



Bird of the Soul

Opening the Cage Door to Enlightened Scriptural Interpretation

Saturday, July 20, 2024

9:30 am to 2:30 pm

(no charge, lunch provided)

Columbus Marriott Northwest

5605 Blazer Parkway

Dublin, 43017

RSVP to Fazeel S. Khan

at fazskhan@aol.com by July 6, 2024

Presented by Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society hosts a symposium each year that offers an opportunity to better understand the spiritual basis of the religion of Islam. This year, we will be presenting on the subject of scriptural interpretation. In particular, we will discuss how familiar stories from scripture can be understood in ways that reveal their transcendental meaning, thereby bringing the narratives to life in a more pragmatic way.

A common metaphor found in the spiritual tradition of Islam is that of a bird in flight representing a soul having attained union with the Divine, soaring above the confines of this material world. Maulana Rumi hints at this potential for spiritual elevation within each one of us by writing:

“You were born with wings, why do you prefer to crawl through life?”

According to Islam, the guidance provided in scripture is an essential part of this process of attaining a close and intimate connection with the Divine. But simply reading or reciting the literal words from a religious text is not what is intended. The Quran repeatedly instructs the reader to “ponder” and “reflect” upon its message. Reading scripture is, therefore, to be a contemplative exercise, involving meditation, reflection and introspection. As a result, the various stories contained in scripture are not to be understood as mere tales of yore, but rather are to be examined through the lens of seeking spiritual insights necessary for spiritual progress. Just as opening a cage door frees a bird and enables it to take flight, so too can appreciating the underlying spiritual lessons in scriptural narratives liberate the soul and allow it to ascend to great spiritual heights.

Please join us as we explore the spiritual lessons contained in popular stories from the Holy Quran, including the story of Adam (and creation), the story of Noah (and the flood/ark), and the story of Moses (and his interactions with Al Khidr). We are also very pleased to have **Prof. Omid Safi** (Director of Duke University’s Islamic Studies Center, author of *Radical Love*) participate again this year. Prof. Safi will present on the classical work *The Conference of the Birds* by the renowned 12th century Sufi philosopher and poet Farid-ud-din Attar.

We look forward to you joining us for the program!