



ANGELS IN JALAL AD-DIN RUMI'S MATHNAWI

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study has extracted from Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, an exposition of Islamic angelology - a cosmological discipline of essential importance in Islam. By honing in on couplets directly or indirectly referencing angels, and taking into account the antitheses of the non-angelic nature, a lattice of Islamic angelology was extracted from the *Mathnawī*. What was achieved was a distillation of Rūmī's understanding of the relationship between Allah and His creation, the man-angel connection, and the cosmological status of both angel and man. The study found that Rūmī was of the mindset that if one is to perceive the truth, then the angelic light is the lens through which one must view the cosmos, for the angelic intellect is primed to aid the lover (man) in seeking his Beloved (Allah). The angels are lovers of the Adamic soul, fosterers of the human spirit - they are the well-wishers and devotees of man. The destinies of man and angel are inextricably intertwined, hence man cannot deny the angelic presence if he is to realise his potential as Allah's *khalīfa* (vicegerent). A correct understanding of the Creator and His Creation is only possible if one listens with the heart to the angelic inspirations, and follows in the footsteps of the prophets.

ملخص البحث

استخرجت هذه الدراسة من مثنوي مولانا جلال الدين الرومي، الرؤية الإسلامية لعلم الملائكة ، وهو مجمل جوهرى في الإسلام وقد تم التوصل لهذه الرؤية من خلال المراجع التي تناولت علم الملائكة بصورة مباشرة أو غير مباشرة ، وقد تضمن ذلك حتى العناصر التي تخالف الملائكة في طبيعتها . وما تم تحقيقه كان استقطاراً لفهم مولانا الرومي للعلاقة بين الله وخلقها، وعلاقة الإنسان والملائكة ، وكذلك المكانة الكونية لكل من الملائكة والإنسان لتصل الدراسة إلى أن مثنوي مولانا الرومي يدعي العقلية التي يمكن لمن أراد الحقيقة أن يصل إليها عن طريق النور الملائكي الذي هو بمثابة العدسة التي بها يجب على المرء أن يرى الكون ، ولذلك فإن الفكر الملائكي عنصر أساسي لمساعدة المحب (الرجل) في الوصول إلى الحبيب (الله) . فالملائكة محبون للروح الأدمية، كما أنها ترعى الروح الإنسانية فهم المهنون والمحبون للإنسان. فمصير كلاً من الإنسان والملائكة متشابه ليس له فكاك، وبالتالي فإن الإنسان لا يستطيع أن ينكر الوجود الملائكي إذا أدرك إمكانيته كخليفة لله سبحانه وتعالى. فالفهم الصحيح للخالق ولخالقه لا يمكن تحقيقه إلا إذا استمع المرء بقلبه إلى الإحياءات الملائكية، واتباعه خطى الأنبياء صلوات الله وسلامه عليهم.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts (Islamic Science).

.....
Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak al-Aidrus
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts (Islamic Science).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

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Signature.....

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In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

Glory be to you, O Allah, and all praises are due unto You. And blessed is your name. And high is Your Majesty, and none is worthy of worship but You. O Allah, let Your Peace come upon Mohammed and the family and followers of Mohammed, as you have brought peace to Ibrahim and his family and followers. Truly, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious. Allah, bless Mohammed and the family of Mohammed, as you have blessed Ibrahim and his family. Truly, You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

It is only through sincerity that one can tap into the intangible *khaloos* (sincerity) that permeates the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, and share with others the spiritual gems that are to be found in Rūmī’s poetry. *Terima kasih* to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak al-Aidrus for sharing his “Rūmī experience” with us students, and for stressing to us all the importance of not limiting oneself to a mere academic study of the *Mathnawī*, and encouraging us (by example) to seek the *Mathnawī*’s treasures with the heart - the seat of sincerity.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Words are alive; cut them and they bleed” - Ralph Emerson.

Life is subject to change. That which evokes emotion, challenges the mind and moulds one’s character cannot be classified as dead, for stagnancy is a mark of death. Words then, are alive, for they have the power to touch hearts. It is through words that inner beings are manifested to the world, for speech and writings are crystallisations of intangible inner selves at selected moments in time. Men have life spans, and so do the literary works they write. When books are read and recited, thereby imprinting the mind with the weight of their meaning, they live and breathe. When they are folded up, forgotten, and no longer resonate, they are rendered mute, and consigned to the graveyard.

The world’s acclaimed works live long, and share one commonality: irrespective of the era and cultural backdrop in which they make their first appearance, they address questions that have long perplexed the human mind. Philosophers and sages throughout the ages have pondered over the whys and wherefores of the nature of existence, the reality of the cosmos, man and Allah Himself. The sacred books of the Abrahamic faiths (the Qur’ān, the Torah and Bible) all wax forth on these time-old queries, as do the Vedas, and the teachings of the Buddha and Confucius.

Of the books mentioned, the Qur’ān is the last to make its appearance onto the world stage, and it is unique in that it is immutable, for the Author Himself has assumed its guardianship:

The lovingkindnesses of God made a promise to Mustafā (Mohammed), saying, “If thou shalt die, (yet) this Lesson (the Qur’ān) shall not die. I am exalting thy Book and Miracle, I am defending the Qur’ān from those who would make it more or less. I am exalting thee in both worlds, I am driving away the scoffers from thy Tidings. None shall be able to make additions or omissions therein. Do not thou seek another protector better than Me.” [M III 1197-1200]¹

The Divine Word is timeless, for it encompasses both space and time; and unlike texts written by men, knows no life span. The Qur’ānic narrative is forever fresh; no other book is read, memorised (in its entirety), and lives in the breasts of men quite like “the Recital” (The Qur’ān). Throughout the centuries, there has been many an enlightened sheikh that has interpreted “the Reminder” (The Qur’ān), and there are numerous Qur’ānic commentaries. Of them all, Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī’s *magnum opus*: The *Mathnawī* has the distinction of being called the greatest commentary of the Qur’ān in verse. A mystical poem that is still recited and interpreted by scores of individuals world over, this lengthy (some 25,000 couplets)² and centuries old, literary masterpiece, brings to the surface from the depths of the Qur’ānic narrative, spiritual gems.³ In the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī’ brings forth from the mine of treasure (i.e. the Qur’ān) rubies and pearls; he polishes and presents them to the spiritual layman, so that the latter may also take steps in transmuting the soul from copper into gold.⁴

The *Mathnawī* does not limit itself to commentary of the Qur’ān, it expounds upon the wisdom of the one to whom the Book was revealed; the one who “...was the

¹ Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawī of Jalalu’ddin Rūmī: edited from the oldest manuscripts available: with critical notes, translation & commentary*, translated from the Persian by Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2004), 518.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Teachings and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, (Oxford: One World Publications, 2000), 357.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

Qur'ān come-to-life.”⁵ Therefore, the best interpreter of the Qur'ān is the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah’s salutations and peace), for it is:

...in the countenance of that unique Pearl (Mohammed) I have beheld the signs of Thy grace, O Bounteous One; For he doth not resemble us, though he is of us: we all are (as) the copper, while Ahmad (Mohammed) is the Elixir. [M IV 990, 991]⁶

As for Rūmī’s *Mathnawī*, Nūr ad-Dīn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Jāmī’ once said, “What can I say about the greatness and the attributes of the friend of Allah? His *Mathnawī* is a matchless ocean of wisdom.”⁷ Jāmī’ was not alone in recognising the greatness of Rūmī’s *magnum opus*. The Ottomans accorded the *Mathnawī* the title of “sharīf” (honourable), a title that they bestowed upon only two other texts: the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah’s salutations and peace) as collected by Imām Bukhārī and the other a biography of the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah’s salutations and peace) titled *Shifā’ al-Sharīf* by Qādī ‘Iyād.⁸ When a testimonial from the Prophet of Islam (upon whom be Allah’s salutations and peace) himself is given, the lofty status accorded to the *Mathnawī* is assured. Rūmī’s biographer Aflaki narrates that, “...Husamuddin Chelebi dreamt that he saw the Prophet (upon whom be Allah’s salutations and peace) with the *Mathnawi* in his hands, reading from it and praising its author.”⁹

⁵ Osman Nūri Topbaş, *The Exemplar Beyond Compare Muḥammad Mustafa (s.a.w)*, translated from the Turkish by Erdiñç Atasever (Istanbul: Erkam Publications, 2009), 48.

⁶ Rūmī, *The Mathnawī...*, 777.

⁷ Osman Nūri Topbaş, *From the Garden of the Mathnawi: Tears of the Heart, Rumi Selections*, translated from the Turkish by Sencer Ecer, Abdullah Penman, ed. Selman Slocum (Istanbul: Erkam Publications, 2005), 10, 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *I am wind you are fire: the life and works of Rūmī*, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1992), 114

There is more to what is said (or written) in the *Mathnawī* though, for two persons may say the same thing; the speech of one may touch the heart, a similar account made by the other may miss the mark. Rūmī says in his *Mathnawī*:

The imitator brings on to his tongue a hundred proofs and explanations, but he has no soul. When the speaker has no soul and (spiritual) glory, how should his speech have leaves and fruit? He boldly directs people in the Way (to salvation), (though) he is more tremulous (infirm) in soul than a blade of straw. Therefore, though his discourse may be splendid, tremor (infirmity) is also latent in his discourse. [M V 2480-2483]¹¹

Rūmī lives and breathes in his *Mathnawī*, the sincerity of feeling is palpable, and that is why, to this day, his discourse resonates with millions worldwide. As a first time reader of the *Mathnawī* once commented, “I may not understand what is being said, but I can taste it.”

Numerous labels have been attached to Rūmī’s literary masterpiece; it has been described as a font of wisdom, a love poem, a spiritual guide that leads man back to Allah - all of which are true, but perhaps the aptest characterisation is found in the *Mathnawī* itself:

Every shop has a different (kind of) merchandise: the *Mathnawī* is the shop for (spiritual) poverty, [M VI 1525]¹²

Our *Mathnawī* is the shop for Unity: anything that you see (there) except the One (God) is (only) an idol [M VI 1528].¹³

The common thread that weaves the stories of the *Mathnawī* together is Unity. Allah is the First, and He is the Last - everything other than Him will perish, and the *Mathnawī* is a work that is a testimonial to His Oneness. That is why the *Mathnawī* is still relevant, for in the end, only that which pertains to Him is valid. Bearing

¹¹ Rūmī, *The Mathnawī...*, 1105.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1299.

¹³ *Ibid.*

testimony to His Unity is the axle upon which the cosmos rotates, and the *Mathnawī* expands upon the subtleties of how different entities manifest their own principle of Unity.

A pristine manifestation of the principle of Unity is the angelic worship of Allah. The angelic manifestation of “There is no god but Allah” has been included as a co-witness to Allah’s own declaration of His Oneness. The angels have been thusly honoured, for they are the messengers bearing the news of His Unity to the rest of creation.

God and the angels and those learned in the sciences (of divinity) bear witness that there is no Lord except Him who endureth for ever. Since God hath given testimony, who are the angels, that they should be associated in the testimony? (They are associated) because unsound (weak) eyes and hearts cannot support the radiance and (clear) testimony of the Sun, Like a bat, which cannot bear the glow of the sun and abandons hope. Know, then, that the angels, as we also, are helpers (co-witnesses)—displayers of the sun in heaven— [M I 3645-3649]¹⁴

As angels are messengers that relay the principle of Unity to the rest of the cosmos, it follows that the angelic presence and the human existence are inextricably intertwined; this was the belief of the followers of traditional cosmologies, as St. Thomas Aquinas once said, “All corporeal things are governed by the angels. And this is not the teachings of the holy doctors, but of all philosophers.”¹⁵

St. Thomas Aquinas represents the man of yesteryears, and the men of yesteryears were not victims of the myopic understanding of the cosmos that is scientism: a world-view that stems from a sceptical mindset and employs a reductionist approach in understanding the world. Proponents of scientism limit their

¹⁴ Rūmī, *The Mathnawī*..., 218.

¹⁵ Jean Danielou, *The Angels and their Mission*, (New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2009 edn., 2009), 3.

understanding of the cosmos to empirically provable postulates. A belief in Allah is considered at best, a possibility. There is no room in scientism's technical framework for the unveiled; hence it is impossible for proponents of scientism to appreciate reality in its totality. If one is to gain a deeper insight into the nature of existence, the unseen realms (inclusive of the angelic realms and their inhabitants) must be taken into consideration.

The creation of man, prophecy, natural events, worship, death and the resurrection - all demand the angelic presence. Man's standing in the cosmos cannot be understood in the absence of angelic light, for:

Angelic light is the means of visibility of light on earth, both material and spiritual. We know about the sun from its rays. Similarly, we know about God from the creations of the heavens and the earth, the perception of which is brought about by the shining of angelic light upon them and their expression through revelation by that light. There is no darkness for us deeper than the non-existence of angelic light. There is no light of God more expressive for us than the angelic light. The appearance of each single thing is the result of this light, just as the existence of each thing proceeds from its existence. In this way, God preserves creation through the light of the angels.¹⁶

It can thereby be stated that to understand the natural world inclusive of ourselves, we must study and understand the celestial realms and their inhabitants, i.e. the angels. Angelology, a discipline that has fallen by the wayside, must be revived as:

...angels are the means whereby God reveals the theoretical framework for a good and wholesome life, and also the means whereby He provides the intimate, luminous guidance through which people move toward Him on their own "night journeys."¹⁷

¹⁶ Shaykh Muḥammad Hisham Kabbani, *Angels Unveiled: A Sufi Perspective*, (Chicago: Kazi Publications Inc., 1995), 11.

¹⁷ Sachiko Murata, "Foreward" in *Angels Unveiled: A Sufi Perspective*, by Shaykh Muḥammad Hisham Kabbani, (Chicago: Kazi Publications Inc., 1995), ix, x.

Treatises (many of which date to the medieval era) have fleshed out the principal framework of Islamic angelology - the basis of which is found in the Qur'ān. The sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah's salutations and peace) expand upon the tenets of Qur'ānic angelology, and both sources serve as the foundation on which treatises (related to Islamic cosmology) such as the *'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt: Wonders of Creation* by Abū Yaḥyā Zakariyā' ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī are based.¹⁸ Sachiko Murata offers a distillation of the cosmological science, and makes mention of the foremost works written on the subject (such as the renowned polymath Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Sīnā's work titled: *Treatise on the Angels*),¹⁹ in an essay titled "The Angels."

An exposition of Ibn Sīnā's angelology in the English language may be found in *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*. The treatise was first translated into French from Persian by the orientalist Henry Corbin; it was Willard R. Trask who then translated Corbin's work into English.²⁰ A doctoral thesis (that has been published as a book) by Stephen Russell Burge titled: *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's Al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik*, focuses attention on angelology as defined by Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī al-Khudayrī.²¹

¹⁸ Helga Rebhan, *Die Wunder Der Schopfung the Wonders of Creation: Handschriften Der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek Aus Dem Islamischen Kulturkreis*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 62.

¹⁹ Sachiko Murata, "The Angels" in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 326, 327.

²⁰ Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, translated from the French by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1960).

²¹ Stephen Russell Burge, *Angels in Islam: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī's Al-Ḥabā'ik fī akhbār al-malā'ik*, (London: Routledge, 2011).

From Ibn ‘Arabī’s several opuses on Islamic cosmology translated into English by William C. Chittick,^{22,23} to Shāh Walīullāh’s section on the angels in his treatise titled *Alṭāf al-Quds*,²⁴ and Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’ulūm al-dīn* (namely the text titled, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife. Kitāb dhikr al-mawt wa mā ba’dahu. Book XL of the Revival of the Religious Sciences*),²⁵ detailed understandings of the angelic personality and angelic cosmic role may be gleaned.

There are also works by Muslim philosophers that have incorporated non-Islamic “angelologies” into their expositions: Shahāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Habash al-Suhrāwardī built upon Ibn Sīnā’s cosmological schemes, and pre-Islamic Zoroastrian angelology to articulate his own theories in *The Songs of Gabriel*.²⁶ A modern day exposition of Islamic angelology, that is in keeping with the inner tradition of the Islamic faith is a book titled *Angels Unveiled: A Sufi Perspective*²⁷ by Shaykh Muḥammad Hisham Kabbani. Kabbani draws upon the Qur’ān, sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah’s salutations and peace), and classical *sūfi* texts to highlight key features of Islamic angelology. Another modern day book that is more a

²² William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

²³ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

²⁴ Shāh Walīullāh, *Alṭāf al-Quds: Sacred Knowledge of the Higher Functions of the Mind*, translated from the Arabic by G.N. Jalbani, ed. David Pendlebury (London: Octagon Press, 1982), 98-103.

²⁵ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife: Kitāb dhikr al-mawt wa mā ba’dahu. Book XL of the Revival of the Religious Science: Ihyā’ulūm al-dīn*, translated from the Arabic with an introduction and notes by T.J. Winter (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1989).

²⁶ Murata, “The Angels.” in *Islamic...*, 326, 327.

²⁷ Kabbani.

product of its time than Kabbani's treatise is *The World of the Noble Angels: in the Light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah* by 'Umar S. al-Ashqar.²⁸

In *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Teachings and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, Franklin D. Lewis outlines the translational trends and commentaries of Rūmī's works inclusive of the *Mathnawī*.²⁹ Rūmī's is still affecting change as translations of his poetry are ongoing processes; one of the latest developments being the complete translation of all six volumes of the *Mathnawī* into Bahasa Melayu - an undertaking accomplished by Prof. Dr. Ajmal Mohamed Abdul Razak al-Aidrus.³⁰

It was R.A. Nicholson who first translated Rūmī's *Mathnawī* in its entirety into English - the British orientalist's translation and commentary of Rūmī's masterpiece was made available to the public over the course of several years (from 1925 to 1940).³¹ It is Nicholson's translation of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* that will be quoted in this thesis, for though the literary style is abstruse, and the (literal) translation may be faulted for some inaccuracies, Nicholson enabled Rūmī to speak to the English reader across the centuries, by minimising the inevitable filtration that accompanies all translations. Rūmī's personality comes across in full colour in Nicholson's translation of the *Mathnawī*, and the latter achieves this by becoming colourless himself. Nicholson took the utmost care in not letting his own voice stymie the flow of Rūmī's

²⁸ 'Umar D. al-Ashqar, *The World of the Noble Angels: in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah*, translated from the Arabic by Nasiruddin al-Khattab (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2nd edn., 2005), 29.

²⁹ Lewis, 467-615.

³⁰ Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, *Karya Agung Mathnawi Jalaluddin Rumi*, translated from the English by Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak al-Aidrus (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Berhad, 2011).

³¹ Rūmī, *The Mathnawī*..., 6,7.

narrative, and this is why his efforts have been preferred over the efforts of other well-known translators of Rūmī's works (E.H. Whinfield³² and A.J. Arberry).³³

With regards to approach, the commentaries on Rūmī's poems are as varied as the translations of his treatises. Rūmī's poetry has been interpreted from viewpoints that are at significant variance with one another: the popular Coleman Barks renditions of Rūmī's poetry seek to uproot it from the Islamic world view in which it is embedded,³⁴ whereas the Persian poet Jāmī' asserts, "The mystic *Masnavi* of our Rūmī: Koran incarnate in the Persian tongue! How can I describe him and his majesty? Not prophet but revealer of a Book."³⁵ Muḥammad Iqbal, the Indo-Pak subcontinent philosopher and poet (1873-1938), thought along the same lines as Jāmī' and "...regarded the *Masnavi* as the second most important book after the Qur'ān, and advised Muslim intellectuals to read it."³⁶ In Iqbal's own words, "The master of Rum transmuted my earth to gold/And set my ashes aflame."³⁷

The scope of Rūmī's *magnum opus* is wide of breadth and deep of depth; hence it is possible to apply a multitude of approaches in trying to understand it. These viewpoints may be classified according to the dimensions in which they fall: horizontal, vertical and sphere-like comprehensive understandings. Approaching Rūmī's *Mathnawī* horizontally entails limiting oneself to the constraints of the parameter that is time. History is a horizontal progression, and theories such as Darwinism are linear as they fall into said category; a study on Rūmī's views on social

³² Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, *Masnavi i ma'navi: the Spiritual Couplets of Maulana Jalalud-Din Muḥammad i Rumi*, translated from the Persian by E.H. Whinfield (Tehran: Yassavoli, 3rd edn., 2005).

³³ Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, *Mystical poems of Rumi 2 : Second Selection, Poems 201-400*, translated from the Persian by A. J. Arberry, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

³⁴ Lewis, 591, 592.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 467-469.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 482, 483.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 483.

norms in the context of the era and area in which he lived, would be an example of a horizontal analysis.

The *Mathnawī* is a mystical poem and cannot be contained in the horizontal dimension. Anything that pertains to the unseen worlds has extended itself into the vertical dimensions, and there are numerous commentaries on Rūmī's understanding of metaphysics - Franklin D. Lewis makes mention of noteworthy treatises in *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: The Teachings and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*. Recent studies in this vein that merit mention include works by Annemarie Schimmel and William C. Chittick.

At its core, the "Qur'ān in Persian" is a work that expatiates upon the tenets of Islam. In her books: *I am wind, you are fire: the life and work of Rumi*,³⁸ and *The Triumphant Sun: a study of the works of Jalaloddin Rumi*,³⁹ Annemarie Schimmel expounds upon Rūmī's love for the Divine, his relationship with the mystics who walked upon the spiritual path with him, and how that translated into the imagery that was incorporated into his poetry. In her writings, Schimmel refers repeatedly to the *Mathnawī*, highlighting themes and parables that showcase Rūmī's theology. William C. Chittick also makes mention of the *Mathnawī* to elaborate upon the theological doctrine of Rūmī' in *The Sufi doctrine of Rumi*,⁴⁰ and *The Sufi path of love : the spiritual teachings of Rumi*.⁴¹

³⁸ Schimmel, *I am...*, 1-204.

³⁹ Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphant Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*, (London: Fine Books Ltd., 1978).

⁴⁰ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*, (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom, Inc., III edn., 2005).

⁴¹ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983).

Rūmī's *Mathnawī* is didactic. From retellings of Qur'ānic accounts, anecdotes from the *aḥādīth* (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed - upon whom be Allah's salutations and peace), and tales derived from the folklore of different traditions (namely Indian and Persian literature),⁴² Rūmī weaves universal truths into his recitals. The truth belongs to the Divine, for one of His Attributes is *al-Ḥaqq* (the Truth), and that is why Rūmī's *Mathnawī* may be considered as a commentary of the Qur'ān.⁴³ The *mu'min* (one of faith) will recognise a reference to a Qur'ānic verse or a saying of the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah's salutations and peace), on almost every page.

Indeed the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī is an ocean of wisdom, and numerous treatises have expatiated upon it by approaching it from different angles. Of interest to this study are scientific interpretations of Rūmī's works. In a recent study titled *Rumi and Modern Scientific Views*, co-authors Nezameddin Faghih and Ali Faghih demonstrate how Rūmī alluded to scientific paradigms in his poetry, long before science itself made the same discoveries (included in the study are couplets from Rūmī's *Mathnawī*).⁴⁴ Scientific interpretations of the *Mathnawī* can be classified as those that limit themselves to the horizontal domain when they are contained within time, or those that take the horizontal dimension into consideration and extend into the vertical realms as well.

The scope for studying numerous scientific disciplines within Rūmī's *Mathnawī* is enormous, and the aforementioned work relates only to modern science. Another approach would be to study a crystallisation of Islamic angelology as laid out in this

⁴² Schimmel, *I am...*, 36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁴ Nezameddin Faghih and Ali Faghih, *Rumi and Modern Scientific Views*, (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corporation, 2007), 1-52.

poetic opus. Angelology is a cosmological discipline that goes beyond the horizontal dimension, and though there have been numerous analyses of Rūmī's understanding of the cosmos, there is a dearth of academic literature that specifically hones in on Rūmī's understanding of Islamic angelology. The reason for this might be because Rūmī's works (inclusive of the *Mathnawī*), are not centred on the angels. Angels are secondary characters in the *Mathnawī*, for the focal point in the poem is Allah, and the Allah-man connexion. It seems as if Rūmī unwittingly fleshed out the Islamic understanding of angels and their worlds. The cornerstone of the *Mathnawī* is Tawhīd (oneness of Allah) and man's understanding of the Creator, and the angels are only mentioned in reference to the roles they play in helping man comprehend this relationship. Though the angels are not given prime billing, understanding them, and their worlds are not unimportant, for they play pivotal roles in helping man recognise his Creator and affirming His Oneness.

The thesis on hand will attempt in bringing noteworthy facets of Islamic angelology to the forefront through the select explication of couplets from Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. Explications of the verses will be based upon Qur'ānic angelology in conjunction with the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (upon whom be Allah's salutations and peace), and supplemented every now and then with commentaries by Muslim intellectuals.

To achieve the research objectives of this thesis, a general overview of the Islamic cosmos with a focus upon the celestial heavens and the terrestrial world will be outlined, and before studying the angels and their worlds, there will be a detailed analyses of the "non-angels" for the angels cannot be understood on their own. Not only is the angelic existence inextricably intertwined with the human experience, the

angel is the antithesis of the devil; hence by comparing the angelic, human and satanic natures and personalities, one can gain a greater appreciation of the angel. At the end, the stage will have been set to study the angels themselves. The properties of the angelic nature (light) will be then elaborated upon, for the essence of the angelic luminous nature shapes the angelic personality, and it is parlayed into the cosmic roles assumed by the angels. The study will culminate with a detailed analyses of the relationship between Allah and His creation, the man-angel connection, and the cosmological status of both angel and man.

It is hoped that this effort will inculcate a deeper appreciation for the intricacies in Allah's plans, and for His elect (prophets, saints and angels). Faith in the Unseen opens one up to receiving an increase in spiritual boon; there are angel caretakers on hand to assist the faithful in purifying the soul, so that the latter may ascend to the spiritual ranks that are suffused with His Love and Mercy. The angelic presence is characterised by tranquillity, and peace; it envelops the followers of the prophetic model who submit to the One Reality. The belief in angels and their presence opens a door that leads to the Divine Presence - one cannot follow in the footsteps of the prophets without walking through the passageways illuminated by the angelic light. To walk in celestial light is a blessing indeed; to be intoxicated on the spiritual wine that the angels imbibe (love of Allah) is bliss.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAN-ANGEL RELATIONSHIP

THE SUBTLETIES INHERENT WITHIN LIGHT, WATER & CLAY

Everything in the cosmos points in the direction of Allah's Oneness, hence creation exists as signs; Allah's signs, as proclaimed in the *ḥadīth qudsi* (sacred saying),¹ "I was a Hidden Treasure, so I loved to be known. Hence I created the creatures that I might be known."² For every one of those signs, Allah appointed an angel³ (from the sayings of the Prophet - upon whom be Allah's salutations and peace- it is learnt that an angel descends with every rain droplet)⁴, a being that He fashioned from created light. That created light imbued the angel with its own light-properties; the angel's inner luminosity fixed a course where its personality was patterned upon light, and as light is associated with intelligence, the angel is at one with the intellect: "...and beyond doubt the intelligence is homogeneous in nature with the angel." [M IV 2703]⁵

The angel is "pure intellect" and its knowing nature coupled with "lack of free will,"⁶ translates into a complete acceptance of the Divine decree. It is the total submission of the angel to its Lord, that renders the former worthy of its high rank in the cosmic order. The angel's inability to contravene Allah's will, befits its cosmic

¹ Sachiko Murata, William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1994), xxiii.

² Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *The Mosque: The Heart of Submission*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 10.

³ Murata, *The Vision of Islam...*, 86.

⁴ Sachiko Murata, "The Angels," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1987), 332.

⁵ Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawī of Jalalu'ddin Rūmī: edited from the oldest manuscripts available: with critical notes, translation & commentary*, translated from the Persian by Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2004), 871.

⁶ Murata, *The Vision of Islam...*, 98, 342.

role, for fidelity and trustworthiness are qualities that are demanded of couriers, and in Arabic, the angel is known as *malāk* (messenger).⁷

As Allah's signs (i.e. His creatures) are innumerable, it follows that the legions of angels are also numberless. All angels are not the same, as creation is dissimilar, but just as creation is unified in manifesting the principle of Unity: *Lā Ilāha Illā Allāh* (there is no god but Allah); the varied and myriad angels display the *Tawhīdic* truth (oneness of Allah) in a breathtaking concert of unity. Creation (inclusive of the angels) though diverse, comes together as one in worship, though this is obvious only to the elect: "Just as, to the Prophet, this world is plunged in glorification of Allah, while to us it is heedless (insensible)." [M IV 3532]⁸

All angels are aptly classified as *malā'ikah* (messengers), for the keen of intellect, winged,⁹ trustworthy angel is renowned in its capacity as an intermediary between Allah and His creation. "Gabriel, the trusted (angel), brought in the Qur'ān the description of this kneeling,..." [M I 2539]¹⁰ There are angels that are messengers in the literal sense of the term; i.e. they are relayers of news, and then there are *malā'ikah* (angels) that live up to their name in a subtler manner: a noteworthy example being the cherubim (*al-karrūbiyyūn*).

The cherubim are angels ensconced in the "precinct of Holiness";¹¹ they have no knowledge of anything other than Allah - lost are they in His remembrance:¹² "They glorify (Him) night and day; they flag not." Al-Qur'ān, *al-Anbiyāh* (21: 20). Though

⁷ Murata, *The Vision of Islam...*, 84.

⁸ Rūmī, 916.

⁹ Murata, *The Vision of Islam...*, 91.

¹⁰ Rūmī, 158.

¹¹ Sachiko Murata, "The Angels," in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1987), 328.

¹² Ibid.