‘ites doctrines were formed. It also coincides with the movement of translation of Greek legacy into Arabic, the *Bayt al-Ḥikmah* (the House of Wisdom). However, Sayyed Hossein Nasr, a Shiite writer, supports the concept of the perfect man by saying, “the universal or perfect man who contains within himself all the possibilities of universal existence and who finds his embodiment in the prophets and saints, foremost among them for Muslims being, of course, the prophet of Islam, who is *al-insān al-kāmil* the man par excellence.”<sup>2</sup>

One can see this concept in some of the Shiites groups, whereby one of whom is from the Twelver Shiite writer, namely Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad al-Kulaynī (255/864-329/940). The narration is attributed to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765),<sup>3</sup> who is said to have quoted from ‘Alī (d. 42/661):

“The Almighty God said, ‘Muhammad, I had created you and Ali, a spirit without a body, before I created the heavens, the earth, and my Throne, and you never ceased to glorify me. Then I gathered the souls of both of you and made them one soul, and you continued to hallow and magnify me. I divided your one soul into two, and the two into yet another two, and they became four souls; one became Muhammad, one became Ali, one became al-Husan, and the last became al-Husayn.’ Then created Fatima from the light and spirit without a body. Then God rubbed the Imams with His right hand, and His Light shone through all of us [the Imams].”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Khalil Andani, “Metaphysics Muhammad: The Nur Muhammad From Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765) to Nasir al-Din al-Tusi,” *Journal of Sufi Studies*, 8 (2019), pp. 99-175

<sup>2</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London: Mandala Books, 1979), p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Khalil Andani, “Metaphysics Muhammad”, pp. 99-175.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Kulayni, *al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfi*, 2 vols, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1968), p. 140.

This narration is called *Nūr Panjtan*, or the light of five. They are Muḥammad, ‘Alī, al-Ḥassan (d.50/670), al-Ḥusayn (d.60/680), and Fatimah (d.11/632).<sup>1</sup> Detail analysis of the above narration found the *Nūr Muḥammad* or *Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadi* does not refer to the Prophet Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh, who was born in 571 C.E, but an entity that is not mentioned in the Qur’ān and the authentic *aḥādīth*. This *Nūr* is believed to be similar to prototokos or Jesus, as subscribed by Arius and his followers, for it is created by God.

It seems similar to *logos* subscribed by the Christians on the concept of the Trinity. Detail analysis of the narration reveals that there are only three original entities; Allāh, Muḥammad, and ‘Alī, comparable to the Neoplatonic framework; the One, mind, and soul. The only difference is that God created, not beget, the two entities. In parallel with the doctrine of *prototokos*, God had created the Light of Muḥammad before Prophet Adam, even before this universe. The creation of all of them is caused by the light of Muḥammad, as it is the original prototype of everything. A Fatimi preacher (*dā’ī*), namely Tāhir Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥārithī al-Yamanī (d. 1188), narrated as follows: “I and Muḥammad, are of one light, which by God’s command was split into two halves. To the one-half, God said, ‘Be Muḥammad,’ and to the other, ‘Be ‘Alī’.”<sup>2</sup> In addition, most Shiite sects believed this light is included in Adam, whose descendants will emerge as the awaited one (*al-Mahdī al-Muntazar*). For the Twelver Shiites, the awaited one will be their twelfth Imam, who will bring the real al-Qur’ān and interpret it. All of their Imam are infallible as the light of Muḥammad is in their bodies. Meanwhile, the Ismā‘īlī Shiites believe that the Aga Khan is the manifestation of God.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystery of Numbers*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 115-116.

<sup>2</sup> Sayyiduna Tahir Ibn Ibrahim al-Harithi al-Yamani, *Kitāb al-Anwar al-Latifa*, as quoted from Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> As for the Shī‘ah Ismā‘īliyyah, Imam Aga Khan is the manifestation of God. It is worth mentioning that the Fatimid dynasty of Egypt begins from 297/910 to 566/1171. It was established originally by ‘Abd Allāh al-Mahdī (d. 322/934), the descendant of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, in Ifrīqiya (Tunisia) and conquered the Egypt in 969 C.E. Majority of the population of Egypt and Ifrīqiya are Christian Coptic who tried to be independent after the Council of Constantinople in 451C.E. The Fatimid dynasty is the descendants of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Imam of the Shiite started with Saidina ‘Alī, al-Ḥassan, al-Ḥusayn, ‘Alī bin al-Ḥusayn, Muḥammad bin ‘Alī, Ja‘far bin Muḥammad. One of the followers of Ismā‘īlī Siism, namely Būluṣ (Paul) Ibn Rajā’ converted to Christianity. See, Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā‘īlis: their history and doctrines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 552-553. David Bertaina, *Būluṣ Ibn Rajā’: The*

Nasr describes that all founders of religions are *Logos*, just as Jesus in the Gospel of John. He suggests that all the prophets are aspects of universal *Logos* or the reality of Muḥammad, the first creation, through whom God considers to create all existences. Therefore, the being of Muḥammad is *Logos* since he existed before the presence of other prophets. The writer then refers to a narration that Muḥammad is a prophet during Prophet Adam was in the form of a mixture of water and soil (*fa kāna nabīyyan wa ādam bayna al-mā' wa al-ṭīn*). Exoterically, Muhammad is the last and the seal in the series of prophethood.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he says, “In every religion the founder is identified with the *Logos*, as we read in the beginning of the Gospel according John, ‘*In the principio erat verbum*’, that is, that which was in the beginning was the the Word or *Logos* identified with Christ. Islam considers all prophets as an aspect of the *Universal Logos*, which in its perspective is identified with the ‘Reality of Muḥammad’ (*al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah*), which the first of God’s creation and through whom God sees all things.”<sup>2</sup>

In line with the doctrine of *prototokos*, the above quotation presumably shares the same framework of Arius regarding the first Adam and second Adam (Jesus) that led to the Nicene Crisis. Like Jesus, who is the second Adam, Muhammad is the first creation of God esoterically before other prophets, including the prophet Adam, are created. He is the universal man or primordial man (*al-insān al-qadīm*), perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and macrocosm (*‘ālam al-kabīr*). The author goes on to opine that this is the meaning of the spirituality of Islam.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Nasr writes, “He is both the Universal Man and the Primordial Man (*al-insān al-qadīm*). As the universal man he is the totality of which we are a part and in which we participate; as the primordial man he is that original perfection with respect to which we

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*Fatimid Egyptian Convert Who Shaped Christian Views of Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 2022), pp. 7-8.

<sup>1</sup> S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> The Arabic version of this narration is as follows: ‘**Anā Aḥmad bi lā Mīm, wa Ana ‘Arab bi lā ‘ayn, man ra’ānī fa qad ra’a al-ḥaqq**. Esoterically, Muhammad united (hypostasis) with God. In the Persian poem, there is an explanation of the alphabet **mīm** in the above narration. The **mīm** is that which distinguishes the esoteric meaning of Ahmad from God. **Mīm** is also a symbol of the prophet Ahmad’s return to his originality, death, and resurrection to his eternity in the world of reality. S.H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, p. 89.

are decadance and a falling away. The Prophet possessed eminently both the human (nāsūt) and spiritual (lāhūt) natures. Yet, there was never an incarnation of lāhūt into nāsūt, a perspective which Islam does not accept. The peophet did possess these two natures and for this very reason his examples possible the presence of a leader of man”<sup>1</sup>

During the time of al-Ghazālī, he described this kind of sect as *al-Bāṭiniyyah*, *al-Qarāmiṭah*, *al-ta’līmiyyah* and others. This led al-Ghazālī to author a book entitled *Faḍā’ih al-bāṭiniyyah wa faḍā’il al-mustazhiriyyah*<sup>2</sup> in which he criticizes the batinites’ doctrines.

In the 4/10 century, a group of philosophers, namely *Ikhwān al-ṣafā’* (the brethren of purity), tried to integrate ancient Greek philosophy, sciences, and religion of Islam using the methodology of Neoplatonism. Many scholars assume that this group is part of the Batinites Ismā’ilites, one of whom is I. R. Netton. He wrote a book entitled *Muslim Neo-Platonist* refers to *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’* by saying, “the phrase ‘Possessors of the Meanings’ is a likely reference to the doctrine of *bāṭin* and *ẓāhir*, expounded by the Ismā’īlī sect, in which bodies of scripture like the Qur’ān had an exoteric and esoteric meaning; while the title ‘Lords of the Truths could have been coined by a Ṣūfī.”<sup>3</sup>

### **The Light of Muḥammad (Nūr Muḥammad) and Sufism.**

In Sufism, as far as it can be ascertained, Sahl al-Tustarī (203/818-283/896) of Baṣrah is among the first to employ the term Light of Muḥammad (*Nūr Muḥammad*) in his work entitled *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*.<sup>4</sup> He interprets the Quranic verse 30 of chapter al-Baqarah (*innī jā’il fī al-arḍ khalīfah*) by saying that the word *khalīfah* refers to Prophet Adam, who was created from soil that originated from the Light of

<sup>1</sup> S.H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> This sect often made some attack to the territories that were governed by the caliph al-Mustazhiri in Baghdad in which al-Ghazālī was a professor in the Nizamiyyah college. During this time al-Azhar was an educational center established by the Fatimid dynasty. Some of the doctrines that were criticised by al-Ghazālī were the infallible imam of the group of Ta’līmiyyah. The imam is the awaited *al-mahdī al-muntzar* which never appeared. Other doctrines that were criticised by al-Ghazālī were *al-sābiq* dan *al-tālī* or God and Logos, *monad* and *henad* that exist simultaneously. Al-Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih al-bāṭiniyyah wa faḍā’il al-Mustazhiriyyah*, tr. R.J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pp. 196-197.

<sup>3</sup> I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neo-Platonists*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Abū Muḥammad Sahl al-Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-ḥurm li al-turāth, 2004), p. 91.

Muḥammad (*Nūr Muḥammad*). Sahl believes that the existence of light was before the existence of this universe. Other contemporaries ṣūfīs to Sahl are Abū Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910) of Baghdād and his disciple, the famous al-Ḥallāj (d.309/922) for uttering the phrase ‘I am the Truth’ (*Anā al-ḥaq*). Due to this incident, after the dismissal from al-Junayd’s class, al-Ḥallāj went to Sahl’s class in Basrah. Knowing the rejection made by al-Junayd, Sahl also rejects al-Ḥallāj to whom the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* is attributed for his association with some of the Shiites.<sup>1</sup>

The followers of Sahl formed a group named the Sālimiyya. It was a school of dogmatic theologians (*mutakallimūn*) with mystical leanings. According to Massignon, this school of thought was formed among the Malikī Sunnis in Baṣra in the third and fourth centuries of the *Hijrah*.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the real founder of this school of thought was Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūnus al-Tustarī, who was born in Tustar in 208/818. He was noted for his piety and was an eminent ṣūfī of his time. He died in Baṣra in 283/896.<sup>3</sup> Besides, a recent study on Sahl has shown that he was a prolific writer, and many treatises were attributed to him, such as *Kitāb Laṭā’if al-Qiṣaṣ*, *Risālat al-Manhiyāt*, and others.<sup>4</sup> G. Böwering also made a beneficial contribution in his study of *Kitāb Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān* which was published in 1980.<sup>5</sup> Sahl attracted many disciples and students to study under him. These followers bore the name Sahliyyah. According to Böwering, three of the disciples of Sahl al-Tustarī made great efforts to compile and edit his *Tafṣīr*. They were ‘Umar b. Wāṣil, Abū Bakar Muḥammad b. al-Ash‘ath al-Sijzī and Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Sālim.

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d.386/996) refers to Sahl on the teaching of *nūr muḥammad*, who says that when God wills to create Muḥammad,

<sup>1</sup> For the detail of al-Ḥallāj’s association with the Shiites’ figures see L. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*,

<sup>2</sup> Lois Massignon, “Sālimiyya”, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Old Edition 1913-1936), (Leiden: E.J. Brill)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Other writings are *Risāla fī al-Hurūf*, *Kitāb Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*, *Kitāb al-Mu‘ārada wa ‘l-Radd ‘alā Ahl al-Firāq wa Ahl al-Da‘wa fī al-Aḥwāl*, *Kitāb Daqā’iq al-Muḥibbīn* and so on. The most important treatise of his is *Risāl fī al-Hurūf* which was treated in depth by M.K. Ja‘far in 1965. This information is based on G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Hermeneutics of The Ṣūfī Sahl al-Tustārī*, Berlin, 1980

<sup>5</sup> G. Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Hermeneutics of The Ṣūfī Sahl al-Tustārī*, Berlin, 1980.

He illuminates the light from His lights.<sup>1</sup> The light that lighted up from God's light was probably the Light of Muḥammad. His teachings are explained by a famous Shiite ṣūfī figure named Abū al-Ḥassan al-Daylamī (d. 392/1002) in a poetic style of writing. The doctrine of *nūr muḥammad* and *al-insān al-kāmil* continue to be systematically interpreted by the great master Ibn 'Arabī (d.1240 C.E) in his works, such as *al-futūḥāt al-makiyyah*, *fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, and others. Arabi categorizes the prophets and messengers in the same category as the saint (*walī*). Just like Prophet Muḥammad is the seal of the Prophets, he is the seal of the saints (*khātim al-awliyā'*) and the pole of the saints (*walī quṭb*) of his time. His teachings are interpreted by some of his loyal disciples such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī (d. 1274), 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (1252-1335), 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (1365-1424) and others.<sup>2</sup>

Before Sahl, a Mu'tazilite, 'Amr ibn Baḥr Al-Jāhiz (160/776-255/869) mentioned in his book entitled *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* on the concept of human perfection in creation comparison with animal and other creations. Prophet Adam is described as a microcosm, the son of the great cosmos, while the macrocosm is the universe. However, Jāhiz's explanation on this issue is directed to compare humans and animals just as that of *De Anima*, authored by Aristotle, who discusses the level of the animal soul.

One of the Ash'arite scholars, namely al-Jurjānī (1009-1081), defines *al-haqīqah al-muḥammadiyyah* as "It is the Essence (of God) at the stage of first determination. He is the greatest name" (*hiyā al-dhāt ma'a al-ta'ayyun al-awwal. Wa huwā al-ism al-a'zam*). Before the first determination, it is called non-determination (*lā ta'ayyun*) when He (God) is called *hu*, a third implied personal pronoun<sup>3</sup> to whom it refers is unclear. At the level of second determination (*ta'ayyun awwal*), the essence (*dhat*) is called *huwā* (He). It is the third implied personal pronoun (*ḍamīr mustatir*) which refers to anyone, which is clear. At the level of third determination (*ta'ayyun al-thālith*) and so forth, the essence (*dhāt*) is called *Allāh*. That is the greatest name of God.<sup>4</sup> Al-Jurjānī indirectly refers to the doctrine of Logos in Neoplatonism and

<sup>1</sup> Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *ʿIlm al-Qulūb*, (Al-Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Qāhirah, 1964), pp. 93-94.

<sup>2</sup> An influential Catholic Christian figure at this time was St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who came from Italy. He studied the method of Islamic kalām knowledge and used it to defend Christian doctrines.

<sup>3</sup> *ḍamīr al-mustatir* or implied personal pronoun.

<sup>4</sup> 'Alī bin Muhammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt*, (Jeddah: al-Ḥaramayn, n.d.), p. 90.

Trinity in Christian theology. It is not created by God but begets from the essence of God.

Considerable orientalist such as A.H John, Annemarie Schimmel, and U. Rubin deal with the doctrine of The Light of Muḥammad as to whether it originates from Islam.<sup>1</sup> Some believe that it emerges from Neoplatonism and Christianity that seep into Sufism, while others do not. Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003),<sup>2</sup> an author of many books, some of them related to *Nūr Muḥammad*, specifically in the *And Muḥammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. She also makes a passing statement in her books, such as the *Mystical Dimension of Islam, As Through a Veil Mystical Poetry in Islam, The Mystery of Numbers*, and others.

Schimmel analyses writings of Sufism in many languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Hindustani, and Turkish. They are related to the doctrine of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the Light of Muḥammad (*nūr muḥammad*), the reality of Muḥammad (*al-ḥaqīqat al-muḥammad*) and others. She suggests that the doctrine of the Light of Muḥammad and the like emerge and develop in the writings mainly whose authors are Persian and Hindustani. Most of the writings are included in Islamic poetry with metaphorical expression and allusive sentences such as poetry (*shi'r*), *mathnawī*, *qawwali*,<sup>3</sup> and others.

In other words, the writing of the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* is in the poetic style and metaphorical expression, and should be understood figuratively, such as poetry (*shi'r*) *Mathnawī*,<sup>4</sup> *Ghazal*,<sup>5</sup> *Qasīdah*,<sup>6</sup> and others. They are adoration and appreciation of the efforts made by the

<sup>1</sup> For example, Annemarie Schimmel, A. H. John, and U. Rubin, whose views are quoted elsewhere in this writing. Annemarie Schimmel **And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety**, Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1985. A.H. Johns, "Malay Sufism", **Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society**, vol.xxx, pt.2, 1-112. U. Rubin, "Pre-existence and light: Aspects of the concept of **Nūr Muḥammad**", *Israel Oriental Studies*, V, 62-119.

<sup>2</sup> Schimmel is chosen for her mastery of more than seven languages that include Persian, Hindi, Arabic, Turkish, and others..

<sup>3</sup> Qawwali is a form of Sufi Islamic devotional singing, originating in India. Originally performed at Sufi shrines or dargahs throughout South Asia.

<sup>4</sup> An extensive poem written in Persian established by Jalāl al-dīn al-rūmī.

<sup>5</sup> The ghazal is a form of amatory poem or ode, originating in Arabic poetry.

A ghazal may be understood as a poetic expression of both the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in spite of that pain.

<sup>6</sup> Religious chant in Arabic. For example *Qasīdah burdah* by Imām al-Buṣṣirī and Sayyid Ja'far's *Mawlid Barzinjī*.

Prophet to humans, which do not base on authentic *ḥadīth*. Consequently, throughout time this kind of writing is understood literally. Schimmel says,

“However, one must keep in mind one important fact: even though Muhammad was elevated to luminous heights and reached a position comparable, in certain ways, to that of the Logos in Christian theology, yet even as the Perfect Man he remained ‘*abduhu*, God’s servant and His Creature- the most beloved of His creatures, to be sure. Even though some poets seem to transgress the proper limits in their encomia, the idea of incarnation in the Christian sense was and is absolutely impossible in the Islamic tradition.”<sup>1</sup>

The remark made by Schimmel is in line with the finding of the methodology of *muḥadīthīn* that concluded that there is no authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and a good (*ḥasan*) *ḥadīth* that narrates about the doctrine of *Nūr Muḥammad* and *Ḥaqīqat al-Muḥammadiyyah*. The claims that the narrations are in the lost manuscript of *Muṣannaḥ* ‘Abd al-Razzāq (d.211/827)<sup>2</sup> is also questionable as the style of the script of the photocopied manuscript is modern. All of the narrations are included in the veneration of the Prophet and are analyzed by a scholar of *ḥadīth*, namely Adab Maḥmūd al-Hamāsī.<sup>3</sup> Some writings in Persian and Hindustani were translated into Malay under the category of The Malay Islamic Hikayat (*Sastera Hikayat Melayu Islam*).<sup>4</sup>

Unlike Schimmel, A. H. Johns suggests that the doctrine of the light of Muḥammad is originated from Logos. He says,

“In certain development of thirteenth century Sūfism is to be found a departure from three cardinal doctrines of Islam: God, the transcendent ruler of the world has become Being existing under aspects of immanence and transcendence, in the visible world term “*khalk*”, and as God termed “*Hakk*”; Muḥammad the servant of God and His Apostle has been metamorphosed into an archetypal being who existed before creation and into whose mouth was put the alleged tradition: I was a prophet while Adam was between clay and water”, and this archetypal

<sup>1</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>2</sup> Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Razzāq bin Hummām al-Ṣan‘ānī, *al-Juz’ al-Mafqūd min Juz’ al-Awwal min al-Muṣannaḥ*, (Dubai: N.Publisher, 2005), pp. 18-22.

<sup>3</sup> Adab Mahmud al-Hamasi, (tr.) *Salah Faham Tentang Nur Muhammadi*, trj. Abdullah al-Qari, (Kota Baru: n.p.), 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Ismail Hamid, *The Malay Islamic Hikayat*, (Bangi:Penerbit UKM, 1983).

being becomes a type of Logos standing between God and His creation.”<sup>1</sup>

In Sufism, this doctrine is related to the concept of the perfect man (*al-Insān Kāmil*), which means the perfect creation. Through this perfect man, the universe is created. This concept is suggested by Ibn ‘Arabī and further interpreted by ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī.<sup>2</sup> Johns goes on to explain that this doctrine is of Platonic origin by saying,

“From the same sources Islam incorporated a Logos doctrine, and in some of the Ṣūfī writings we find Muḥammad fulfilling the various activities of the Logos syncritized by Philo who treats of it sometimes as the creative Word of God, sometimes as the revealer of God symbolized in Scripture as the angel Jahweh, sometimes-after a Platonic concept-as the sum total of ideas and intelligible World and sometimes, after the Stoic theory as the power which upholds the world, the bond that assures its cohesion and the law that determines its development.”<sup>3</sup>

According to Schimmel although the Prophet is only an ordinary human being, he was venerated by some until he is equated as God esoterically. This is because the metaphorical expression is understood and taken literally. Unlike Schimmel, A. H. John bluntly claims that Islam has borrowed this idea from Philo. Consequently some of the ṣūfīs equate the Prophet Muḥammad with Logos as understood by Neoplatonism and some followers of Christianity.

An article written by Imtiyaz Yusuf says that the Muhammadan Light (*Nūr Muḥammadī*) equals Amitābha Buddha or the Buddha of Infinite light.<sup>4</sup> According to Yusuf, this is because the Qur’an makes distinct exclusivist, obvious inclusivist, and pluralistic statements about other religions in Arabia and its vicinity. He tries to find the parallelism between Islam and Buddhism, especially the Light of Muhammad and

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<sup>1</sup> A.H. Johns, “Malay Sufism”, *JMBRAS*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> John T. Little, “*Al-Insan al-Kamil*: The Perfect man according to Ibn al-‘Arabi”, *The Muslim World*, January, 1987. Pp. 43-54; see also Geofferey Parrinder, *Mysticism in the World’s Religion*, (London: 1976), pp. 138-139.

<sup>3</sup> *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, *Art, Logos* as quoted from A.H. Johns, “Malay Sufism”, *JMBRAS*, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Imiyaz Yusuf, “Nūr Muḥammadī, Muhammadan Light, and Amitābha/Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light- A Muslim’s Comparative Theological Perspective”, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 42 (2022), p. 353.

the Primordial light attained by Sidharta Gautama. He quotes the Qur'anic verse about light<sup>1</sup> that describes Allāh as light and draws similarities between Islam and the limitless light or Amitābha or Amida of Buddhism. Moreover, he says:

“Although Muslims are generally selective about these different interpretations regarding *Nūr Muḥammadī*, I accept both interpretations of *Nūr Muḥammadī* as (i) pre-existence of Muhammad, which preceded the creation of Adam and (ii) later interpretation of the term as referring to the person of Muhammad as *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, the “perfect” human being to include different theological and spiritual trends of the wide Islamic world.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Yusuf accepted that the theory of Light of Muhammad is similar to that of Arius's concept of Prototokos, or the first creation of the second Adam. In this case, the question that comes to our mind is who came earlier between Jesus and Muḥammad esoterically since both theories claim the same premise of existence before Adam. This impasse question led us to consider the views of the *muḥaddithūn* and Schimmel, who believe that the understanding of the Light of Muḥammad comes from inauthentic narrations that employ allusive language in the veneration of the Prophet Muhammad and can only be understood figuratively.

In conclusion, the doctrine of Logos, Prototokos, Light of Muḥammad, and the perfect man stem from Philo, who mixes Plato's concept of form with Judaism's concept of God. This idea, later on, is taken by Plotinus, who outlines the Neoplatonic framework that consists of the One, the Mind, and the soul. Eventually, Neoplatonism is adopted by some Christian bishops to develop the theology of the Trinity. The same doctrine seeps into the Muslims, especially the Shiites and some philosophical ṣūfīs to establish the teaching of the Light of Muḥammad.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Qurʿān, 24:35.

<sup>2</sup> Imiyaz Yusuf, “Nūr Muḥammadī, Muhammadan Light, and Amitābha/Amida Buddha, the Buddha of Infinite Light- A Muslim's Comparative Theological Perspective”, p. 353.

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