

role and function of prophets may positively improve the Christian perception of the prophethood of Jesus. Dr Denny Clack (College of Idaho, USA) observed that Nursi's understanding of prophethood provides helpful avenues by which Muslims and Christians may better understand one another, as well as their own respective scriptural traditions.

In my own paper I sought to analyse the issue of the necessity of prophethood in building a true civilisation with special reference to al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Said Nursi. The ideas of these three thinkers agree that humans cannot achieve their main goal – *felicity (sa 'ādah)* – without living in society, and that their most fundamental requirement is religious guidance as revealed by prophets. True civilisation capable of making humans happy, fulfilled and enjoying egalitarian justice originates from divine laws. Based especially on the thought of Said Nursi, my paper emphasised that besides establishing the worship of One God, the mission of prophets also includes implementing economic and political justice, social stability, ethical enhancement, and inspiring peoples toward material progress through technological and industrial developments.

This symposium was a successful event which offered positive hope for the welfare of human society through applying the legacy and wisdom of the prophets, and for the positive future role religions should play for establishing peace, harmony and stability among mankind.

**3<sup>rd</sup> SOASCIS International Conference [SICON] 2013:  
'Towards a Healthy Youth Culture'  
(Brunei Darussalam, 6-8 November 2013)**

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A three-day international conference in Bandar Seri Begawan, the third in the annual series organised by the Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Centre for Islamic Studies (SOASCIS) at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam, was held on 6-8 November 2013. The theme was *Towards a Healthy Youth Culture: The Role of Islamic Family and Educational Values*. Key objectives of SICON 2013 were: (1) to obtain a better understanding of the state of health of contemporary Muslim youth culture, including the symptoms and underlying causes of social diseases or serious threats affecting youth; (2) to find ways and means of overcoming these trends, particularly by making use of the traditional resources and values of Islam to develop effective practical strategies to create a healthy youth culture; (3) finally to provide input for policy makers and implementers responsible for youth development and welfare. This focus was a follow-up on youth issues

treated during the successful SICON 2012 conference. International speakers attended from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Russia, the United States and Australia.

The conference was opened by Pehin Dato Hj Abdul Aziz, former Brunei Minister of Education. Pehin dealt with identity challenges Brunei youth face in the context of the Bruneian Malay Islamic Monarchy model, and suggested that while the Malay component may weaken the role of Islam will likely be enhanced but not at the expense of ignoring the rights either of non-Muslims or Muslims. He said the recent implementation of the Shariah Criminal Code is one step towards promoting an Islamic civilisation in which Brunei fosters its identity for the future. In his keynote address Professor Osman Bakar, Conference Chairman and Director of SOASCIS, portrayed the meaning and characteristics of a healthy youth culture and how to create this within an Islamic perspective. Bakar stressed the importance of healthy role models, exemplified in the Prophetic Model (*uswat hasanah*) and the Perfect Man (*al-insan al-kamil*). The second keynote was delivered by Professor Hussin Mutalib who discussed the experience of Muslim youth in Singapore. In a secular state with material objectives they are under pressure to perform well among their non-Muslim peers in the education system while maintaining a balance in seeking Islamic knowledge which becomes a severe challenge.

A broad coverage of topics followed, which we highlight several. Dr Gabriel Haddad stressed the need for balance in youth obtaining not only good grades but praying regularly on time, practicing *dhikr* and developing character since good character traits and morals define Islam. Key issues were raised by speakers from developing South Asia (Fareed Malik) and Africa (Jibrail bin Yusuf), where late marriage has detrimental knock-on effects in Nepal, while in Ghana there is a tendency for males to practice polygamy without having the means to support their large families. Imam Achmat Salie discussed more effective learning approaches in coaching youth to greatness which recognises that “hilarity and holiness” are not mutually exclusive approaches. His experience teaching at a Jesuit university indicates how much the two communities could benefit one another. Umar Batchelor and Dr Daud Batchelor addressed the need for improvements to Australia’s education system, particularly the focus on education for employment, ignoring metaphysical considerations, a “one size fits all” approach, and the need for more respectful relationships between teacher and pupils, for the crucial importance of developing good *akhlaq* in students. Indonesian philosopher Professor Muliyadi Kartanegara, outlined the issue relating to modern science education with its hidden value system which often contradicts Islam, and helping youth cope with this challenge. Professor Dato Dr Mohd Yusof Othman spoke on the need for students to develop the faculties of

not only *objective* knowledge but also *subjective* knowledge essential for training men and women with good manners and spiritual values. Mohamad Raimi bin Ab Rahim discussed the post-Independence model of an eminently successful moderate Muslim youth organisation, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), which promotes “Islam as a Way of Life”.

In his closing remarks Professor Osman Bakar identified 28 broad issues raised by the speakers. Closer interaction is needed between scholars and the wider public to resolve youth problems within the *Ummah* which demonstrates both diversity and unity. The root causes should be identified and solutions sought from the Qur’an and Sunnah through a group approach applied in local communities using the strategy of *al-amr bi-l-ma’rūf wa nahyi ‘an al-munkar*. Professor Bakar emphasised that more needs to be done in Muslim societies to prevent *munkar* (the reprehensible).

**African and West Asian Nations [AFWAN] Conference 2013:  
Can Peace and Stability Be Restored in North Africa and West Asia?  
(Kuala Lumpur, 18 November 2013)**

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University of Malaya inaugurated a new academic focus on ‘African and West Asian Nations’ (AFWAN), led by its dynamic International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA), with support from the government’s Prime Minister’s Department. This one-day symposium joined leading thinkers and officials in Malaysia with international scholars, policy makers and INGOs. They offered rich insights into unfolding dynamics of that region’s socio-political changes, with which Malaysia is increasingly building linkages. The internationally syndicated American columnist Eric S. Margolis delivered a perceptive address on how the AFWAN region is covered in Western media. Speakers from Japan, South Africa, Australia, Iran, Lebanon and Egypt took part, treating sociological, financial, and ideological dimensions. The success of this meeting was largely due to its careful conception by Professor Dr Mohd. Hazim Shah Abdul Murad (University Malaya), and the professionalism of the INPUMA staff. Among the more notable presentations were a penetrating overview of market financialisation by Dr Ali Kadri (now at NUS, Singapore), detailed statistical analysis of “Arab Spring” discourse in Arabic academic journals and books by Professor Sari Hanafi (AUB, Beirut), and assessing the degradation in Muslim identity induced by Sunni–Shi‘ah discord by Dr Karim Crow.