Al-Taqrīb

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**The World Forum for Proximity
of Islamic Schools of Thought**

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Contents:

Editorial

The coming together of the different *madhāhib* (schools of jurisprudence, theology, or thought) within Islam and the unification of the ranks of Muslims against the enemies of Islam, has been the aspiration of many visionaries and concerned individuals within the Islamic world, and has been one of the most important goals of the Islamic Republic of Iran since its inception.

Undoubtedly, there are those who hold that the attempt to bring together the different *madhāhib* within Islam is tantamount to the spread of an intellectual and ideological form of liberal pluralism and something which leads to the censoring and revision of various historical and recorded realities; however, this is far from the case. The principle objective in pursuing this endeavour is to unite the various Islamic groups and communities [and has no ulterior agenda apart from this].

This noble aspiration is dependent on a number of different factors which include: 1) ensuring the well-being of the individual and society, by being firmly rooted in the Qur'ān and the traditions, 2) avoiding division within the ranks of Muslims, 3) preventing the loss of Divine favour and the weakening of faith, and 4) putting a stop to the subjugation of Muslims and the dominance of foreign powers in Muslim countries.

Today, in the wake of the Islamic resurgence movement, Muslim nations have become aware of the existence of a common enemy and its malevolent intentions; it has become imperative, therefore, for the concerned Muslim to struggle and devote himself in order to defuse the divisive plots of the enemies and to return to Islam its former glory and grandeur. With a single and united voice (*tawhīd-e-kalemeh*), Muslims should take steps towards the dissemination of *tawhīd* or monotheism (*kalemeh-e-tawhīd*), which is the greatest and most apposite of man's divinely mandated destinies.

It is only with the growth of intellectuality, under the guidance of religion, that one may remove any inhibitions and be able to lay the theoretical framework for the proper conduct of the individual and society. This effort—as well as the acquisition of a common language of discourse—can then act as the basis through which internal relations may be furthered between Muslim nations. This will foster interaction and replace the current state of miscommunication and its unfortunate consequences.

The Iranian year 1386 was declared as "the Year of National Unity and Islamic Cooperation" by the supreme leader of the Islamic Revolution; it is in this light that the 21st conference of the World Assembly of the Proximity of the Islamic *madhāhib* presents the following charter:

The Charter of Islamic Unity

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

All Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Peace and salutations be upon the holy Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), his pure progeny, his companions and those who follow him in virtue till the Day of Judgment.

Whereas Islam is a trust placed on the shoulders of Muslims and defending its sanctity and honour is obligatory for all; and

Whereas Islam has emphasized all issues which lead to Islamic unity; which lay the foundations for brotherly relations between the nations; which spread reason, good sense and a language of communication; and which enable cooperation, interdependency, consensus, and the maintenance of the sublime interests of Islam; and

Whereas the enemies of Islam—including arrogant global powers and Zionism—have waged a cowardly and extensive onslaught on the culture, values, interests and independence of the Islamic *ummah*, therefore, calling for efforts to marshal all material and spiritual forces to confront this enmity and antagonism:

We, the Muslim scholars, intellectuals and signatories of the following charter—in accordance with the valuable steps taken by previous *'ulamā* in the blessed city of Mecca, Tehran, Amman, Cairo and elsewhere—unequivocally endorse the roots, principles and methods enumerated below and call upon others to become duty-bound by them:

General Principles

Principle 1: Islam is the seal of religions, the only path which elevates mankind, and is a trust placed on the shoulders of Muslims. Therefore, it is incumbent on Muslims to employ it in all spheres of life, to defend its sanctity and honour, and to place its sublime interests above all other interests.

Principle 2: The holy Qur'ān and the noble Prophetic *sunnah* are the principle sources of legislation in Islam, as well as in all its teachings. The truthfulness and authenticity of these sources, as well as the dependency of all other secondary sources of legislation upon these ones, are agreed upon by all the Islamic *madhāhib*.

Principle 3: Accepting the following pillars and beliefs forms the criterion through which one may recognize a Muslim:

1. Belief in the oneness of Allah, the Most High (*Tawḥīd*)
2. Belief in the prophethood of Muḥammad (ṣ) and in his being the seal of the prophets, and acknowledging that his *sunnah* forms one of the two principle sources of religion. (*Nubūwwah*)

3. Belief in the noble Qur'ān, and acknowledging that its concepts and decrees form the principle source of religion.
4. Belief in Resurrection. (*Ma'ād*)
5. Acceptance of the indisputable and agreed-upon tenets of the faith while not denying any of its foundational supports such as the canonical prayers, charity, fasting, pilgrimage and *jihād*.

Principle 4: True Islam—while officially recognizing the principle of *ijtihād* within the framework of Islamic sources—acknowledges differences of opinion; for this reason, it behooves Muslims to consider the diversity in *ijtihād* as a natural element of Islam and to, therefore, respect the opinions of others.

Principle 5: The unity of the Islamic *ummah* and safeguarding the interests and well-being of all Muslims is an important principle; moreover, Islamic brotherhood must be counted as the basis of any sort of collaboration, interaction and solidarity among Muslims.

Future Outlook

Principle 6: It is necessary that the *'ulamā* and Islamic thinkers aspire towards the following:
1. To engage in efforts uniting modern-day Islamic communities, with the hope of returning them to a condition similar to the early period of Islam in terms of: spreading collaboration, cooperation and a sense of spiritual brotherhood; calling for God-consciousness (*taqwā*); persevering against arrogance; encouraging truth and patience; and avoiding division, schisms and all things that lead to the weakening of Muslims.
2. To emulate the interactions that the leaders (*a'immah*) of the Islamic *madhāhib* had with each other, and to convey the nature of this interaction to their followers today.
3. To spread the culture of solidarity among Muslims to the point where they accept differences of opinions and realize that they are a natural result of the legality of *ijtihād*.

Principle 7: It is upon the *'ulamā* and Islamic thinkers to guide, deepen and strengthen the Islamic revival movement; to insist on Muslims becoming acquainted with each other in order to bring together the followers of the different *madhāhib*; and to encourage religious familiarity and Islamic brotherhood based on firm principles and a common understanding of Islam.

Scope of the Proximity

Principle 8: The effort to bring together the different Islamic *madhāhib* embraces all aspects of life of its followers, including beliefs, jurisprudence, morality, culture and history.

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Principle 9: In addition to what was mentioned earlier, the following plans and programs are necessary for ensuring the proximity of the Islamic *madhāhib*.

1. Absolute cooperation on issues about which Muslims are unanimous is a necessity.

2. All material and spiritual energies aimed at elevating the Word of Allah and employing Islam as the most stable path to felicity must be mobilized.

3. A united approach in confronting the enemies of Islam, particularly on issues common to the whole Islamic *ummah* such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, etc. must be coordinated

4. Name-calling (*tafsīq*) and declaring each other as unbelievers (*takfīr*) or of ascribing innovation (*bid'ah*) to other Muslims must be avoided. As Muslims who believe in the legality of *ijithād* within the framework of Islamic sources, we must accept the necessity and end-result of this principle; such is the case even when the opinion of others appears erroneous in our view. Moreover, in our judgments regarding various differences of opinions, instead of issuing verdicts of 'belief' and 'disbelief', terms such as 'correct' and 'incorrect' may be more appropriate. Furthermore, declaring others as unbelievers on account of their opinions—which, according to us are against the tenets of the faith, yet which according to them are not—is unacceptable.

5. Respectful interaction when encountering differences of opinion must be maintained; again, this is due to the acceptance of the diversity of *ijtihād* in Islam.

6. Insulting that which is sacred to others must be avoided. Considering that Islam allows a type of religious tolerance with regards to other faiths, and calls on Muslims not to disrespect the sacred beliefs of others (though they be erroneous), tolerance among Muslims, therefore, becomes a priority. For this reason, one must steer clear of disrespecting the sanctities of the followers of the Islamic *madhāhib*; respect for the pure progeny (*ahl al-bayt*) of the Prophet (ṣ) and his righteous companions must be insisted on.

7. Government organizations must avoid imposing a particular *madhhab* on their populace, thereby taking advantage of their needs and weaknesses. Through the official recognition of the certified Islamic *madhāhib* and the acceptance of the principles mentioned previously, governments should accord followers of these *madhāhib* all rights of citizenship.

8. There must be freedom of enacting personal religious laws. In matters related to individual affairs, the followers of the Islamic *madhāhib* should be permitted to follow their respective *madhhab*; however, in

matters related to public affairs, they should follow the current laws governing their country.

9. In light of the fact that the Holy Qur'ān calls upon Muslims to converse with others with reason and wisdom, while shunning fiery and intimidating speech, and with the sole aim of understanding truth, it behooves Muslims, as a matter of priority, to solve their differences peacefully through dialogue and within the confines of logic and morality. In this way, they will have taken a practical step towards proximity and the materialization of its values in their life.

10. The doors of conversation and dialogue regarding the disputed areas of history, theology and jurisprudence should remain open. This dialogue should be carried out in an impartial manner and in the spirit of brotherhood by experts and specialists in the field—with the sole aim of attaining the truth. The establishment of distinct seminaries to foster such dialogue in the fields of theology, jurisprudence and history would be a worthy undertaking towards this end.

11. The jurisprudence of Islamic unity and the etiquettes of dealing with differences should be taught. Such teachings, as well as constructive debates in jurisprudence, theology, and Qur'ānic exegesis (both topical and comparative) may be conducted in the sanctuary of Islamic seminaries and educational establishments where there is an atmosphere of mutual respect and where criticism of each other's opinions is avoided.

12. Developmental (*tarbiyatī*) centres committed to the Qur'ān and *sunnah* must be revived in order to reduce the tendencies towards extreme materialism, to prevent the deceptions of new-age or pseudo-religious movements, and to correct the ignorance regarding the true principles of Islam.

13. The certified *'ulamā* of the Islamic *madhāhib* must strive to foster moderation and tolerance through the implementation of any and all educational methods available. This includes assemblies, scholarly seminars and public conferences. Moreover, by taking advantage of institutions devoted to ensuring proximity, and with the aim of correcting the attitudes of the educational institutes of theology and jurisprudence, they may be able to implement Islam through a variety of ways. The *'ulamā* should convey the idea that the differences among the *madhāhib* are differences of diversity (*tanawwuʿ*) and gradation (*takāmul*), and are not oppositional differences (*taḍād*). On this note, the unique qualities and distinguishing features of each one of the different *madhāhib* should be brought to light and familiarity with their respective anthologies of literature should be encouraged.

14. Extremist and radical ideologies and tendencies which are contrary to the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* must be confronted. The conditions mentioned earlier to determine which tendencies or groups meet the criteria of being in the fold of Islam should be considered in this process.

15. The *madhāhib* should not be blamed for the mistakes and actions of Muslims who claim to follow them whether in issues of belief, jurisprudence and erudition, or in actions such as killing innocent people, defiling the honour and reputation of individuals and destroying property. Moreover, it is necessary to resolve on preventing acts which further lead to discord among Muslims and their becoming deviated. Efforts should be made to eradicate provocative and seditious issues which act as a catalyst for angering Muslims and which cause schisms within the communities.

16. The issuance of *fatwa*s should be limited to persons who are experts and have profound knowledge of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) or are learned in related sciences such as jurisprudence and its principles, and therefore have the ability to deduce religious rulings from the mentioned sources. They should also have a general awareness of the state and affairs of Muslims and the contemporary circumstances under which they live.

Constructive Interaction between the World Religions: A Framework for World Order*

Āyatullah Jawādī Āmulī
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Abstract

Greater world peace and order, which is characterized by a lasting and apposite mutual understanding between the peoples of the world, cannot be envisioned without a penetrating intellectual and metaphysical basis. Aspects of commonality in culture, language, race, economic structure or political system, and their like, do not suffice. What is needed is a series of unchanging principles which are innate to humanity and the human condition. This erudite paper endeavours to outline a number of such principles and their inevitable grounding in religion.

Keywords: World religions, religious unity, transcendent unity of religions, world peace, Islam and religious pluralism, blasphemy, desecration of the sacred, human nature.

*In the Name of God, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful,
and to He alone do we turn for help.*

Perpetual praises are due to God all-eternal; salutations without end are in order upon God's holy prophets—particularly his Eminence, the Seal of prophethood; boundless benedictions are owing upon the immaculate family—especially his Eminence, the Seal of sainthood, the promised Mahdī. We wish to near ourselves in friendship to these sacred souls and distance ourselves from their nefarious foes.

Having welcomed the prominent figures and authorities of the world's religions and schools of thought, we would like to honour the presence here of all noble guests. We would like to thank the conveners and sponsors of this important conference—the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, the Assembly for the Rapprochement between Religious Sects and Factions, and the Office of the Governor of Isfahan.

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The world today is like a single city and all individuals are the virtual citizens of this assembly. Tranquillity and peace of mind for all [in this global village] comes about in the wake of mutual respect and balanced interactions. A lasting and apposite mutual understanding can not be arrived at without a penetrating intellectual and metaphysical basis.

For, those things which fall outside the human disposition are not only various and variegated, but are contradictory and antithetical as well; and everything that is external to the essential human self is not only different in relation to other such external things, but in fact it is inconstant and mutable in relation to itself as well. It is apparent that that which is not only variegated but rather antithetical, and that which is not only different but rather mutable as well, can never be the source of unity and the basis of unification. Hence, language, features of time and place, particularities of race and region, can not form the rationale for reasonable interaction. That thing which can be the driving motive for world harmony and order and which can play its part in removing the dirt of [discrimination arising from] differences and [caprice coming from] mutability and changeability will by presented to the respected audience in the course of a number of principles:

First Principle: Human nature, something that informs the entire identity of man, is immune from changeability and protected from discrepancy. That is to say, the disposition of every man—vis-à-vis its general principles and its all governing human ideals—is neither mutable in itself, nor is it different from those of other men. Hence, not only do human natures not oppose one another, but they are also not different from each other. Moreover, differences in body types, changes in geographical climes, or the like, cannot affect established and accepted principles such as the principles of freedom, independence, security, and justice. Regarding human nature, its uniqueness, and its purity from any type of alien influence, the Creator of man and the world (and the Lord of the bond and tie between these two) has said:

$$\text{فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ۚ فِطْرَتَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّتِى فَطَرَ ٱلنَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا}$$

$$\text{تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلْقَيِّمُ}$$

So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the nature
of God according to which He originated mankind. There is no al-
tering God's creation; that is the upright religion.[1]

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[1] Qur'ān 30:30.

This nature, so long as it is not clouded by pollutants and when it does not become the underling of carnal desires, takes pleasure in pure thought as well as in clean motives. Every man can experience this truth in his inner self and can see its effects in others. Hence, human society is composed of a permanent and established principle, that is [human] nature, and a mutable and variable secondary aspect, which is characterized by physical, temporal, and regional particularities and their like.

Second Principle: Man, who has an immaterial spirit and a fixed [human] nature, is never overcome by the bitter experiences or unresolved situations of life. Nothing obliterates the spirit and it always exists by the grace of God. The ascendancy of man in his encounter with death lies in the fact that it is he that kills death and abolishes dying; death does not destroy him. The Holy Qur'ān, that truthful and trustworthy narrator of reality, in judging the encounter between man and death has this to say:

$$\text{كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَآئِقَةُ ٱلْمَوْتِ}$$

Every soul shall taste death.[2]

That is, the soul of every man is a taster and death is that which is tasted. What is clear is that the taster remains and that the tasted thing is eventually digested and eliminated. From this perspective, that which takes place on the daunting fields of the encounter between man and death is the perseverance of man and the degeneration of death. What the "death of death" means is the termination of the [natural] course of degeneration and mutability and the accession to the throne of permanence and immutability. Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Mawlawī has encapsulated this sublime point in exquisite Persian verse as such:

> From that which cripples run afar;
> On long, rocky roads—lame you are.
> If Death dares and now comes to me;
> I will hug it firm lovingly.
> While I draw from it life unmarked;
> From me pulls a carcass all marked.
> Disdain you its polish and scrape;
> Be a mirror rusty and drape.[3]

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[2] Qur'ān 3:185.
[3] *Diwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī,* poem 1326.

The quintessential point of spiritual anthropology and the sacred deposit of all of God's prophets is that in dying, man comes out of his skin and not that he decays with it; or alternatively, that by dying, man only shuffles off this mortal coil and not his soul; and again, by dying man soars to new heights and does not sink to the dark depths.

Third Principle: Man's true identity, according to the two above mentioned principles, is the same at all times and in all places, and will continue to be so. All prophets, especially of the Abrahamic lineage, who are the true owners of the hearts of the monotheists, have taught these two matters to man so that by acquiring this divine science he will not be inclined towards the left, nor will he frequent the right—because both have deviated far from the straight path. Imām 'Alī ('a) says, "The right (path) and the left (path) cause one to go astray; the middle path is the (right) way." [4]

The approach of the "common principle" makes possible deliverance from differences and discrepancies, and augments equitable interactions amongst the people of the world—especially the followers of the monotheistic religions and doctrines. In this regard, the call of heaven and the voice of revelation is:

$$\text{وَقُولُواْ لِلنَّاسِ حُسَّنًا}$$

…and speak kindly to people.[5]

The meaning of *speak* here is "all interaction," including all speech, writing, behaviour, and actions, and not just speech by itself. It can be concluded that the reasonable or logical mutual understanding between religious communities has an ontological basis and hence has the capability of going from the level of conceptual knowledge to the level of concrete reality.

Fourth Principle: Equitable and balanced interaction between the followers of various religions and faiths is not possible without the establishment of a legal code. The convening of such scholarly symposiums as this one is a precursor to that legal code and constitution. The composition of the legal code is prior to the ratification of its clauses and the formation of a catechism. This is because a secondary without a primary principle is absent of cognitive content and is not founded upon any base of knowledge. The value-laden articles of the legal code are procured by clauses pertaining to justice, freedom of speech and expression, independence, public safety and security, human rights, democracy, non-violence, anti-terrorism, and their like. But the mentioned concepts go to form the underlying foundation of the legal code and are in no way to be considered as its sources. This is because each and every one of the mentioned notions has various interpretations and due to the discrepancy that

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[4] *Nahj al-Balāgha,* sermon 16.
[5] Qur'ān 2:83.

exists between these interpretations it is not possible to arrive at a single and universally accepted covenant or international agreement. Hence, for the sake of the theoretical consistency and practical stability of the reasonable interaction between monotheistic believers, it is necessary to derive the legal code from sources that are both immutable and common. This weighty affair calls for the prior apprehension of what this common source is and its ability to give rise to those specific founding legal precepts as have the ability to inform the legal code in question.

Fifth Principle: Man moves according to his own particular epistemological perspective. If his epistemology is limited to his senses and sensory experience, his ontology in turn becomes restricted to the material realm, and his life—due to his false belief—ends up being strapped in the confines of the straightjacket that the natural world becomes for him. But if his epistemological perspective is broader and includes not only empirical reason but also abstract intellection, then his ontological perspective is given free rein in the more expansive realm which includes both the material and the immaterial. For it is only in proportion to man's awareness of Reality that he gains freedom in the physical and metaphysical realms. The materialists and the myopic worldlings are and have always been in a psychological and military war with the free-minded believers regarding the physical and meta-physical. God, almighty, relates the bad behaviour of the crooked-minded in relation to the prophets in this way:

$$\text{يَـٰحَسْرَةً عَلَى ٱلْعِبَادِ ۚ مَا يَأْتِيهِم مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا۟ بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ}$$

How regrettable of the servants! There did not come to them any
apostle but that they used to deride him.[6]

The underlying reason for their deriding and mocking the prophets is their stagnation based on the limited knowledge of the physical and natural world. The Qur'ān says,

$$\text{فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِٱلْبَيِّنَـٰتِ فَرِحُوا۟ بِمَا عِندَهُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ}$$

$$\text{بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا۟ بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ}$$

When their apostles brought them manifest proofs, they exulted in
the knowledge they possessed, and they were besieged by what they
used to deride.[7]

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[6] Qur'ān 36:30.
[7] Qur'ān 40:83.

So if the prophets of God such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the last of them, Muḥammad (ṣ) have been the object of profanities at the hands of the Salman Rushdies, the Danish cartoonists, or the ilk of the destroyers of the sacred shrine of Imām al-Hādī and Imām al-ʿAskarī of our time and of all other ages, it is because they are prisoners of the natural world and consider the free space outside their prison to be nothing but fairy tales and the "opium of the people".

Sixth Principle: The official mandate of the prophets is to inform man about the world, about man himself, and about the bond and nexus between man and the world; their responsibility is to equip man with doctrinal knowledge, ethical character traits, jurisprudential laws and legal stipulations so that he neither goes astray himself, nor becomes an obstacle in the way of others. Such an exalted task calls for unity in the source of receptivity (or material cause), which can be had by way of an analysis of the meaning of human nature and the original disposition and identity of man. Such an endeavour also requires the unity of the source of action (or efficient cause), one which is guaranteed by the Creator and Lord of the three-way relationship mentioned above and one which is had by tracing the causes of the unity and unicity of the Godhead. On one hand, the common goal of all of the prophets and all of the immaculate Imāms is to cultivate and bring to blossom the potentials of human nature (for Imām ʿAlī says, "they lay bare to them the deposits of the intellects"[8]), and on the other hand, their goal is to teach the Book and wisdom vis-à-vis knowledge and vision, and the spiritual cleansing of the souls vis-à-vis effort [the application of the will]. Hence, every former prophet was the harbinger of the prophet that came after him—and every latter prophet was the confirmer of the ones that preceded him. God speaks of the project of former and latter prophets in this way:

$$\text{لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ وَأَنزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَٱلْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ}$$

$$\text{ٱلنَّاسُ بِٱلْقِسْطِ}$$

Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent
down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may
maintain justice.[9]

According to this explanation, the secret of success of the divine prophets is in their bringing forth the Law. Now, because in such a scheme the subjects of the Law or the ruled are one—as per their original human identity, and because

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[8] *Nahj al-Balāgha,* sermon 1.
[9] Qurʾān 57:25.

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the Lawgiver, God Eternal, is One, and because the bringers and expounders of the Law, the prophets, are united in their integrity and trustworthiness—we can conclude that all of the elements and prerequisites for a balanced interaction and all of the factors for a mutual understanding are obtained. In such case there is no reason to entertain agreements and contracts based on "friendship".

> Where is Moses that with a staff in this desert bare;
> Set to flow a hundred odd springs from this stony lair?
> Where, from five apparent senses and five hidden ones-
> Is the springer from this body of the ten fountains?
> Spirit is Jesus to the corpse of our cradle, true;
> But where is Mary who can rock this cradle, anew?[10]

It is the absence of prophets or rather disregard of them that causes the harmonious order between the followers of the world's religions to break down.

Seventh Principle: The world is there to be in the service of man, not man in the service of the world; that is why God, the Keeper of the heavens and the earth, has spoken of man subjugating the expanses of the earth and mastering the flow of history, and not being subjugated by them. Man's proper use of the ocean depths and the far reaches of space becomes possible when there is an exchange and interplay of ideas and not when they are set into conflict—being [forcefully] imposed and [meekly] absorbed. This interplay of ideas is very much like the marriage that takes place between opposite sexes and it paves the way for the unfolding of knowledge and the production of arts. World unity [or peace] by way of political, economic, and industrial artifices, or their like, is tantamount to a façade, whereas faith forms the foundation upon which these artifices are to be built. The only principle that can procure a harmonious world order is a unity of faith or the alliance of the believers in the world's religions and their various branches. Although unity may be difficult to achieve, the formation of an alliance is not as demanding. Islamic Iran has had the honour to convene such a prestigious gathering and, as such, will be the point of departure for constructive interaction. Those engrossed in worldly concerns and dealings, who are alien to the very principle of faith, must know well that when they carry out sacrilege and profanation of religious sanctities, or when they murder the men of God or even when they engage in the desecration of the shrines of such saints (from Karbala to Baqi', and from Baqi' to Samara), or when they insult and blaspheme the paragons of religion, (and they do all this for a material world that is dark, dismal, and spiritless), then these

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[10] *Dīwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī,* poem 2176.

acts of theirs will stop them from making any type of progress, and apart from the repercussions, if any, at the hands of the people, such deeds will only lead to Divine punishment. It could be that human battles are a portion of that Divine retribution, for as the Qur'ān says:

$$قَٰتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ$$

Make war on them so that Allah may punish them by your hands and
humiliate them, and help you against them.[11]

The correct analysis and explanation of this matter is the responsibility of religious scholars in their role as the inheritors of the prophets.

Eighth Principle: The purpose for convening such symposiums, whether in Iran or in any other Islamic country, is not to sign a political agreement or to affect a military ceasefire; rather, the purpose is to save existing cultural links and to deepen religious relationships—such as will not be altered by any political or economic events. Solidarity amongst the prophets and the unity of their common goal is pertinently portrayed by the Qur'ān. For God says of those who belied their own prophet that they have actually belied all of the prophets:

$$وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْحِجْرِ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ$$

Certainly the inhabitants of Hijr denied the apostles.[12]

$$كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ$$

[The people of] 'Ad impugned the apostles.[13]

$$كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ$$

The people of Lot impugned the apostles.[14]

It is possible that what is meant here is that they denied prophethood itself and, hence, the evil consequence of such a denial is to belie all prophets. In any case, what is being said here is that those who go beyond the bounds of mutual understanding [and respect] for people, always end up destroying whole generations and their tilth, and wherever they invade they leave in ruins.

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[11] Qur'ān 9:14.
[12] Qur'ān 15:80.
[13] Qur'ān 26:123.
[14] Qur'ān 26:160.

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إِنَّ ٱلْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُواْ قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوٓاْ أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَآ أَذِلَّةً

Indeed when kings enter a town, they devastate it, and reduce the
mightiest of its people to the most abased.[15]

However, apart from these and their ilk, those who do have the capacity to
carry on a scholarly exchange, can, nay rather they must, apply themselves to
enumerating the intellectual errors of the former and must carry out their dis-
cussions in a perfectly open forum that is free from sacrilege.

With the hope that we will come to witness a world full of peace, freedom,
and prosperity, I would like to once again welcome the honoured guests—the
followers of the world religions and religious schools of thought and would
like to thank the conveners of this outstanding gathering. I would like to end
this message by sending the best of salutations and the highest of blessings
upon the pure souls of the prophets of God (may Peace be upon them)—in
particular his eminence the last of the prophets (may God bless him and his
progeny and upon them be Peace)—and upon the pure souls of the Imāms—in
particular Imām Hādī and Imām 'Askarī, whose shrine was desecrated in Sam-
ara, and the noble spirit, the last of the Imāms, the promised Mahdi (upon
him be Peace).

Peace be upon he that follows the Guidance.

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[15] Qur'ān 27:34.

Religious Pluralism and the Transcendent Unity of Religions

Dr. Roland Pietsch

Abstract:

Contrasting the modern notions of 'religious pluralism' with the principle of the transcendent unity of religions aims at learning to understand religions both in their diversity as well as their inner unity. The following discussion first depicts the possible meanings of religious pluralism, and then goes on to explain the teachings of the transcendent unity of religions. It concludes with the implications of this confrontation.

Keywords: Religious pluralism, transcendent unity of religions, world religions, religious unity, modernity, secularism, traditionalism, *sophia perennis*, religious esotericism, mysticism.

Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism, as an existing phenomenon, has been interpreted in different ways. The position of modern sociology, which has developed this concept, is to comprehend religious pluralism as a characteristic of modernity. In this context modernity is understood as an outcome of secularisation. Sociology, especially that of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, generally defines pluralism as a situation in which there is competition in the institutional ordering of comprehensive meanings for everyday life. Historically, such competition generally succeeds a situation in which it was more or less absent. That is, pluralism is the consequence of a historical process of de-monopolisation. The global historical force producing pluralism is secularization, by which we mean the progressive autonomization of social sectors from the domination of religious meanings and institutions.

In analyzing the social-structural dimension of pluralism it is possible to distinguish between the latter's effect on the relationship between institutional religion and other social institutions, and the effect on institutional religion itself. The social structure has its correlates in subjective consciousness. Religious pluralism, to wit, entails religious subjectivization. This means that the old religious contents lose their status of objective facticity in individual consciousness. This change is already given in the reflective attitude that the consumer comes to take as he is presented with a multiplicity of products. He must choose between them and is thereby forced to hesitate, to compare, and

to deliberately evaluate. In this process the traditional religious affirmations about the nature of reality lose their taken-for-granted quality. They cease to be objective truth and become matters of subjective choice, belief, and preference. Other meaning-systems come to take the place of the objective facticity that was previously occupied by religious tradition.[1]

This purely sociological portrayal of religious pluralism is not aware of religion's truth. Ultimately, it only expresses the existing crisis-of-meaning imbued in modernity itself. Hence, without doubt, religion can best and most adequately be understood from the point of view of religion itself. Accordingly, this is also true for the plurality and diversity of religions. Concerning the idea of religious pluralism, as seen by the various religions, there exist great differences. Judaism, as the first of the monotheistic religions, does not acknowledge any other religion as a matter of principle, whether that religion had been existing before it or emerged afterwards. Christianity as the second monotheistic religion, sees Judaism to a certain degree as a prefiguration of Christian revelation. But it does not acknowledge Islam that arose later. Eventually, Islam acknowledged both Judaism and Christianity as true revelations, though they only reached completion in and through the religion of Islam. In praxis this resulted in Christianity holding a monopoly in Christian countries for centuries. In most Islamic countries the religion of Islam was and is—apart from some small minorities—the sole religion. This meant that Christianity lost its monopoly.

> With the collapse of the Europe-centered view of the world and the rapid development of international interaction in various fields of human life, have Christians come again to experience intensely the reality of religious pluralism. In this connection they have come to recognize the existence of non-Christian religions and the integrity of non-Christian systems of belief and values, not only in foreign lands, but in Europe and America as well. Hence, religious pluralism now appears to many Christians to be a serious challenge to the monotheistic character of Christianity. On the other hand, Buddhism, throughout its long history, has existed and spread throughout Asia within a religiously pluralistic situation: in India, it coexisted with Brahmanism, Jainism and many diverse forms of Hinduism; in China with Confucianism and Taoism; and in Japan with Shinto and Confucianism. Thus to most Buddhists the experience of 'religious pluralism' has not been the serious shock it has been to most Christians.[2]

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[1] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "Secularization and Pluralism" in *Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssoziologie / International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion*, v. 2, 1966, pp. 73-81.
[2] Masao Abe, "A Dynamic Unity in Religious Pluralism: a Proposal from the Buddhist Point of View", in Masao Abe, *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. By Steven Heine, Honolulu 1995, pp. 17-18.

And certainly not the shock it would be for the representatives of both other monotheistic religions. The Christian shock was peculiar and corresponds not so much to the two other monotheistic religions as it does to the non-monotheistic religions. Meanwhile Christian theologians tried to deal with this shock by way of a theology of religious pluralism. The central question asked by such a theology was whether religious pluralism should be accepted as a reality, de facto, in our present world or if it should, on the contrary, be viewed theologically as existing de jure.

> In the first case, the plurality of religions… is seen as a factor to be reckoned with, rather than welcomed… In the other case, the same plurality is welcomed as a positive factor which witnesses at once to the superabundant generosity with which God has manifested himself to humankind in manifold ways and to the pluriform response which human beings of diverse cultures have given to the Divine self-disclosure. Seen from God's side, the question is whether religious pluralism is only permitted by God or, on the contrary, positively willed by Him. Or rather— if one prefers to avoid both these terms—the question is whether theology is able to assign to the plurality of religious traditions a positive meaning in God's overall design for humankind or not.[3]

The Catholic theologian Schillebeeckx responds to this problematic question by noticing that even in the Christian self-understanding…

> The multiplicity of religions is not an evil which needs to be removed, but rather a wealth which is to be welcomed and enjoyed by all…. The unity, identity and uniqueness of Christianity over and against the other religions… lies in the fact that Christianity is a religion which associates the relationship to God within the context of a historical and thus a very specific and therefore limited particularity: Jesus of Nazareth. This is the uniqueness and identity of Christianity, but at the same time, its unavoidable historical limitation. It becomes clear here that… the God of Jesus is a symbol of openness, not of confinement. Here Christianity has a positive relationship to other religions, and at the same time the loyal Christian affirmation of the positive nature of other world religions is honoured.[4]

The question here is where do the origins of religious pluralism lie? An answer can be that the principle of plurality is mainly based on the superabundant richness and diversity of God's self-manifestation to mankind. The religion of Islam acknowledges the principle of the plurality of religions to an even greater extent than does Christianity, simply because it accepts all the previous monotheistic revelations and completes them. In this sense it does not need to be explained much, whereas what calls for further discussion is Islam's prob-

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[3] Jacques Dupuis, S. J., *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism*, New York 1997, p. 386.
[4] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, London, p. 164.

lematic relationship with Hinduism and Buddhism. The solution to such a problem and similar problems can be found to lie in taking up an esoteric or transcendental point of view. The point of departure for the teachings of the transcendent unity of religions, as they have been formulated by their most important representative Frithjof Schuon, can, as paradoxical as it may seem, be found in the actual diversity of mankind and the corresponding limitations that such diversity and multiplicity call for.

The Transcendent Unity of Religions

The multiplicity of religions has its origin in the single divine Truth that has manifested itself in manifold ways to mankind throughout its history. These divine revelations occurred at different times, in different places, and to different human collectivities. Thereby they assumed different shapes. Thus, "what determines the differences among forms of Truth is the difference among human receptacles. For thousands of years already humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches, which constitute so many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves; the existence of spiritual receptacles so different and so original demands differentiated refractions of the one Truth."[5]

This principle bears great meaning for there is no doubt that the Truth is one. In this context the revelations of the one divine Truth can be viewed as formalisations of this truth. And the formalisations are not completely identical with this Truth-in-itself, because, "Truth is situated beyond forms, whereas Revelation, or the Tradition that derives from it, belongs to the formal order, and that indeed by definition; but to speak of form is to speak of diversity, and thus of plurality."[6]

As a matter of course the principle of a multitude of revelations is "not accessible to all mentalities and its implications must remain anathema to the majority of believers. This is in the nature of things. Nevertheless, from a traditionalist viewpoint, anyone today wishing to understand religion as such and the inter-relationships of the various traditions must have a firm purchase on this principle."[7]

In this regard it has to be emphasised that every single revelation is the origin of a religion. And every religion is self-sufficient and comprises all that is necessary for man's salvation. But at the same time every religion is limited as a form. Frithjof Schuon has explained this coherence as follows:

> A religion is a form, and so also a limit, which, 'contains' the Limitless,
> to speak in paradox; every form is fragmentary because of its necessary

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[5] Frithjof Schuon, *Gnosis, Divine Wisdom*, London 1979, p. 29.

[6] Frithjof Schuon, *ibid.*, p. 29.

[7] Kenneth Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism Religion in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy*, Colombo 2000, p. 70.

exclusion of other formal possibilities; the fact that these forms—when they are complete, that is to say when they are perfectly 'themselves'— each in their own way represent totality, does not prevent them from being fragmentary in respect of their particularisation and their reciprocal exclusion.[8]

Given the diversity of revelations the question arises who the messengers were who received the respective revelation and passed it on. A first conclusion is that: "The great Messengers, if they are assuredly one by their principle, in their gnosis and in the Logos, are not however of necessity equal on the phenomenal plane, that of manifestation on earth; what are equivalent are the Messages when each is taken in its entirety. It is necessary, in any case, not to confuse the phenomenal or cosmic with the spiritual reality; it is the latter which is one, and the former which is diverse."[9]

To understand the correlation between the diversity of revelations and the respective messengers, it has to be clarified that the revelation received by the respective messenger is the foundation of a religion. The peculiar imprint that characterises every single religion indeed depends on when and where the respective messenger fulfilled his challenge and in what particular manner. According to this Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a follower of Frithjof Schuon, could write: "When one says *the* Prophet it means the prophet of Islam…when one says *the* Incarnation it refers to Christ who personifies this aspect. And although every prophet and saint has experienced 'enlightenment', *the* Enlightenment refers to the experience of the Buddha which is the most outstanding and universal embodiment of this experience." [10]

But how can a religion be understood and interpreted in this meaning? Essentially there are two elements which build the foundation of a religion: Namely doctrine and method, that is to say, "a doctrine which distinguishes between the Absolute and the relative, between the absolutely Real and the relatively real…and a method of concentrating upon the Real, of attaching oneself to the Absolute and living according to the will of Heaven, in accordance with the purpose and meaning of human existence".[11]

When we speak of a doctrine, which distinguishes between the Absolute and the relative, the question about its orthodoxy arises. "In order to be orthodox a religion must possess a mythological or doctrinal symbolism establishing the essential distinction between the Real and the illusory, or the Absolute and the relative…and must offer a way that serves both the perfection of concentration on the Real and also its continuity. In other words a religion is orthodox on

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[8] Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, London 1976, p. 144.

[9] Frithjof Schuon, *Gnosis, Divine Wisdom*, p. 14.

[10] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, London 1966, p. 67.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 67.

condition that it offers a sufficient, if not always exhaustive, idea of the absolute and the relative, and therewith an idea of their reciprocal relationships."[12]

Concerning a religion's inner or outer orthodoxy Frithjof Schuon speaks clearly and precisely: "For a religion to be considered intrinsically orthodox—an extrinsic orthodoxy hangs upon formal elements which cannot apply literally outside their own perspective—it must rest upon a fully adequate doctrine … then it must extol and actualise a spirituality that is equal to this doctrine and thereby include sanctity within its ambit both as concept and reality; this means it must be of Divine and not philosophical origin and thus be charged with a sacramental or theurgic presence"[13]

Indeed, traditional orthodoxy means, as Schuon says:

> …being in accord with a doctrinal or ritual form, and also, and indeed above all, with the truth which resides in all revealed forms; thus the essence of every orthodoxy is intrinsic truth … and not merely the internal logic of a doctrine that may turn out to be false. What makes the definition of orthodoxy rather troublesome is that it presents two principal modes, the one essential or intrinsic, and the other formal or extrinsic: the latter is being in accord with a revealed form, and the former the being in accord with the essential and universal truth, with or without being in accord with any particular form, so that the two modes sometimes stand opposed externally. To give an example, it can be said that Buddhism is extrinsically heterodox in relation to Hinduism, because it makes a departure from the basic forms of the latter, and at the same time intrinsically orthodox, because it is in accord with that universal truth from which both traditions proceed.[14]

In order to provide a deeper insight into the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic orthodoxy the relationship between exotericism and esotericism will be briefly explained. First, an explanation of exotericism: "Exotericism never goes beyond the 'letter'. It puts its accent on the Law, not on any realisation, and so puts it on action and merit. It is essentially a 'belief' in a 'letter', or a dogma envisaged in its formal exclusiveness, and an obedience to ritual and moral Law. And, further, exotericism never goes beyond the individual; it is centred on heaven rather than on God, and this amounts to saying that this difference has for it no meaning." [15] The famous American scholar Huston Smith has clarified this definition of exotericism with the following words: "For the exoteric, God's personal mode is His only mode; for the esoteric this mode resides in one that is higher and ultimately modeless…For the exoteric the world is real in every sense; for the exoteric it has only a qualified real-

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[12] Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, London 1966, p. 138.

[13] Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, London 1976, p. 14.

[14] Frithjof Schuon, *Language of the Self*, Madras 1959, p. 1.

[15] Frithjof Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, p. 76.

ity…For the exoteric God is primarily loved; for the esoteric He is primarily known; though in the end the exoteric comes to know what he loves and the esoteric to love what he knows."[16]

What characterises esotericism "to the very extent that it is absolute, is that on contact with a dogmatic system, it universalises the symbol or religious concept on the one hand, and interiorizes it on the other; the particular or the limited is recognised as the manifestation of the principle and the transcendent, and this in its turn reveals itself as immanent." [17] And further: "If the purest esotericism includes the whole truth—and that is the very reason for its existence—the question of 'orthodoxy' in the religious sense clearly cannot arise: direct knowledge of the mysteries could not be 'Moslem' or 'Christian' just as the sight of a mountain is the sight of a mountain and not something else." [18]

The exoteric point of view is "doomed to end by negating itself once it is no longer vivified by the presence within it of the esotericism of which it is both the outward radiation and the veil. So it is that religion, according to the measure in which it denies metaphysical and initiatory realities and becomes crystallized in literalistic dogmatism, inevitably engenders unbelief; the atrophy that overtakes dogmas when they are deprived of their internal dimensions recoils upon them from outside, in the form of heretical and atheistic negations." [19] Hence it is necessary to refer to religion's spirituality or religion's esoteric dimension.

A religion is indeed "not limited by what it includes but by what it excludes; this exclusion cannot impair the religions's deepest contents—every religion is intrinsically a totality—but it takes its revenge all the more surely on the intermediary plane… the arena of theological speculations and fervours… [hence] extrinsic contradictions can hide an intrinsic compatibility or identity, which amounts to saying that each of the contradictory theses contains a truth and thereby an aspect of the whole truth and a way of access to this totality."[20] In contrast, the exoteric claim to the exclusive possession of a unique truth, or of Truth without epithet, is "an error purely and simply; in reality, every expressed truth necessarily assumes a form, that of its expression, and it is metaphysically impossible that any form should possess a unique value to the exclusion of other forms; for a form, by definition, cannot be unique and exclusive, that is to say it cannot be the only possible expression of what it expresses."[21]

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[16] Huston Smith, "Introduction" in Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, New York 1975, p. xxvi.
[17] Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and Way*, London 1981, p. 37.
[18] Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, p. 139.
[19] Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p. 9.
[20] Frithjof Schuon, *Islam and Perennial Philosophy*, London 1976, p. 46.
[21] Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p. 17

The diversity of religions does not demonstrate the incorrectness of the various doctrines of the supernatural. It rather shows that revelation lies beyond the formal, whereas human comprehension has a formal nature. According to this the essence of every religion—or enlightenment—is always the same. The diversity on the contrary arises from human nature.

Conclusion

This concise and fragmentary comparison of religious pluralism and the transcendent unity of religions aimed at two things: First, to deepen the understanding of every single religion. And second, through the realisation of the esoteric and spiritual dimension of this religion, to recognize the transcendent unity of all true religions. To understand every single religion however not only requires in-depth studies, but above all demands the acceptance of the authentic self-conception of the religion.

The realisation of the metaphysical doctrine goes even further. It means to follow a spiritual path that ultimately leads to immediate love and gnosis of the divine Truth itself.

An outstanding example for such a spiritual path is the life and work of Ibn 'Arabi, who wrote in his famous *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, out of his own mystic and theosophic experience, the following marvellous verses:

My heart has become capable of every form,
a pasture for gazelles,
a convent for Christian monks,
a temple for idols,
the pilgrim's Ka'ba,
the tables of the Torah,
the book of the Koran.
I follow the religion of love
whatever way Love's camels take.[22]

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[22] Ibn 'Arabī, *Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*, ed. by R. N. Nicholson, London 1911, pp. 19/67.

Ḥajj - Manifestation of Unity[*]

Shuja Ali Mirza

Abstract:

Ḥajj is the greatest outward symbol of both *tawḥīd* and the *ummah*—including implicitly the latter's integrity and unity. The inner reality of the *Ḥajj* is tied to the idea of *walāyah* and the *walīullāh*. Muslims, in embodying these ideas, will be able to achieve higher and higher forms of unity, empowering them for the cause of Allah in this world and engendering for them the heavenly states of the hereafter. Sectarianism is one of the greatest impediments for such achievement in the path of the Muslims. This article delineates these themes and provides the general direction that individual Muslims are to follow.

Keywords: *Ḥajj*, *tawḥīd*, Muslim unity, *ummah*, *walāyah*, *Imām*, transcendental unity of Islamic sects, sectarianism, Shia-Sunni unity, Shia-Sunni polemics.

Ḥajj—Symbol of Unity and Universality

Of all the rites of religion, *Ḥajj* is the greatest in its manifestation of unity and *tawḥīd*. This is because the concept of unity, as expressed in creation, essentially involves the idea of universality. Just as God, the One, is eternal, ubiquitous, and the sustaining Creator of mankind, His last word and final religion must rightfully be universal. Hence, Islam—the universal religion—is for all times, all places, and for all peoples. The *Ḥajj* clearly portrays this truth and the Kaʿbah, its focal point, poignantly symbolises the same.

Islam is for all times—past, present and future. After all, is not the Kaʿbah the first place of worship? God says in the Qurʾān:

$$ \text{إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِى بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ} $$

$$ \text{فِيهِ ءَايَٰتٌ بَيِّنَٰتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ ۖ وَمَن دَخَلَهُۥ كَانَ ءَامِنًا ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى} $$

ٱلنَّاسِ حِجُّ ٱلْبَيْتِ مَنِ ٱسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَنِىٌّ عَنِ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

Indeed the first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for all nations. In it are manifest signs [and] Abraham's Station, and whoever enters it shall be secure. And it is the duty of mankind toward God to make pilgrimage to the House— for those who can afford the journey to it—and should anyone re- nege [on his obligation], God is indeed without need of the crea- tures.[1]

The word "*Bakkah*" means the place of confluence and congregation of throngs and it refers to the ground upon which the Ka'bah is built. God says that the structure there was the first house to be set up for mankind and hence is as old as man himself. It is also the last point of convergence that man will have available to rally around during his spiritual epic and sojourn on this planet. The great-grandson of the Prophet (ṣ), Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ('a) said:

لَا يَزَالُ الدِّينُ قَائِماً مَا قَامَتِ الْكَعْبَةُ [2]

Religion will withstand so long as the Ka'bah stands.[3]

Islam is for all places. This is graphically symbolised in the *Ḥajj* by the in- flux of people from all different places on the earth towards Makkah. As such the Ka'bah is the centre whose circumference encompasses the entire world. God says in the Qur'ān:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَٰهِيمَ مَكَانَ ٱلْبَيْتِ أَن لَّا تُشْرِكْ بِى شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِىَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ وَٱلْقَآئِمِينَ وَٱلرُّكَّعِ ٱلسُّجُودِ وَأَذِّن فِى ٱلنَّاسِ بِٱلْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِن كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

When We settled for Abraham the site of the House [saying], Do not ascribe any partners to Me, and purify My House for those who go

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[1] Qur'ān 3:96-97.
[2] *al-Kāfī*, vol. 4, p. 272.
[3] *Wasā'il*, vol. 8, p. 14.

around it, and those who stand [in it for prayer], and those who bow
and prostrate. And proclaim the *hajj* to people: they shall come to
you on foot and on lean camels coming from distant places[4]

Islam, as the perennial religion practised by all prophets from Adam to
Muḥammad (ṣ), was present in all times and all places because it was meant for
all people. God, the eternal and omnipresent Creator, created mankind—and
He alone knows best how to guide them—sending prophets to every people, at
all points of human history. Man for his part, in his imperfect and fallen
state, is always in need of God's guidance and is the perfect receptacle of this
Divine guidance and grace. But man in his fallen and earthly nature cannot
immediately conceive of Divine realities, whether it be in the form of this su-
preme guidance or man's own essence and spirit. He needs help and support
from the outside, so to speak. He needs tangible things to aid him and guide
him towards guidance and the Guide. The Ka'bah serves as this external sym-
bol and is God's House not because God needs a house, but because man in his
weakness needs a solid point of reference to turn to. The Ka'bah is as a light-
house which guides sailors lost at sea back to the shore and back to their home
and origin.

The first verse quoted above speaks to this role of the House of God being a
source of guidance for all nations and peoples. But it also mentions the House
being "blessed"; meaning that there is really and truly grace flowing from this
place and that it is a point that has been providentially chosen to be an "open-
ing" up to the heavens.

In addition to being for all people a source of guidance, the House of
God—and the symbol of Islam—is also a refuge and sanctuary for people. The
Qur'ān says:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا ٱلْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَٱتَّخِذُوا۟ مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ

مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِىَ لِلطَّآئِفِينَ

وَٱلْعَـٰكِفِينَ وَٱلرُّكَّعِ ٱلسُّجُودِ

And [remember] when We made the House a resort for mankind and
a sanctuary, [declaring], 'Take the venue of prayer from Abraham's
Station.' We charged Abraham and Ishmael [with its upkeep, saying],
'Purify My House for those who go around it, for those who make it
a retreat and for those who bow and prostrate.[5]

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[4] Qur'ān 22:26-27.
[5] Qur'ān 2:125.

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It is a "resort" or "place of return" because man, who came from the Divine presence, needs to return to God by centering himself on Him by way of His signs—the House being the central-most and manifest of them. It is a sanctuary, morally speaking, because it is a channel of grace and those that take refuge in it are openly showing that they no longer want to be renegades and fugitives from God. By so doing they accept the grace and receive mercy—entering the flock of God; and God protects his flock.

Intellectually, it is also a sanctuary because it centers man, providing him refuge from the vicissitudes of the material realm and the multiplicities of the ephemeral world. Divine grace treats man in his totality and in all his dimensions—heart and mind, spirit, soul and body.

The Ka'bah is the life-line and beating heart for all people in the world. It lives and breathes. As a refuge, sanctuary, and guiding light shining in the dark, it attracts and draws the people to itself. It then graces and blesses the worthy from amongst them and releases them, raising them in spirit and body—giving new life and vigour to their spiritual being as well as enriching their material livelihood. It gives them a sustenance which at once increases their intellectual rapture, moral uprightness, and physical worship. For in God's Sacred House and the Divine Presence, man rises in respect and awe, realizing all the while that it is not really he who is "doing" the rising—as he is nothing in himself—but that it is his Origin and Source which is raising him. Seeing himself in this new and novel way, man begins to see everything as being connected to the Origin; casting aside the eyeglasses that made him see things as separate and independent entities, he now sees the all-pervasive unity that resides and resounds in creation. His empathy and sympathy with created beings grows; and as he rises in rank and station, he is able to see more of the created order "below" him for what it is. He longs to reach out and raise with himself all those around and below him. The Qur'ān says:

$$
\text{جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْكَعْبَةَ ٱلْبَيْتَ ٱلْحَرَامَ قِيَـٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَٱلشَّهْرَ ٱلْحَرَامَ}
$$

$$
\text{وَٱلْهَدْىَ وَٱلْقَلَـٰٓئِدَ ذَٰلِكَ لِتَعْـلَمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ}
$$

$$
\text{وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمٌ}
$$

God has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, sustentation for mankind—and [also] the sacred month, the offering and the garlands—so that you may know that God knows whatever there is in the heavens

and whatever there is in the earth, and that God has knowledge of all things.[6]

The word *qiyāman* or "sustentation" in this verse has been interpreted by the exegetes in many of the ways alluded to above. From the personal rapture and ascent of the individual believer to the mass revival of the Muslim *ummah*; from the progress in *dīn* or religion to the increase in livelihood; from the physical exertions of the believers around the Ka'bah as they rise to the occasion of the *Ḥajj* to the attempts of Muslim communities for the establishment of justice and the rule of God on earth.

The Ka'bah was seen to be for all times (the first and the last) and for all places (as it is the centre) and for all people (as it is a guide, refuge, and sustainer or elevator for them). The following verse emphasizes the fact that it is for people of all places equally and that no one is to be given preference based on where he hails from.

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ ٱلَّذِى جَعَلْنَـٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءً ٱلْعَـٰكِفُ فِيهِ وَٱلْبَادِ وَمَن يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِإِلْحَادٍ بِظُلْمٍ نُّذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

Indeed those who are faithless and who bar from the way of God and the Sacred Mosque, which We have assigned for all the people, the native and the visitor being equal therein—whoever seeks to commit therein sacrilege with the intent of wrongdoing, We shall make him taste a painful punishment.[7]

That the Ka'bah is for all people, the first and the last, can be seen from the following sermon of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa).

أَ لَا تَرَوْنَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ اخْتَبَرَ الْأَوَّلِينَ مِنْ لَدُنْ آدَمَ ص إِلَى الْآخِرِينَ مِنْ هَذَا الْعَالَمِ بِأَحْجَارٍ لَا تَضُرُّ وَ لَا تَنْفَعُ وَ لَا تُبْصِرُ وَ لَا تَسْمَعُ فَجَعَلَهَا بَيْتَهُ الْحَرَامَ الَّذِي جَعَلَهُ لِلنَّاسِ قِيَاماً[8]

Do you not see how God, most Holy, has tried the first of men from the time of Adam to the last of men from this world by means of stones [i.e. the Ka'bah] which neither harm them nor

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[6] Qur'ān 5:97.
[7] Qur'ān 22:25.
[8] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sermon 192, p. 293.

> benefit them; and which neither see nor hear; and He has made
> them His Sacred House, the one which He has made to be a
> sustentation for people.

Not only does the temporal extent of the Ka'bah's influence span the extent of human history, it transcends it, making its presence felt even after death and in the afterlife. There is a tradition which says:

<div dir="rtl">

قَالَ الصَّادِقُ ع وَدَّ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُ حَجَّةً بِالدُّنْيَا وَ مَا فِيهَا⁹

</div>

> Al-Ṣādiq ('a) said: He who is in the grave wishes that he could give the world and all that is in it for just one *Ḥajj* for himself.

Ḥajj—Symbol of Walāyah

The *Ḥajj* is one of the pillars of Islam whose importance and centrality becomes apparent upon even a little deliberation. For instance, a part of the first verse quoted above reads, "And it is the duty of mankind toward God to make pilgrimage to the House". No other pillar or commandment of the Law are the words "duty…toward God" used and this manner of speaking is unique to the *Ḥajj*. The remainder of the verse implies that those who do not take up this duty—while having the ability to do so—have disbelieved in some manner! So among the exoteric pillars of Islam, the *Ḥajj* stands out and God has called the people to perform the *Ḥajj* in this serious tone. But there is another pillar, more esoteric than the others, which demands even greater attention. In a tradition from the grandson of the Prophet (ṣ), Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn ('a) it is said:

<div dir="rtl">

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَ الزَّكَاةِ وَ الصَّوْمِ وَ الْحَجِّ وَ
الْوَلَايَةِ وَ لَمْ يُنَادَ بِشَيْءٍ كَمَا نُودِيَ بِالْوَلَايَةِ¹⁰

</div>

> Islam has been founded on five [pillars]: on *ṣalāh, zakāh, ṣawm, Ḥajj,* and *walāyah;* and nothing has been called to as *walāyah* has been called to.

What is this *walāyah* that is so important and how is it related to *Ḥajj*? The pertinence of this question demands a short digression:

The word *walāyah,* in its root meaning, means "nearness" and proximity—both in its physical and figurative senses. As such it is a relative concept. When it is said *"waliyahu"* (i.e. he/it became close to him/it), the meaning is

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⁹ *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, vol. 11, p. 118.
¹⁰ *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, p. 19.

reciprocal in that just as one thing became close to and attained proximity to the second—the other thing, in an equal and similar manner became close to the first. This is very much like brotherhood and opposed to fatherhood. In this meaning, if someone attains proximity to Allah, Allah too becomes close to him. But in the Qur'ān, the concept of nearness is not usually used in this simple "horizontal" sense—especially when the nearness that is intended is not of a material and physical nature. This second type of nearness—more "vertical" in nature—which is found in the Qur'ān is such that it is obtained by one of the parties but not the other. For example, on the one hand, Allah is equally close to both a believer and a disbeliever:

$$\text{وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ ٱلْوَرِيدِ}$$

We are nearer to him (man) than his jugular vein[11]

On the other hand, however, the disbeliever, since his actions are not sanctified by the faith, is "far" from the Divine Presence.

$$\text{أُوْلَـٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِن مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ}$$

Those (*kuffār*), they are called to from a far-off place.[12]

The nearness or farness then is from the human perspective. So to recap, the *walāyah* that is usually used in the Qur'ān is not a relative term that is equal on both sides; rather it is of a type that the Muslim philosophers have termed as *ishrāqī*. In an *ishrāqī* relation the second term is dependent upon the first and can be said to be a manifestation of it.

In the Arabic language, especially as used by the *ḥukamā*, the first case of the mutual nearness is termed *wilāyah,* and the second case—that is, the unidirectional or *ishrāqī* type—is termed *walāyah.*

Now the Qur'ān says:

$$\text{فَٱللَّهُ هُوَ ٱلْوَلِيُّ}$$

But it is Allah Who is the (real) Walī.[13]

So absolute *walāyah* (and implicitly *wilāyah*) belongs only to Allah. He most perfectly and supremely encompasses all creation and is infinitely close to all things and hence has **command** over them. His servants become close to Him and hence gain *walāyah* only by approaching Him through correct intel-

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[11] Qur'ān 50:16.
[12] Qur'ān 41:44.
[13] Qur'ān 42:9.

lection and willpower. They must know the truth and do righteous acts to gain this nearness and become one of the *awliyā*.

The widening of the circle of *walāyah* for a person and its ability to encompass more and more of reality is a tendency pointing towards the Absolute *walāyah* of Allah and hence is divine in nature and essence. What is God-like is liked by God and is the cause of our becoming near to Him and His friends. And Allah in turn becomes the Friend of these believers.

$$\text{ٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟}$$

Allah is the Walī of those who believe.[14]

In this sense *walāyah* can be seen to be the great chain of being and becoming—the principle in existence and of existence that ties all existents together and unifies them in their Source and Origin. As such the *walī al-muṭlaq* is the raison d'etre of *walāyah*—infinitely close to all things while, at the same time, the cause of their gradation and farness from Him, and finally the cause of their "becoming" towards Him.

To phrase it differently, the principle of *walāyah* is known by its peak—that is by the *Walī*—Allah. This very same principle in both its horizontal aspect (implying connectedness and relevance) and its vertical aspect (implying goal and example) requires the existence of a relative peak in all realms and conditioned by the limitations of that realm. Hence, the necessity of a human *walī* in the human realm—one who can act as a centre—or an *insān al-kāmil* exemplifying the way of overcoming the particular limitations of that realm for the purpose of salvation and eternal becoming, i.e. to **be** more and more.

Now just as the Ka'bah is essentially the centre and the House of God or the House of al-Walī, it is also substantially the symbol of the human *walī*. The human *walī* in his turn is the living example and standard of this symbol, mediating between it and God. The *walī* par excellence after the Prophet (ṣ) was Amīr al-Mu'minīn Imām 'Alī ('a). In defending himself against the attacks and accusations of the Khawārij he said:

قَدْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ وَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ

سَبِيلًا وَ لَوْ تَرَكَ النَّاسُ الْحَجَّ لَمْ يَكُنِ الْبَيْتُ لِيُكْفَرَ بِتَرْكِهِمْ إِيَّاهُ وَ لَكِنْ

كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِتَرْكِهِمْ إِيَّاهُ لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ نَصَبَهُ لَكُمْ عَلَماً وَ كَذَلِكَ

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[14] Qur'ān 2:257.

نَصَبَنِي عَلَماً حَيْثُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص يَا عَلِيُّ أَنْتَ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْكَعْبَةِ تُؤْتَى
وَ لَا تَأْتِي ¹⁵

Surely God has said, "And it is the duty of mankind toward God to make pilgrimage to the House—for those who are able to find a way to go to it". So if the people do not perform the *Ḥajj*, it is not for the Ka'bah to be (accused) of unbelief due to their keeping away from it, rather it is the people who disbelieve (i.e. become *kāfir*) by staying away from the Ka'bah. This is because it is surely Allah who has set the Ka'bah for you as a standard (or point of reference); and similarly He has appointed me as a standard, as the Prophet (ṣ) has said:

"O' 'Alī, you are like the Ka'bah—you are approached and you
do not approach."

Hence the man born in the Ka'bah and the first holder of the station of *walāyah* after the Prophet (ṣ) is the inner reality and substance of the *Ḥajj*. Through the mediation of the Imām—the holder of the station of *walāyah*—the Ka'bah plays its fundamental role as the channel of Divine grace and the sustainer of religion and livelihood of the people; for in one of its most significant meanings *walāyah* is nothing other than the Divine channel of grace.

The Walī—the Ka'bah of Tawḥīd

Just as the *bāṭin* and esoteric aspect of prophethood (*nubūwwah*) is the tradition of initiation (*imāmah*), the inner reality of *tawḥīd* is *walāyah*. This itself can be seen from two perspectives. Looking inwardly more emphasis is put on the "vertical" *walāyah* in its aspect of truth. As al-Walī, is also al-Ḥaqq, the Truth permeates and hence unites—*walāyah* here being the dynamic principle of the Truth. The human *Walī* symbolises this and acts as the "Pole" and "Ka'bah" around which and through which humanity can unite, in their journey to the One. The second perspective is more outward and more importance is paid to the "horizontal" *wilāyah*—the one that human beings have with one another through love, assistance, brotherhood and the other valid and true human relations.

To begin with the second, it can be said that the clearest and most obvious manifestation of this idea in the context of Islam is the *ummah*. The political and practical unity of the community of Muslims is of paramount importance. Was it not for this very reason that Imām 'Alī ('a) refused to fight for his right after the death of the Prophet (ṣ). Only the person who truly understands and

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¹⁵ *Wasā'il*, vol. 11, p. 33.

is the possessor of the station of *walāyah* could forgo his "rights"—in practice if not in principle—so as to meet the demands of the *wilāyah* and its logic of unity. For the Qur'ān says:

$$إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْـوَةٌ$$

The believers are surely brothers.[16]

It also says:

$$وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ$$

And the believing men and the believing women are the friends of
one another.[17]

The meaning of both these verses is imperative—a command from Allah. As such it is the duty of Allah's trustee and guardian to enforce this law. Hence the great and overwhelming task that is at hand for the Imām ('a) and his representatives and followers to try to unite the Muslim *ummah*, with all its many divisions and differences. The outward symbol of this coming together of all Muslims, with their various schools of thought, races, tongues and cultures, is the *Ḥajj*. It is the focal point of the unity of the *ummah*.

Now to return to the first perspective—the one in which the vertical *walāyah* in its aspect of truth and connection to the Truth predominates—it can be said that this is the essence of the other perspective. The truth, by its very nature unites, and unites in a real and true sense. But the quintessential point here is to know and realize that the truth *qua* truth—in its totality and infinity—is unfathomable by any and all human minds. One can never claim to know all of the truth; hence one cannot absolve oneself totally from its many possible manifestations, in all their variegated degrees and archetypes. In fact the closer a person is to the Truth, the more he can see these various manifestations and help to perfect their "light", as it were. This is precisely what the Imāms ('a) would do and in particular the foremost of them. Hence it is no accident that all Sufi orders, without exception, trace their chain of authority and grace back to Imām 'Alī ('a).[18] And it is also not coincidental that it was these very orders that played such an important part in the spread and subsistence of Islam in the world.

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[16] Qur'ān 49:10.
[17] Qur'ān 9:71.
[18] It is also important to note that the ultimate teacher of the founders of the four schools of jurisprudence in the Sunni world was his grandson, Imam al-Ṣādiq ('a). In fact, many of the Imam's thousands of students were from different schools of thought in the Islamic world.

The logic of the above can be found in the saying of the Prophet (ṣ), in which he said that:

<div dir="rtl">

علي مع الحق و الحق مع علي يدور حيث ما دار

</div>

'Alī is with the truth and the truth is with 'Alī—he goes
wheresoever it goes.

The truth and right was with the Imām ('a) as is so clearly and graphically portrayed in *Ghadīr* at the time of the last *Ḥajj* of the Prophet (ṣ). The consequence of this is that the truth proceeded through his progeny and we now have access to it through mainly their sayings—to whatever extent that they were recorded and correctly transmitted to us.[19] But 'Alī is with the truth. This is a much greater claim. So, where ever the truth is to be found, irrespective of whether there is documented proof of it or not, know that the reality of the Imām ('a)—in his role as the initiator of the station of *walāyah* and partaker of the Muḥammadan Light—is also there.

It is precisely because of this that such great figures of Islamic history as Mawlānā Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī, inspite of the differences in their exoteric perspectives and *madhabī* affiliations, were great. They partook of the Muḥammadan spirituality through the grace and connection that they had with Mawlā 'Alī ('a)—the Ka'bah of faith. To deny this would be to limit and belittle the greatness of the Imām ('a). It is through this—i.e. the reference to the esoteric reality of Islam (which principialy unites and gives grace to exoteric partialities) and its initial channel that the first Imām ('a) represents—that we can conceive of a unity that is truly becoming of him and his Beloved, the One.

Muslim Unity and the Ḥajj

The concept of unity is central to Islam, *tawḥīd* being the most important principle and doctrine of religion. *Tawḥīd* literally means "unification" and "the act of uniting"—of bringing disparate "realities" together under a single total vision and Reality. On the doctrinal level *tawḥīd* means nothing less than understanding and seeing reality for what it is, on all its levels. It means to understand the unity—or unicity—of the Godhead in the first place and then to realize the unity of His creation in the second; all created things being nothing but the signs, words, and acts of the one God. Now, man being the greatest creation of God, is no exception to this rule. Hence, unity on the human plane implies that first and foremost, men are united in their created Divine nature—God having inspired them with something of His Spirit. From there on down, any type of unity in the human sphere acquires worth in accordance with its awareness of the Divine and its efforts at trying to aim for and reach It.

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[19] This line of the truth is represented by the *'ulamā* and the *muḥaddithūn*.

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The concept of the *ummah* is precisely this type of unity. It is the concept of a congregation of humans self-consciously traversing the path to God. As the goal is one and **the** One, the *ummah* is one. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمۡ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً وَأَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمۡ فَٱتَّقُونِ

Indeed this Community of yours is one Community, and I am your
Lord, so be wary of Me.[20]

So the ideal is clear and straightforward. All those that are Muslim and are wary of their common Lord are a part and parcel of the *ummah* and they, by Divine decree, must be united. But of course, the devil is in the details, for if any kind of details detract the Muslims from the application of this Divine precept, then they truly must be from the Devil. If on the other hand, the details and differences are aspects of the overall unity and fall in line with its ultimate purpose, they are acceptable. This is because unity can be envisaged on different levels and different people, depending on their aptitudes and archetypes, will incline to one or more of these levels.

On the most outer, basic, and pragmatic level, there is the need to unite out of sheer necessity. This is the political unity of those who label themselves Muslims in an attempt to defer the attacks of those who oppose them. This is a temporary and tactical unity which cannot withstand the test of time because on this level, the hearts of the Muslims are still divided. Nonetheless, this unity is still a real unity because of the necessity underlying it, and stands in opposition to the "false" or "virtual" unities of groups which rally around a common name or imagined cause in a superficial way.

On the most inner level is the unity which arises from man's awareness of the Divine, and hence, his own essence; the transcendent unity of God, and the immanent unity of the Divine nature and creation *(fiṭrat Allah)* in man and the world. In understanding these matters, man understands his origin and end, and his present state which lies between the two. He grasps the fallen and falling nature of man in this world and so becomes able to engage his will to make amends and to constantly struggle in the way of regaining his original heavenly state. This struggle or way is what is known as "religion" (or *dīn*) and, when understood in its totality, is the highest and best way to achieve true unity among men.[21]

Which of the two forms of unity must be chosen? Well, if the challenge of the *ummah* is seen to be primarily a political defeat from the outside, then the first "pragmatic" method of unity will be emphasized. If on the other hand,

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[20] Qur'ān 23:52.
[21] This form excludes, on principle, any and all forms of "unity" - whether racial, tribal, national, linguistic, historical, … - in which religion is not given priority and supreme authority.

the challenge of the *ummah* is seen to be a decline from the inside, then the second type of essential or transcendental unity will be the most pressing. For the most part, the choice of perspective will depend on how the idea of *ummah* is understood in the first place. The second understanding—that based on the total and unitive understanding of reality—is not exclusive and can certainly include the first. The same cannot be said of the first or political viewpoint.

What is clear is that the higher and more encompassing the understanding of reality is, the better will be the quality of the unity—of whatever type, level and extent—from the smallest groups and brotherhoods to pan-Islamic movements. Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) counselled his companion Kumayl in the following way:

$$ \text{يَا كُمَيْلُ مَا مِنْ حَرَكَةٍ إِلَّا وَ أَنْتَ مُحْتَاجٌ فِيهَا إِلَى مَعْرِفَةٍ}^{٢٢} $$

O' Kumayl! There no movement [or action] whatsoever but that
you need understanding for it.

The precursor to understanding is knowledge. So if understanding is necessary for any unity movement, knowledge is indispensable and without it more harm is done than good—no matter how good and noble the intentions and irregardless of how numerous the good deeds. In a tradition from the most Noble Prophet (ṣ) it is reported he said:

$$ \text{قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص مَنْ عَمِلَ عَلَى غَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَانَ مَا يُفْسِدُ أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا يُصْلِحُ}^{٢٣} $$

The harmful effects of a person who acts without knowledge are
greater than his beneficial ones.

Knowledge and understanding are qualities which are divine in principle, for God is al-ʿAlīm and al-Ḥakīm. As such, quantity is not of primary importance. This means that even if a handful of believers in the One struggle to achieve a unity based on knowledge and understanding, it is of great consequence. What is more, the traditions tell us that their very coming together aids in achieving the necessary understanding. It is said in a tradition:

$$ \text{مُلَاقَاةُ الْإِخْوَانِ نُشْرَةٌ وَ تَلْقِيحٌ لِلْعَقْلِ وَ إِنْ كَانَ نَزْراً قَلِيلًا}^{٢٤} $$

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[22] *Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil,* vol. 17, p. 269
[23] *al-Kāfī,* vol. 1, p. 45.
[24] *Mustadrak al-Wasāʾil,* vol. 8, p. 326.

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> Meeting with brothers brings about expansion and life [lit.
> impregnation] for the intellect—even if they be a small
> insignificant number.

This then seems to be the traditional logic and methodology of unity; to start on a human scale, based on quality not quantity, and to build up from there. There are many references to both the perfection of the intellects in the latter days and with the coming of the Mahdī (ʿa), the quality and strength of the believers and their formation into small groups. In the recent history of the Muslims, Imām Khumaynī wrote in his last will and testament of the formation of "cells of the party of God" throughout the world.

The first unit after the "meetings of brothers" is the local community, the *jamāʿah*. The Noble Prophet (ṣ) said:

<div dir="rtl">

أيُّها الناس! عليكم بالجماعة و إيَّكم و الفُرقة[25]

</div>

> O' people! Enjoined for you is the community and forewarned
> [and detrimental] to you is disunion [and separatedness].

Beyond this level of "community" are higher levels. Now all of these levels are alluded to in the Law by institutions such as the congregational prayers (which begin with just two Muslims), the Friday prayers, the enjoining of good and the forbidding of evil (*amr bi al-maʿrūf wa nahī ʿan al-munkar*) in society, *jihād*, and finally and most prominent in its symbolism, the *Ḥajj* .

So this is the methodology and these are the steps to achieve higher and higher forms of unity. A glimpse of where this can lead to is achieved by combining these levels with the inner or esoteric understanding of unity. In our time the greatest exponent of such a breadth and depth of understanding was Imām Khumaynī. His son, Aḥmad, summed up the vision of his father in this regard in the following way:

> Imām wanted unity on all levels... unity on the international front—as Imām believed that the world's oppressed should attempt to unite against the oppressors; unity of the followers of religions and prophets in opposition to profanity, infidelity, and arrogance; unity of the *ummah* and Islamic countries so as to fight and counter the attacks of the enemies of the Islamic world; unity of Shias, Sunnis and orthodox Islamic schools and sects within the Islamic world....[26]

Imām Khumaynī was emphatic and insistent on especially the unity between the different sects and schools of thought in the Muslim world. To the extent that he said: "We are united with Sunni Muslims—we are one—because we are Muslims and brothers. If a person says anything that causes division

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[25] *Mīzān al-Ḥikmah*, tradition no. 2434.
[26] *Āwāy-e Waḥdat*, Papers Presented in the Seventh International Conference of Islamic Unity, July, 1995.

between Muslims, then know that such a person is either ignorant or wants to sow the seeds of dissension between Muslims." Moreover, in line with his esoteric understanding of unity— something for which there is ample room within the Shia school of thought—he gave a *fatwā* making it *wājib* and obligatory on the Shias to participate in the congregational prayers of the Sunnis during the *Ḥajj*.[27]

Final Words

A cursory glance at the state of the Muslims today shows us that we are desperately in need of unity on all its levels—from the inner (or esoteric and transcendental) to the outer (or exoteric and political), and on all its scales—from a study group of two Muslims to the super-collective that is called the *ummah*. But we will not achieve it by just being aware of the need, nor by harbouring a thousand good intentions. The methodology has been shown to us, considering our weakness and imperfection, by the all-Perfect Being and His prophets, saints and friends (ʿa). Glimpses of this all embracing vision cum ideology and methodology have been presented above. What remains now is for us to ponder and think. Given this need, should we not be doubling our efforts? Should we not renew our vigilance? Should we not stop being complacent and happy with the name of "Muslim" or "Mu'min", but rather try to make the *dīn* everything in our lives? How can we claim to be the followers of *tawḥīd* when we practice disunity?! We talk of Islam but follow sectarianism as our way! How can we change the state of affairs? What must be done?

What we must do is gain and apply the knowledge that has been handed down to us. We must follow the lead of the *ʿulamā'*, such as Imām Khumaynī, who discounted secondary differences and divisions and remained fixed on the Divinity and His plan for man, in all its dimensions, from the mystical to the political—or rather, the political based on the mystical and the exoteric on the esoteric. God tells His beloved Prophet (ṣ):

$$\text{قُلْ إِنَّمَآ أَعِظُكُم بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَن تَقُومُواْ لِلَّهِ مَثْنَىٰ وَفُرَادَىٰ ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُواْ}$$

Say, 'I advise you just with one [thing]: that you rise up for God, in twos, or individually, then reflect…' [28]

We the Muslims have been advised by the best of God's creation to rise to the occasion. Let us try to obey. Individually or collectively, we must increase

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[27] *Saḥīfeh e Imām*, vol. 6, p. 133.
[28] Qur'ān 34:46.

our knowledge then apply the knowledge and hence gain wisdom and understanding. If we are sincere in this endeavour, grace and blessings will descend—as this is God's promise—and we will be able to form the small cells of believers or communities that we have been encouraged to do. It will be the coming together of such qualitative and enlightened groups of the faithful, by their following the One Light of the heavens and the earth and under the leadership of Its human representative, that will lead to the formation or manifestation of the Single *ummah* (the *ummatan wāḥidah* referred to in the Qur'ān).

We previously saw that the *Ḥajj* has been called the "sustentation of the people" or the place of "rising". As such, it not only is a lasting monument to the plain of *Alast*, where we all stood and acknowledged our Lord, but it is also a foreshadowing of the final Resurrection, where we will be once again impelled to recognize His absolute Dominion and Sovereignty over creation. The coming together of Muslims of all walks, tongues, and races every year for the *Ḥajj*—as a commemoration of our common Origin, our common End and our absolute abasement in His presence—is a rhythmic tribute to the presence of the One in the many. It is a graphic reminder of our potential—of what we could be in breadth and depth, quantity and quality, *dunyā* and *ākhirah*—if only we witnessed His signs and believed in His word during the rest of our lives as we do in the *Ḥajj*.

وَٱعْتَصِمُواْ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُواْ

Hold fast, all together, to God's cord, and do not be divided [into sects].[29]

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[29] Qur'ān 3:102-103.

Elements of Unity

Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī
Translated by D. D. Sodagar

Abstract:

Language, time and ethnicity engender differences among human beings, but none of these are essential to humanity. The 'humanity' of individuals springs from their human nature *(fiṭrah)*, which is shared by all human beings equally. This is the inner unitive element. It is ever-active and enduring, for it is not the result of human convention. The article argues that the elements of unity are essential to the human condition and are aplenty. It enumerates these elements and elucidates the Qurānic basis for them.

Keywords: Muslim unity, elements of unity, human nature, goodness of differences, innate nature of unity, Shia-Sunni unity, Muslim-Kafir relations.

Sound Heart

God, the Immaculate, thus describes to the Noble Prophet how one should comport oneself in a scholarly or religious circle:

وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَـٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

When those who have faith in Our signs come to you, say, "Peace to You".[1]

The intermediate among those thus saluted by the Prophet simply hear his salutation, whereas the elite will hear God's salutation through His Prophet. Thus God salutes the prophets, His friends, and the faithful.

God's salutation is not verbal. This salutation is, rather, an effusion unto the sound heart. God's word is His action; God's salutation is His nurturing the sound heart. What is a sound heart? It is the heart that has unified its cognitive *(darkī)* and emotive *(taḥrīkī)* faculties. An unsound heart, on the other hand, is that which has lost control of these faculties.

One who fails to attain to inward unity will also fail in outward unity. If imagination roams unrestrained, lust and anger perpetrate what they will, and

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[1] Qur'ān 6:54.

base faculties subjugate the intellect ("How many an intellect that is a slave to unruly desire"[2]), one is lost in confused thoughts, and one so lost cannot be a member of a unified community. One who fails to attain to unity is impotent: disorganized multiplicity is unprolific.

In this light, a sound heart is a heart that has unified its desires, impulses, and cognitions. And it is only after achieving this inward unity that one may legitimately advocate unity in the social sphere.

The Possibility of Unity

In spite of our various cognitive and emotive faculties, we are duty-bound to strive for unity and to prevent disunity. That God has created us as a multiplicity but has ordered us to strive for unity and to shun disunity indicates that unity is attainable and disunity avoidable.

But what must we do to be in harmony with one another and to form a unit? As Muslims, there are many methods available to us for attaining to this end. Islam warns us of the dangers of disunity and informs us of the advantages of unity, the factors conducive thereto, and the obstacles that hinder the achievement of unity.

Islam teaches us that unity is not something that could be produced by such conventional means as economic and military treaties, which may one day be ratified and one day invalidated. The consolidation that unity engenders is one which transcends agreements and contracts. The unity to which God exhorts us is not contractual; it is, rather, a unity rooted in our very existence.

Language, time, and ethnicity engender difference among human beings, but none of these are essential to humanity. Humanity springs from human nature, which is shared by all human beings equally. This is the inner unitive element. It is ever-active and enduring, for it is not the result of human convention; it is God's creation:

$$\text{لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ ٱللَّهِ}$$

There is no altering God's creation.[3]

Human nature, which directs us from within, is unalterable:

$$\text{ذَٰلِكَ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلْقَيِّمُ}$$

that is the upright religion.[4]

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[2] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sayings: 211.
[3] Qur'ān 30:30.
[4] Qur'ān 30:30.

It is human nature that defines humanity, not the colour of skin, not conventions, not habits. This inherent direction is so beautiful and effective that it remains unchanged; God leaves it unchanged, as it is the *best constitution* (95:4), and no other being is able to alter it. Hence, *There is no altering God's creation*. All human beings possess this unitive nature, and the mission of God's prophets has been to nurture it.

The unity engendered by human nature is so profound that it extends beyond religious boundaries. Islam teaches us that all human beings who submit to the guidance of a divine guide are our brothers, our equals, and our peers in faith.

God, the Immaculate, says,

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلرُّسُلُ كُلُواْ مِنَ ٱلطَّيِّبَـٰتِ وَٱعْمَلُواْ صَـٰلِحًا ۖ إِنِّى بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ

وَإِنَّ هَـٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً وَأَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱتَّقُونِ

O apostles! Eat of the good things and act righteously. Indeed I
know best what you do. Indeed this community of yours is one
community, and I am your Lord, so be wary of Me.[5]

This verse clarifies that all divine religions are on the same path. But instead of heeding the inner guide—human nature—the believers of divine religions fragmented this cord of salvation, each grasping only a thin thread of it:

فَتَقَطَّعُوٓاْ أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا

But they fragmented their religion among themselves.[6]

This is contrary to God's will; He furnished a single agent of salvation and thus commanded us:

وَٱعْتَصِمُواْ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُواْ

Hold fast, all together, to God's cord, and do not be divided [into
sects].[7]

There are numerous hadiths that express that Islam and the Qur'ān constitute "God's cord." One end of this cord is in the hands of God, and the other end is with us. We must hold this cord with a firm grip and use it to ascend. We must hold it all *together*, for otherwise we would be all holding it but in

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[5] Qur'ān 23:51-52.
[6] Qurān 23:53.
[7] Qur'ān 3:103.

disunity. God, the Immaculate, exhorts us to think together and to keep together. This is the solution to many a theological, jurisprudential, and historical dispute, for the efforts of a circle worthy of God's salutation[8] are, without doubt, productive.

Distinguishing Between Enemy and Enmity

According to the Qur'ān, we are confronted by two enemies—internal and external. Our duty in respect to each is different. In confronting the external enemy—the army of unfaith, hypocrisy, and arrogance—the only way is war and resistance; we must defeat the enemy and exhaust its every resource:

فَٱضْرِبُواْ فَوْقَ ٱلْأَعْنَاقِ وَٱضْرِبُواْ مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ

So strike [the] necks [of the faithless] and strike each of their fingertips.[9]

But what is our duty in dealing with those who pray toward the same *qiblah*, who believe in the same religion and scripture but with whom we disagree? God, the Immaculate, tells us that in such a situation, we must strive to wipe out enmity not the enemy. Infidels and hypocrites are our enemies, and so we must confront them harshly:

مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ ٱللَّهِ ۚ وَٱلَّذِينَ مَعَهُۥ أَشِدَّآءُ عَلَى ٱلْكُفَّارِ

Muḥammad, the Apostle of Allah, and those who are with him are hard against the faithless.[10]

When dealing with monotheists and Muslims, however, we must seek to destroy enmity not the enemy.

وَلَا تَسْتَوِى ٱلْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا ٱلسَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ٱدْفَعْ بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا ٱلَّذِى

بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُۥ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُۥ وَلِىٌّ حَمِيمٌ

Good and evil are not equal. Repel evil with what is best, for then he between whom and you was enmity, will be as though he were a sympathetic friend.[11]

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[8] As the author mentions above, those who engage in peaceful relations with other human beings are worthy of God's salutation. [Tr.]
[9] Qur'ān 8:12.
[10] Qur'ān 48:29.

By erasing evil and enmity—not the evil-doer—we can make a friend out of a bloodthirsty enemy. Of course, only a very few can materialize this ideal:

$$وَمَا يُلَقَّىٰهَآ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ صَبَرُواْ وَمَا يُلَقَّىٰهَآ إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ$$

But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is
granted it except the greatly endowed.[12]

Nevertheless, if enmity is erased, unbiased dialogue can then solve many disputes, for only then can it bring home to us what is *good*. And once we know what is good, we strive for it without hesitation.

The Qur'ān and the Question of Good

But what is *good*? The Qur'ān has the answer to this question. The Qur'ān tells us that it contains truths that are beyond human ken, and if it wasn't for revelation, mankind would never comprehend them. Fundamentally speaking, the task of God's prophets is not merely to recite scripture to their people, to establish certain regulations, or to offer some superficial admonition. If it were such, it could have been argued that human intellect could supersede divine revelation. But the Qur'ān states,

$$كَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُواْ عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَٰتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ$$

$$وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُواْ تَعْلَمُونَ$$

As We sent to you an apostle from among yourselves, who recites to
you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wis-
dom, and teaches you what you could not have known.[13]

It says "what you could not have known," not "what you did not know." That is, the apostle teaches human beings what they cannot learn on their own, what defies technology and natural science.

Now let us see what the Qur'ān teaches us. The Qur'ān explains that human good lies beyond this material world, beyond worldly positions and wealth. To restrict one's purview to these worldly matters is to sell one's soul in return for nothing. Those content with this world will have only this world.

There is a beautiful analogy in Surahs Yūnus and Ḥadīd regarding the state of this world. The Qur'ān likens this world to a lush garden in spring that receives abundant rainfall. This wonderful state, however, is short-lived; au-

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[11] Qur'ān 41:34.
[12] Qur'ān 41:35.
[13] Qur'ān 2:151.

tumn arrives and withers the plants and scatters the flowers. This is the reality of the material world.

Of course, the blessings of this world are divine signs. Rivers, plants, seasons: these do not constitute the base world. It is our desires that are base, not what exists in the real world, to which God refers as His signs. It is the shattering of our dreams and desires that God thus depicts:

$$\text{فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ ٱلرِّيَٰحُ}$$

Then it becomes chaff, scattered by the wind.[14]

$$\text{ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَىٰهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَٰمًا}$$

then it withers and you see it turn yellow, then it becomes chaff.[15]

The end of the base world is like chaff, scattered by the wind.

But what about the end of those content with the base world? The Qur'ān says that their end is similar to the end of the base world:

$$\text{فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ}$$

thus making them like chewed-up straw.[16]

Regarding the calamitous end of the people of Thamūd, the Qur'ān says,

$$\text{إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَٰحِدَةً فَكَانُوا۟ كَهَشِيمِ ٱلْمُحْتَظِرِ}$$

We sent against them a single cry, and they became like the dry sticks
of a corral builder.[17]

They enjoy the pleasures of this world, which is its spring, only to be separated by death from what they cherished. The end of the base world and its admirers is turning into chaff. The end of the base world and its admirers is one and the same, for they are in essence one thing.

Those content with the base world are perpetually in conflict; they vacillate for trivial reasons: "followers of every caller, bending with every wind."[18] They

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[14] Qur'ān 18:45.
[15] Qur'ān 57:20.
[16] Qur'ān 105:5.
[17] Qur'ān 54:31.
[18] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sayings: 147.

quarrel as long as they are in this world, and when they enter Hell, they continue their quarrel:

$$كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا$$

Every time that a nation enters [Hell], it will curse its sister [nation].[19]

But those who succeed in attaining to inner unity—by bringing all their faculties under the guidance of the soul—and who live in a unified Islamic state lead a heavenly life. Even as those residing in heaven hold no grudges against one another, there are no conflicts among true believers in this world.

Describing people in heaven, God says,

$$وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ$$

We will remove whatever rancour there is in their breasts; as brothers, [they will recline] on couches, facing one another.[20]

People in heaven harbour no rancour in their hearts. Residents of heaven see one another at all times. It is not that they see one another only while reclining on couches; rather, they are always together. This is the spirit of those residing in heaven.

True believers ask God to give them this spirit in this world:

$$يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَا$$

$$تَجْعَلْ فِي قُلُوبِنَا غِلاًّ لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ$$

[They] say, "Our Lord, forgive us and our brethren who were our forerunners in faith, and do not put any rancour in our hearts toward the faithful.[21]

Not only do true believers wish to remove rancour from their own hearts, they wish to see all conflicts among believers disappear.

Elements of Unity

On the outside, we are confronted by imperialist powers; on the inside, by our rebellious ego. So by what ways can we secure the unity of the world of Islam? What are the obstacles? These are questions we must clarify.

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[19] Qur'ān 7:38.
[20] Qur'ān 15:47.
[21] Qur'ān 59:10.

We must bear in mind that from disbelievers, we will receive no gain. More fundamentally, unity is not a quality that the material world could cultivate. Only God, the creator of hearts, holds the keys to rapport. Addressing his Noble Prophet, God says,

$$لَوْ أَنفَقْتَ مَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّآ أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَـكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ$$

$$أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ$$

Had you spent all that is in the earth you could not have united their
hearts, but God united them together.[22]

Materiality is unable to bring hearts together; materiality is incompatible with the soul. Should the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran convert the entire Alborz Mountains to gem and distribute it among the people in order to please and unify them, that would only be the beginning of conflict. Material resources can never serve as a unifying element.

In an Islamic state, injustice to our private rights is sufferable. We must, however, prevent at all costs any harm to the state itself. In a letter addressed to Abū Mūsā, the Master of the Faithful writes, "There is not a man—heed this—more anxious to preserve the integrity and union of the community of Muḥammad (may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his household) than I."[23] Imām ʿAlī asserted the truth—that his rights had been violated—with reasoning but was, nevertheless, careful to prevent faction within the community of Muslims.

$$فَتَقَطَّعُوٓاْ أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا ۖ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۭ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ$$

But they fragmented their religion among themselves, each party exulting in what it had.[24]

Imām ʿAlī strove to prevent such a conclusion.

"Verily, you are brothers in faith. Nothing can separate you but the wickedness of your intentions and the evil of your hearts."[25] For identifying the cause of disunity, we must introspect, and on introspection we will realize that the cause of disunity is our evil-naturedness, which consumes our hearts:

$$نَارُ... ٱلَّتِى تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى ٱلْأَفْئِدَةِ$$

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[22] Qurʾān 8:63.
[23] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Letters: 78.
[24] Qurʾān 23:53.
[25] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 113.

the fire…which overspreads the hearts.[26]

Our religion is one; our book is one; our qiblah is one; our prophet is one; the heaven and hell we strive for are the same. So it is our inner evil that instigates conflict and splits the community of the faithful into factions. We must reform ourselves in order to bring about unity: neither submission to the West nor invoking the East could unite us. (And most certainly it would be useless to work with a regime that slaughters several hundred *ḥajj* pilgrims without second thoughts.) It is only through heeding the directions of Islam that we can secure unity.

Imām ʿAlī says, "Beware of subjecting God's religion to vagaries. Indeed unity in regard to a just cause you dislike is better than disunity in an unjust cause you like."[27] Obviously for group work to succeed, one must humble oneself. This may be unpleasant, but it is necessary. Coming together in a group may be disagreeable, but its collective reward is worthwhile.

"Conform to the great majority, for indeed God's hand is with the community."[28] "Great majority" doesn't mean merely a big city; it, rather, refers to manifestations of brotherhood in the Islamic community, such as the elections.[29] We must adhere to the Islamic community, "for indeed God's hand is with the community." Just as the sheep that stray away from the flock are prey to wolves, so those who distance themselves from the community of Muslims for preserving their status are prey to satanic deceptions.[30] It is folly to think that solitary action could produce any good: "Verily God (immaculate is He) does not grant any good to anyone, from nations past or nations to come, through disunity."[31]

Imām ʿAlī informs us of this truth not as a historian who has studied the annals of history but as God's viceroy with knowledge of Divine Norms. He tells us that this truth holds not only for nations past but also for nations that are yet to come. "God does not grant any good" means that He has ordained it such that a disunited nation should not receive any good. If we desire to secure any good, even personal good, we have no choice other than unity.

And it is no excuse to claim that elements of unity are lacking. Elements of unity are aplenty. Elements of unity are *essential*, whereas those of disunity are *accidental*. The principle that preserves the individual and the society alike exists within us, and it is so firm that it withstands any attempt at bending it. It is neither alterable nor bendable.

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[26] Qurʾān 104:6-7.
[27] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 176.
[28] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 127.
[29] Please note that this example holds only where the government is Islamic. The author makes this statement with a reference to the Islamic Republic of Iran. [Tr.]
[30] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 127.
[31] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 176.

In describing the "upright" book (the Qur'ān), God says,

$$\text{وَلَمْ يَجْعَل لَّهُ عِوَجَا}$$

[He] did not let any crookedness be in it.[32]

Only a book thus "upright" can serve to guide mankind to the right path. The human being's spiritual nature (*fiṭrah*) is likewise upright and a source of guidance. As such, these two are unalterable elements of unity. So where conflict in words and deeds arises, we should know that it is in violation of our spiritual nature and on account of our evil intentions.[33]

We should recognize that we reside in the Islamic Republic as guests. Our hosts are those pure souls who sacrificed themselves to safeguard this nation from the assaults of the West and the East. Bearing this in mind, we must strive to purge our evil intentions and purify our soul so as to pave the way for unity.

(Before the Islamic Revolution in Iran, we had difficulty understanding a good number of Qur'ānic verses and hadiths. This revolution, however, served as a practical interpretation of these instances. One such instance is this saying by Imām 'Alī: "One who is pleased with the action of a people is as if though he shared in it with them."[34] After the Islamic Revolution succeeded, we encountered situations where two qualified individuals were candidates for a position. The position would be granted to one of the two. If the other whom was denied the position was pleased with the first's office and activities, he would share in with the spiritual rewards that the first official would procure by fulfilling the needs of the people. And this would naturally produce a harmonious environment. If, however, he protested the appointment of the first on account of evil and selfish intentions, he would be instigating conflict.)

By traversing this inner path of unity, we will succeed in resolving many a theological and jurisprudential problem. There are naturally certain differences among various groups. The Asharites (*ashā'irah*) have differences among themselves, and so do the Mutazilites (*mu'tazilah*) and the Adliites (*'adlīyyah*). Just as there are external differences that define the boundaries of a group, so there are also internal differences within a group. But such differences are a potential source of blessing. (Although, it should be pointed out that the laudable difference is that which is prior to knowledge.)[35]

These differences are like the imbalance between the two trays of a balance, both of which work together to yield just apportionment. When the weight of

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[32] Qur'ān 18:1.

[33] See *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 113.

[34] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sayings: 154.

[35] That is, differences that encourage debate and thus enlighten us are laudable. Those differences, however, that rise from acrimony and bigotry can only produce contention. [Tr.]

a weighed item differs from that of the weights, the two trays do not meet; one is higher and the other lower; they disagree but the purpose of each one is right and towards the establishment of a balance. Thus disparity before the final levelling out is sacred. The differences that God—immaculate is He—has imbedded in human nature are of this sort. Such differences are inevitable.

But it is those differences that remain after one gains knowledge that are nothing but the fruits of egotism:

وَمَا ٱخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ ٱلْبَيِّنَتُ بَغْيًا

بَيْنَهُمْ

and none differed in [the Book] except those who had been given it,
after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of a desire to violate
[the rights of] one another.[36]

فَمَا ٱخْتَلَفُوٓا۟ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ ٱلْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ

But they did not differ except after knowledge had come to them, out
of a desire to violate [the rights of] one another.[37]

God warns us that this desire to violate the rights of others harms, first and foremost, ourselves:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُم

O mankind! Your violations are only to your own detriment.[38]

We beseech God that He purify our soul and restore it to its pristine state and grant us a firm faith: with a pure soul and a firm faith, we can achieve unity in all spheres.

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[36] Qur'ān 2:213.
[37] Qur'ān 45:17.
[38] Qur'ān 10:23.

The Practice of the Holy Prophet (ṣ) and Muslim Leaders in Dealing with Ideological Opponents

Sayyid Ṣādiq Sayyid Ḥusaynī Tāshī
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Abstract:

In recent times, some Islamic factions have taken their literal under-standing of certain religious doctrines as a pretext for accusing other Muslims of infidelity, to the point of legitimizing and even sanctifying their killing. In justifying their actions, they have cited the example of the leading figures of Islam, in particular the Holy Prophet (ṣ), the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the founders of the various schools of thought, as well as other prominent scholars. However, as this paper will argue, a more thorough analysis of their example reveals that such extreme meas-ures were never sanctioned by these great personalities.

Keywords: *Ṭakfīr*, *sīrah*, Wahhabi, religious precedents in Islam, imper-missibility of killing Muslims.

Introduction:

Throughout its tumultuous course, the history of Islam has been witness to many a heated theological debate and argument. In many of these, the oppos-ing sides would set up founding principles particular to themselves, thereby providing the basis for the formation of a new sect or school of thought; in the process, they would link their debates to the polarization between *tawḥīd* (monotheism) and *shirk* (polytheism). Whenever a sect found fault with the arguments of its opponent, it dwelt upon their logical erroneous consequences and attempted to label them as polytheistic in nature. Such antagonistic cur-rents, taking their cue from the extremist views of particular individuals, would sometimes end in violence and bloodshed. At the same time, it can be said that all sectarian warfare and internecine conflicts that have historically taken place within the Islamic world were the result of the stratagems and guile of the cor-rupt rulers of the day, who cunningly used existing differences and instigated factionary antagonisms to secure their self-interests.

In recent times, some Islamic factions have taken *tawḥīd* as a pretext to carry out extreme measures such as mass murder and severe repression. In justi-fying their actions, they have cited the example of the Muslims [of the past] and the Companions [of the Prophet], maintaining that their deeds are noth-

ing but the continuation of the policies adopted by those Pious Predessors *(salaf-e ṣāliḥ)* in their theological disputes and polemical debates. In perpetrating their inhuman acts, this group claims to base itself solely on the words and deeds of the Pious Predecessors. They put forth the example of the Prophet (ṣ), the policies of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the speech and actions of the Imāms of the Islamic schools of thought *(madhāhib)* as well as some other Islamic scholars, to try to explain their own actions with respect to Muslims who are, from their perspective, *mushrik.*

This attempt to find textual authority for themselves— given the vagueness inherent in trying to apply the meaning of a text to a concrete reality, and in this case, to a particular group of Muslims—were, for the most part, "proving-the-given" and hence, invalid. This led the Wahhabi thinkers to further study the relationships between Islamic sects and intra-Muslim conflicts. Using fallacious arguments they concluded that they themselves were the true successors of the Pious Predecessors.

With these few introductory comments, we can conclude that a proper study of the life and example of the Prophet (ṣ), the *Ahl al-Bayt* (ʿa) and Islamic scholars not only gives us definite criteria and principled proofs for a number of civil and legal codes, but also allows us to critique certain deviant ideologies. This, then, can become the basis on which such groups can be opposed. Proving that the actions of this deviant group are diametrically opposed to the example of the Prophet (ṣ) is tantamount to taking away from them their proverbial religious fig leaf—thereby enlightening the general populace of Muslim communities.

According to the Wahhabis, the following four groups have the necessary validity to act as sources in deriving Islamic rulings *(ijtihādāt)*: 1) the example of the Prophet (ṣ), who was a pious man, and whose words and deeds form the exact, detailed, and error-free basis for the Law; 2) the example of the Companions and their followers, who were considered the Pious Predecessors that accurately applied the said Law; 3) the example of the Imāms of the four schools of thought; and 4) scholars (such as ibn Taymiyyah), who were considered the 'true followers' of the Pious Predecessors. Hence the study of the example of the Prophet (ṣ) and the Pious Predecessors plays a central and foundational role in the discussion on the legal consequences of *tawḥīd* and *shirk.*

The Practice of Theological Debates amongst the Muslims during the Lifetime of the Prophet (ṣ):

I. The Prophetic (ṣ) *sīrah* in dealing with polytheists:

Our discussion surrounding the debates within the Islamic society is particular to the issues of *tawḥīd* and *shirk*. However, a study of the Prophetic *sīrah* in dealing with the polytheists and those who had not accepted Islam, can, in

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its own capacity, divest all pretexts from the Wahhabis in justifying their unpleasant behavior.

The *sīrah* of the Prophet (*ṣ*)[1] before and after *hijrah* contains two different facets, each of which has to be examined independently.

1. The Prophetic *sīrah* before *Hijrah*.

The Prophet (*ṣ*) was extremely kind and gentle in his dealings with the polytheists. Throughout the period of his stay in Mecca and some neighboring cities, he was never observed to display violent behavior towards them, and in fact, he would even prohibit others from expressing such behavior. To the same extent that the polytheists would persecute and provoke him, he would tolerate and accept it patiently. He would even humbly supplicate for their guidance from the Lord, and would consider their behavior to be a result of their ignorance.

ʿAbdullah ibn Masʿūd narrates that he himself would witness the Prophet (*ṣ*) being brutally tortured by his people, and yet, while wiping the blood off his face, he (*ṣ*) would pray, "O Lord! Forgive my people for they are ignorant."[2]

In the midst of difficult moments, the Prophet (*ṣ*) was not seen to curse his people even once.[3] When the disbelievers wounded him on his holy face with their stones, he went off to a mountain faraway from their view, and retreated into a corner. When Lady Khadijah (*ʿa*) went to see him, she observed the blood trickling down his holy face and how he would prevent it from falling on the ground with his hands. She said, "May my parents be sacrificed for you, let the blood fall onto the ground." To this he responded, "I fear the anger of the Lord may overcome its inhabitants."[4]

A similar event occurred on the day of the battle of Uhud. Regarding the event, Imām Ṣādiq (*ʿa*) has narrated, "By Allah, had even a drop of this blood fallen onto the ground, the punishment of Allah would certainly have descended."[5]

After his uncle, Abu Ṭālib, passed away, the polytheists intensified their persecutions towards him. Once, he had left Mecca for the city of Ṭā'if where he encountered a hostile reception from its residents. While blood was flowing from his feet, he sought refuge in a garden under the shade of a tree. Instead of cursing the people of Ṭā'if, he raised his hands in supplication and prayed,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ مِنْ ضَعْفِ قُوَّتِي وَ قِلَّةِ حِيلَتِي وَ نَاصِرِي وَ هَوَانِي عَلَى النَّاسِ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

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[1] That is, in dealing with the polytheists [Tr.].
[2] *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, vol. 9, p. 20.
[3] *Dhālikum Rasūlullah*, p. 184.
[4] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 18, p. 242-243.
[5] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 96.

"O Lord, I complain to you regarding the weakness of my strength, the lack of my stratagems, the shortage of my supporters, and my debasement amongst the people; O the most Merciful of the merciful."[6]

With this in mind, how can a pretext for the violent actions perpetrated by certain sects be derived from the interactions of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), who dealt with the obstinate and ill-natured polytheists of Mecca in such a kind manner?

2. The Prophetic *sīrah* after *Hijrah*

A study of the prophetic *sīrah* in dealing with the polytheists and the disbelievers is necessary from two perspectives:

1. A study of the Prophet's war objectives.
2. A study of the Prophet's dealings with the hypocrites.

A historical review of the Prophet's battles demonstrates that he never permitted the Muslims to go to war without the polytheists cowardly initiating it. When the polytheists of Mecca confiscated the property belonging to the Muslims, the Prophet (ṣ) ordered the caravan of Abu Sufiyan to be seized. Then, upon encountering the Meccan army, he issued the command for *jihād* to confront their advance. Similarly, in the battle of Uhud, it was the polytheists who had initiated the battle to make amends for their losses in Badr.

In the battles against the Jews of Medina, their treachery and broken pledges were the principal causes (that lead to the issuing of the command for *jihād*). Likewise, the conquest of Mecca started only after the polytheists broke the terms of the agreement of *Ḥudaybiyyah*.

After establishing an Islamic government in Medina, the Prophet never took the initiative to kill the polytheists there. On the contrary, his interaction with them was one of love and affection.

During the battle of Uhud, when the enemies had broken his teeth and bruised his blessed face, his companions asked him to curse the polytheists. Instead, he responded, "I wasn't raised to be a curser; I was raised to be a caller and a mercy. O Allah, guide my people, for certainly they are ignorant."[7]

He threw the drops of blood streaming down his face into the air, and not a single drop fell back to the earth. Imām Ṣādiq (ʿa) said, "By Allah, had even a drop fallen down on the earth, the punishment would certainly have descended."[8] The same Imām (ʿa) narrates, "The Prophet never attacked the enemy by night."

When the Prophet entered Mecca with a large number of soldiers, Saʿd ibn Ubādah, the standard bearer, was crying out, "Today is the day of war. Today your dear ones will be imprisoned." When news of this reached the Holy

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[6] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 19, p. 17.
[7] *Safīnat al-Biḥār*, vol. 1, p. 412.
[8] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 96.

Prophet (ṣ), he instructed ʿAlī (ʿa) to take the standard from Saʿd and call out a message of love and friendship. ʿAlī (ʿa) did so and called out, "Today is the day of forgiveness."[9]

Various narrations have been reported with respect to the Prophet's (ṣ) verbal interactions with the disbelievers, polytheists and hypocrites. For the sake of brevity, these will not be mentioned in this article. Clearly, if the Prophet (ṣ) dealt with obstinate hypocrites and disbelievers in such a manner, how can he be considered a propagator of the violent actions meted out by some Muslim sects against others?

II. The Prophet's (ṣ) dealings with the hypocrites:

An important principle used by the Prophet (ṣ) in dealing with the hypocrites was to deal with them according to their outer behaviour and to refrain from probing into their hidden objectives. This is not to be misconstrued as being neglectful of their state; rather it should be interpreted as the love and kindness that is inherent within the nature of prophethood.

The true dispositions of various hypocrites, such as ʿAbdullah ibn Ubayy and Jalās ibn Suwayd, had become apparent for the Prophet (ṣ) from the wars and incidents that involved the Muslim society. In particular, the abhorrent actions of ʿAbdullah ibn Ubayy in the battles of Uhud, Bani Mustalaq and Tabūk had become evident for everyone and many verses of the Qurʾān had been revealed with respect to him. Despite all these indications, the Prophet (ṣ) did not grant ibn Ubayy's son the permission to kill his father. He also warned ʿUmar from doing the same.[10]

The Prophet's (ṣ) restrain from killing the hypocrites is among the important issues which have grabbed the attention of Islamic scholars and the founders of the four schools of thought. Most of them, such as Imām Shafiʿī, Imām Abu Ḥanifah and Imām Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, have not permitted killing hypocrites and *Zindīq*s based on this Prophetic practice.[11] They have defined a hypocrite to be one who is a disbeliever in his heart but manifests his faith by his tongue. Clearly, one who considers himself to be a Muslim and attests to the *shahāda* (Islamic testimonies) is not more of a sinner than the likes of ʿAbdullah ibn Ubayy, who inflicted multiple blows to Islam and yet the Prophet (ṣ) did not hasten to bring about his death.

Similarly, some hypocrites had intended to assassinate the Prophet (ṣ) upon his return from the battle of Tabūk, yet the Prophet (ṣ) did not grant Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr, who sought authorization to kill them, the permission to do so. He explained that were he to do so, the people would say, "Muḥammad went to

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[9] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 21, p. 105.
[10] *Al-Nifāq wa al-Munāfiqūn fī ʿahdi rasūlillaḥ (ṣ)*, p. 231.
[11] *Ibid*, p. 237.

war along with his people, and after becoming victorious, by the will of God, he has now proceeded to kill his own people."[12]

As can be seen, the Prophet (ṣ) did not execute hypocrites (with the intention of avoiding its social repercussions) nor did he display the slightest reaction with respect to them; for this reason, the violent actions perpetrated by the followers of some Islamic sects and schools of thought against followers of others would be viewed with severe opposition by the Prophet (ṣ). After all, the effects and repercussions of these violent actions are far greater than the response meted out to the hypocrites after the battle of Tabūk. In reality, such violent acts only lead to the negative portrayal of Islam.

The Practice of the Rightly Guided Caliphs in Ideological Confrontations (*tawḥīd* and *shirk*):

I. Abu Bakr's practice:

Abu Bakr's practice can be summarized from his wars against two groups of Muslims:

1. Those who turned away from prophethood and the finality of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), thereby becoming apostates.
2. Those who refused to pay *zakāt* (the Islamic taxes).

The followers of Musaylamah "the impostor", not only split away from the Muslim community and turned away from Islamic teachings but also rejected Islam explicitly. They had rejected Islam as the final religion and embraced *bidʿahs* (innovations) within the religion. Having not sufficed themselves to these issues, they went on to spread corruption within the society and hence, were the cause of corruption on earth.

From Abu Bakr's reasoning in granting permission to confront those who had refused to pay *zakāt*, we can conclude that, in his view, these people had deviated from the path followed by the general Muslim population. Consequently they had failed to observe the rights of the phrase "there is no god but Allah" as it ought to be observed. However, the important point lies in the fact that despite his consent to confront them, he emphasized over and again that he did not consider them to be apostates, and hence was opposed to killing them. He also made apparent his repulsion to the manner in which Khalīd ibn Walīd had dealt with them.[13]

II. The second caliph's practice:

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[12] *Ibid*, p. 236.
[13] Refer to the book *Tārīkh-e Islām: ʿAhd-e Khulafā-e Rāshid*.

The second caliph's campaign to confront ideological opponents can be classified into two categories:

1. His confrontations with the polytheists beyond the Muslim borders after the conquests of Iran and Rome.
2. His confrontations with ideological opponents within the Muslim community.

From the manner in which he reacted in both these cases, one can derive a certain inclination within him towards compromise and an aversion to violence. His flexibility in dealing with some of the Iranian prisoners is, in itself, evidence towards this claim. In the book *Al-'Aqd al-Farīd* (3ʳᵈ and 4ᵗʰ century) it has been reported:

> When Hurmuzān was brought as a prisoner in the presence of 'Umar ibn Khattāb, he invited him to Islam. Hurmuzān refused the invitation and consequently 'Umar ordered his execution. When he was put to the sword, he said, "If you were to request some water for me O Amīr al-Mu'minīn, it would be better than killing me thirsty." So he granted him his request. When the vessel was within his hands, he asked, "Am I safe until I drink?" 'Umar responded in the affirmative, to which he dropped the vessel from his hands, crying out, "O Amīr, fulfilling a covenant is a clear light." 'Umar said, "You are reprieved until I look into your matter. Lift the sword from him." When the sword was lifted, Hurmuzān said, "I now testify that there is no god but Allah…"[14]

In this incident, 'Umar gave precedence to fulfilling a covenant over killing an infidel combatant from Egypt. This decision itself demonstrates a kind of casualness and flexibility in his view vis-à-vis confronting the polytheists.

Even in his confrontations with ideological and political opponents within the Muslim community, the second caliph did not put the sword to use, choosing only to suffice himself with some decisive responses. His confrontation with Aḥnaf ibn Qays and imprisoning him for the purpose of ascertaining his beliefs, speaks of a kind of precaution observed by the second caliph in his communal decisions.

III. The practice of Amīr al-Mu'minīn, 'Alī ('a):

A study of Amīr al-Mu'minīn's ('a) practice revolves around three important areas:

1. A study of the Imām's ('a) practice vis-à-vis the *Ghulāt* and the reasons for it.
2. A study of the Imām's ('a) response to the extremist ideologies of the *Khawārij*.

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[14] *Al-'Aqd al-Farīd*, vol. 2, p. 50.

3. A study of the Imām's ('a) response to the *Jabriyyah* and *Qadriyyah* ideological tendencies within the Muslim society.

It is no secret that the beliefs of the *Ghulāt*, their explicit apostasy, their confession to having turned back from Islam, and their insistence on committing this shameful deed were the causes of their punishment at the hands of Imām ʿAlī ('a). From this perspective, they bear no resemblance to any other Islamic sect, for the only sect that was recognized to have exited the folds of Islam in the explicit textual rulings of Imām ʿAlī ('a) and the pure Imāms ('a) are the *Ghulāt*.[15]

Similarly, according to authentic and explicit narrations, agreed to by both the Shiʿa and the Ahl al-Sunnah, the Holy Prophet (ṣ) ordered the *Khawārij* to be fought, and Imām ʿAlī ('a) did so. However, never did the Imām nor did the rest of the companions accuse them of being infidels. Rather, they considered them to be within the folds of Islam. On this issue, Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

> The *Khawārij* were the first to accuse Muslims of being infidels due to their sins. They would call those who opposed them infidels and would consider shedding their blood and confiscating their property to be permissible… They are the ones whom the Prophet (ṣ) ordered to be fought, and Amīr al-Muʾminīn ('a) did so… And never did ʿAlī ibn Abi Ṭālib ('a) call them infidels, nor did Saʿd ibn Abi Waqqās and the other companions. Rather, they considered the *Khawārij* to be Muslims despite fighting against them. ʿAlī ('a) did not fight them until they shed unlawful blood and looted property belonging to Muslims. Then he fought them to defend against their oppression and hatred, and not because he considered them to be infidels. It is for this very reason that their families were not taken captives and neither was their wealth acquired as war booty.[16]

Such an analysis by Ibn Taymiyyah of Imām ʿAlī's ('a) approach vis-à-vis the *Khawārij*—considering that he (i.e., Ibn Taymiyyah) is a recognized ideological father of Wahhabism— demonstrates the crooked nature of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Waḥḥāb and his followers' understanding of the writings of Ibn Taymiyyah. It also demonstrates Imām ʿAlī's ('a) patient, logical and nonviolent approach in dealing with deviated Islamic sects.

Despite maintaining a hard line against those who advocated predestination or freewill, the Imām never considered them to have exited the folds of Islam. One day a man posed a question to Imām ʿAlī ('a) regarding predestination. Initially, the Imām ('a) refused to answer the question. After much insistence from the man, the Imām ('a) eventually responded, "Since you have refused to accept my response, then (know that) surely it is an affair between the two affairs, not determinism, nor delegation." Upon hearing this, the man said, "So

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[15] *Miqbās al-Hidayah*, vol. 2, p. 393.
[16] *Al-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il*, vol. 2, p. 376-378.

and so believes in *istiṭā'at* (personal autonomy)." After summoning that person, the Imām ('a) said to him, "You either possess *istiṭā'at* with Allah or without Him. Beware of selecting either one, for you will become an apostate."[17] In the view of the Imām ('a), belief in any one of these two options—each of which is concealed within the belief in delegation—was tantamount to apostasy. At the same time, though, the Imām ('a) did not consider the believers of the view of 'delegation' and refuters of the Divine Will to have fallen out of the folds of the Muslim *ummah*. He ('a) said, "For every community there is a *Magian*, and the *Magian* of this community are those who say there is no Divine will."[18] As such, Imām 'Alī ('a) considered them to be within the Muslim *ummah*.

The Practical Approach of the Companions in Theological Confrontations:

The companions also never opted for violence, killing and looting as a method of confronting their ideological opponents. They would not even accuse a particular person of being an infidel simply due to his beliefs.

Although in the view of many of the companions, the Mu'tazilah beliefs were attributed to those of disbelief and polytheism, they did not accuse their leaders of being disbelievers. Neither did they decree the shedding of their blood to be lawful. Rather, the companions and the *Tābi'īn*[19] prayed behind them, despite recognizing them as callers towards error and deviated beliefs.[20]

It thus becomes clear that in the companions' system of rights, assuming apostasy and polytheism within the beliefs of some Islamic sects does not grant the license for calling the followers of that sect infidels nor for killing them or plundering their property. Rather, in their view, normal social interactions and relations should persist even with the followers of such sects.

The Practical Approach of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in Confronting Deviated Islamic Sects:

Following the practice of Amīr al-Mu'minīn ('a), the Imāms adapted a principle of severely rejecting the deviated beliefs of such groups while being lenient with their followers.

Despite severely opposing some of the deviated tendencies within Muslim society—to the extent of calling them disbelief and polytheism[21]—the Imāms

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[17] *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 5, p. 57.

[18] *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 120.

[19] Those who did not see the Holy Prophet (ṣ) but saw his companions.

[20] *Al-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il*, vol. 2, p. 377. "The companions and the Ṭābi'īn prayed behind Ibn Abi Ubayy though he was accused of apostasy and calling towards error."

[21] *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, vol. 10, p. 526.

did not consider their followers to have fallen outside the folds of the Muslim *ummah*. Rather, they explicitly declared them to be a part of the Muslim community, choosing to refer to them as a deceived and deviated group.

In response to a letter from Ḥasan al-Basrī, Imām Ḥasan (ʿa), on the one hand, considered denial of Divine decree and destiny to be a form of disbelief, yet on the other, did not label believers in this doctrine to have exited the Muslim *ummah*.

Regarding this group, Imām Raḍā (ʿa) narrates from the Holy Prophet (ṣ), "Two groups from my *ummah* have no share from Islam: the *Murji'ah* and the *Qadariyyah*." In this statement, the term 'Islam' undoubtedly refers to faith (*īmān*), since the only sect considered by the Imāms to have left Islam are the *Ghulāts*.

Bearing in mind all the available evidences, we reach the following conclusion: in the view of the Imāms, *takfīr* (calling someone an infidel) and declaring various Islamic sects as apostates is an unacceptable practice. Furthermore, killing and looting their property is by no means permissible. Of course the Imāms envisioned a special manner of dealing with them, which needs to be discussed separately under the heading of "*The Imāms' (ʾa) Accepted System of Rights in Theological Confrontations*." The manner of socially interacting with those inclined towards deviated ideologies and sects has been thoroughly explicated in the words and actions of the Imāms (ʾa).

All the heads of the various Islamic schools of thought—be they theological or jurisprudential—highly revered the Shiʿa Imāms. In fact, many of them were amongst their students. This, itself, speaks to the Imāms' inclination towards co-existence and religious forbearance between the various sects. Had the Imāms considered these individuals to be apostates, none of them would have remembered the Imāms with kind words. They would not have been proud of being their students either.

The Imāms did not call the leaders of the predestination movement infidels during the time when the Umayyads were clearly supporting the belief in predestination. Nor did they consider the Muʾtazilahs and the *Qadariyyah* to have exited the folds of Islam during the Abbasid rule. Whenever a scholar from the Muʾtazilahs or the *Qadariyyahs* was killed during the time of the Imāms, it was at the hands of the oppressive rulers and for political purposes.

There were periods when oppressive rulers were seeking to justify their actions through Divine decree by advocating the belief in predestination. There were also periods wherein they sought to justify their hideous actions through some of the ambiguous verses of the Qurʾān. They would promote issues surrounding the eternal nature of the Qurʾān, its inner reality and the belief in freewill. In both cases, the infallible Imāms (ʿa) chose to maintain unity amongst the Muslims and mutual understanding between various sects. This practice is clearly observable from the various discussions that took place be-

tween the Imāms and the other theological and jurisprudential schools of thought.

For example, it has been narrated in *al-Kāfī*:

> (Narrated) from Abd al-Karīm ibn 'Utbah al-Hāshimī, who said, "I was seated by Abu 'Abdillah in Mecca when a group from the Mu'tazilahs entered in his presence. Amongst them were 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd and Wāsil ibn 'Atā… and a group from their leaders… then he said, 'O 'Umar, leave him! Don't you see that had I pledged allegiance to you companion, the one whom you invited me to pledge allegiance to, then… so you ventured towards the polytheists, who do not accept Islam nor do they pay *jizyah*. Do you or your companion have any knowledge, through which you practice the *sīrah* of the Prophet (*ṣ*) with respect to the polytheists and his (*ṣ*) wars?' He said, 'Yes.' Imām (*a*) said, 'Then what do you do?' He responded, 'We invite them to Islam. If they refuse, we invite them to pay *jizyah*.' He (*a*) said, 'And even if they are Magians, who are not *Ahl al-Kitab* (people of the book)?' He said, 'We do the same.' He (*a*) said, 'Even if they are the polytheistic Arabs and idol worshippers?' He said, 'We do the same.' "

This debate clarifies the practice of the Imām (*a*) vis-à-vis the Mu'tazilahs, and their (i.e., the Mu'tazilahs) practice vis-à-vis the polytheists. Although the Imāms (*a*) considered the Mu'tazilah belief regarding the power of Allah and man's freewill to be contaminated with polytheism, they interacted with them as they would with any other Muslim. They also lectured them about their manner of dealing with the polytheists after obtaining power.

A Study of the Practices of the Founders of the Four Schools of Thought with the Other Sects:

Upon studying the evidences found in the books written by the *Ahl al-sunnah* scholars, we conclude that the founders of all the four schools of thought refrained from *takfīr* with regard to followers of other schools. They never permitted killing and looting from them either. In fact, their recommendations were quite contrary to this.

For example, the only difference that Ibn Hājar recognizes to exist between the *Ahl al-sunnah* scholars and founders of the various other schools of thought, is in the debate over whether *ahadith* narrated from followers of other schools of thought can be considered authentic or not? He accepts as indisputable the impermissibility of *takfīr* and applying the ruling of apostasy, especially in the case of the Shi'as.[22] Ibn Hazm Andulīsī states that in the view of the Shāfi'īs, disagreement over beliefs does not warrant the grounds for *takfīr*. In regards to this, Imām Shāfi'ī has stated:

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[22] *Lisān al-Mizān*, vol. 1, p. 10.

> A Muslim cannot be considered an infidel for any reason, neither for holding opposing beliefs nor anything else, unless the *ummah* comes to a consensus that he is an infidel. In this case, it would be based on their consensus.[23]

Ibn Hazm considers this policy to have been accepted by Dawūd Ẓahirī as well.

Jahm ibn Safwān, the founder of the *Jahamiyyah* sect, whose beliefs were severely rejected by the heads of all the schools of thought, was never the subject of *takfīr*. In fact, the permission to kill him was never authorized by any of them. His killing was the result of a purely political issue, whereby Jahm had come in conflict with the ruler of his time and had fought against him.[24] Imām Hanbal offered prayers for his corpse and he was buried in a Muslim graveyard.

Suyūṭī lists the names of many of the heads of the *Jahamiyyah* and the Mu'tazilahs, whom Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, Bukhārī, Muslim and others have extensively quoted from. Had they been condemned to apostasy, none of the narrations reported by them would have been deemed authentic. Similarly, Zahābī also lists many of the narrators who were either Shi'as or Mu'tazilahs, and holds the narrations reported by them to be authentic in the view of the leaders of the various schools of thought.[25]

Aḥmad ibn Hanbal states that if we were to reject the narrations reported by the *Qadariyyah* narrators, many of the narrators from Basrah would have to be cast aside. However, amongst them, we find many scholars and elders that even Bukharī and Muslim have reported from.[26]

Some of the leaders of the four schools of thought, such as Imām Shāfi'ī and Abu Ḥanīfah, have ruled that *takfīr* and killing people with deviated beliefs is not permissible. Moreover, they also have placed the value of their testimonies in the court of law to be equal to that of the rest of the Muslims. In *Tārīkh al-Jahamiyyah wa al-Mu'tazilah*, it is stated, "It has been reported from Imām Shāfi'ī... he said, 'I do not reject the testimony of the whimsical *(ahl al-ahwā')* except for the *Khaṭābiyyah*, for they believe in the permissibility of lying.' "[27] By the *Khaṭābiyyah* he intends the *Ghulāts*, who in the view of the Ahl al-Bayt ('*a*) are apostates and permissible to execute. In the view of the Shāfi'īs though, only their testimonies are to be rejected. They cannot be killed.

In the same book, the author states, "As for Abū Ḥanīfah, Al-Ḥākim—the author of *al-Mukhtaṣar*—has reported in his book *al-Muntaqā*, Abū Ḥanīfah

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[23] *Al-Uṣūl wa al-Furū'*, p. 128.
[24] *Tārīkh al-Jahamiyyah wa al-Mu'tazilah*, p. 18.
[25] Refer to the book *Mīzān al-I'tidāl wa al-Tadrīb fi Sharḥ al-Taqrīb*.
[26] *Tārīkh al-Jamhiyyah wa al-Mu'tazilah*, p. 76.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

did not consider anyone amongst the people of the *qiblah* (Muslims) to be an infidel."[28]

Ibn Taymiyyah states, "Not only is the discontentment of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal vis-à-vis *takfīr* of one Islamic sect by another an established fact, even Ab al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, the founder of the Asharites, has himself stated in his book, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin*, "After the Prophet (ṣ), the Muslims disagreed over issues, in which some considered others to be astray, while some sought to disassociate themselves from others, except that Islam brings them together and is common to all of them."[29] With these words, Ashʿarī does not consider any of the ideological disagreements to be grounds for exiting Islam.

The Views of Muslim Scholars:

In this section we will demonstrate the contradiction between the system of rights accepted by the Wahhabis and the views of scholars from various centuries, starting from the fourth century to the latter centuries. In this manner we will establish the practice of Islamic communities in adopting a peaceful system of rights in their theological dealings.

Islamic Rights in the Relationships Existing between Islamic Schools of Thought from the Viewpoint of Ibn Taymiyyah:

Contrary to common Wahhabi mentality, Ibn Taymiyyah was severely opposed both to *takfīr* (of opponents) and to violence. He considered the Shiʿas and the Muʾtazilahs to be better than the Asharites in many respects, while no one, not even the Wahhabis condemn the Asharites to apostasy and permit killing them. The Asharites are a sect which has branched out from the Hanbalis, while the Shiʿas and the Muʿtazalites which are two opposing camps, were respected as Muslims by Ibn Taymiyyah. He also opposed any sort of violence against them due to their beliefs. With regards to preferring the Shiʿas over the Asharites, Ibn Taymiyyah writes,

> It is known to everyone who believes in Allah and His Prophet (s), that the [*qadarī*] Muʾtazilahs and the Shiʿas—the ones who affirm legal obligations and prohibitions, as well as the Divine rewards and punishments—are better than those who equate a believer to an infidel, or a good-doer to an evildoer, or a true prophet to a false prophet. Rather, the latter are more worthy of being censured than the Muʾtazilahs, as mentioned by Khilāl in the book *al-Sunnah wa al-Raddu ʿalā al-Qadariyyah*.[30]

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[29] *Muwāfiqat Ṣarīh al-Maʿqūl li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, vol. 1, p. 49.
[30] *Al-Rasāʾil wa al-Masāʾil*, vol. 2, p. 302.

In this excerpt, Ibn Taymiyyah gives precedence to the Shiʿas over the Muʾtazilahs and considers their beliefs to be more acceptable. This is in addition to giving them precedence over the Asharites, even though respecting the Asharites and showing leniency to them are amongst the undisputable beliefs of the Hanbalis and the Salafis. In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah has penned an article under the title of "the Principle of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jamāʿah in Showing Mercy to the People of Bidʿah and the Sinners, and Joining them in Congregational Prayers." In this article he severely rejects the use *takfir* and responding violently to opposing sects. Moreover, he explicitly mentions the Shiʿa school of thought in quite a few places and considers *takfīr* and fighting against them to be opposed to the practice of the Pure Predecessors.[31] After demonstrating convincing proofs and arguments, he draws the following conclusion:

> The *takfīr* of a Muslim due to his sins is not permissible, nor is it permissible due to an issue that he is mistaken in, such as the issues in which the Muslims oppose each other... Thus it is not permissible for any one of these groups to call another "infidel", nor is it permissible to shed their blood or seize their property, even if a *bidʿah* has occurred in one of the groups. How could it be (permissible) if the accusing group itself contains one who practices *bidʿah*?[32]

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā states with regards to Ibn Taymiyyah's article:

> This article is among the most valuable ones written by Shaykh al-Islām, and the most beneficial in intra-faith literature... and his methodology of rejecting those who practice *bidʿah*, by expounding the truth through proofs and issuing rulings against that which opposes the truth vis-à-vis the beliefs which contain *shirk*, *kufr* and *bidʿah*. He achieved this without resolving on the *takfīr* of any particular individual implicated of fanciful interpretations *(shubhatu taʾwīl)*, let alone the takfīr of an entire school of thought which upholds the pillars of the religion. [33]

Rashīd Riḍā notes that while Ibn Taymiyyah demonstrates elements of polytheism and infidelity in the beliefs of some of the groups which practice *bidʿah*, he does not call any one of them infidels. He neither considers them to be cases for the application of harsh laws.

Ibn Taymiyyah has presented arguments along these lines within his writings in a very scattered manner. In some of his writings he has rejected the use of intellectual principles in theology as a criterion for *takfīr*. He also suggests that the harsh approach of the Salafis vis-à-vis the Shiʿas and the Muʾtazilahs is actually aimed at atheists like the Qarāmiṭahs, who have guised themselves un-

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[31] *Ibid*, vol.2, p. 375-385.
[32] *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 378.
[33] *Ibid*, vol. 2, p. 385.

der these two schools of thought for advancing their evil goals.[34] In other words, he considers the actual target of the Salafis' ill-treatment to be the Qarāmiṭahs, not the Shi'as or the Mu'tazilahs.

Among the words of Ibn Taymiyyah which are striking, is an allusion to the following principle:

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ملازمة المذهب ليس بمذهب.

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> The necessary concomitant of (the beliefs of) a school of thought is not a part of it.

We will devote an independent section to analyze and discuss this principle. He believes that some Islamic sects are called infidels or polytheists by others because the doctrines of the accused sect seem to be affiliated with polytheism or infidelity. However, Ibn Taymiyyah believes that the necessary concomitants of a school of thought are not a part of that school unless the followers explicitly state it to be so (for example, if they not only proclaim their belief in absolute freewill, but also proclaim its necessary concomitant, which is the belief in multiple creators). Thus, if a group were to advocate a doctrine to defend the general nature of God's justice—a result of which may be polytheism—they cannot be counted as polytheists or infidels since this partial result or concomitant is not a part of their school of thought and cannot be recognized as one of their doctrines.

Ibn Taymiyyah was also a supporter of unity within the Muslim *ummah* and opposed to violence within the *ummah*. In one of his writings he states:

> The *Ahl al-Sunnah* do not call a Muslim an infidel because of his sins or his *bid'ahs*, nor do they prohibit praying behind them. Among the principles of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* is that they pray the congregational, *'īd*, and Friday prayers. They do not forsake the Friday and congregational prayers like the people of *bid'ah* do from amongst the *rāfiḍah* and others.[35]

He also states:

> And certainly the companions, may Allah's pleasure be with them, would pray behind those whom they knew to be vicious… and the companions and the Tābi'īn would pray behind Ibn Abi 'Ubayd even though he was accused of atheism and was an inviter towards error.[36]

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[34] *Tārīkh al-Jamhiyyah wa al-Mu'tazilah*, p. 75 and 101. *Muwāfiqatu Ṣarīḥ al-Ma'qūl li Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, vol. 1, p. 49 onwards.
[35] *Al-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il*, p. 376.
[36] *Ibid*, p. 377.

Ibn Hazm Andulisī and Religious Forbearance:

Ibn Hazm, a fifth-century scholar, was known to have traversed the path of the Ẓāhirī sect; yet, he severely rejected the *takfīr* of Muslims at the hands of each other. In fact, he advocated a policy of religious forbearance within the various schools of thought. He also identified some of the prominent figures amongst the *Ahl al-Sunnah* who have played leading roles on this issue and have endorsed this doctrine. This, in itself, is an indication of the extensive and in-depth manner in which this inclination has penetrated Muslim thought. It is in complete contradiction to the violent tendencies advocated by certain sects, such as the Wahhabis.

In his book Al-usūl wa al-furū', Ibn Hazm narrates the views of Imām Shāfiʾi and Dawūd Ẓāhirī in great detail, giving them precedence over all the other examples. He then proceeds to argue the validity of their views.

> A group of the *Ahl al-Sunnah* has believed that a Muslim cannot be called an infidel for any reason—not for his beliefs or anything else—unless the *ummah* comes to a consensus over his infidelity. In this case it will be based on their consensus. This is the view of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī and Dāwūd.[37]

He rejects the views of those who oppose this doctrine via two arguments:

1. The Prophet (ṣ) explained all the doctrinal elements of Islam in full detail. He made sure that these were conveyed to the people with complete perfection. He also clarified all the doctrines, opposing which can cause one to become an infidel. When we refer to the doctrinal matters which are under dispute between the Muslims today, we do not find them to be amongst the doctrines which were stated by the Prophet (ṣ) to affect one's faith. Examples of contemporary doctrines include the creation of the Qur'ān or its being eternal, predestination and freewill, and other similar doctrines which were not under discussion during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (ṣ). Now, if someone were to consider opposition to any one of these doctrines as the basis of exiting Islam, it would imply that the Prophet (ṣ) failed to convey many of the fundamental doctrines of Islam for mankind. In effect, it would imply that he has rendered the religion futile.

2. Moreover, he states, "if *takfīr* was permissible based on the interpretation of another person's words, then the one who does *takfīr* would be closer to being an infidel due to the magnitude [of the sin or injustice] done in interpreting the words of the accused, especially if the accused has not articulated that particular interpretation. Otherwise, such doctrines are also found in the words of the accuser, based on what they

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[37] *Al-usūl wa al-furū*, p. 178.

can be interpreted as, though he does not articulate them, while they too are grounds for *kufr*." This explanation by Ibn Hazm is an allusion to the principle "the concomitant of a school of thought is not a part of the school of thought."[38] In other words, all the *takfīrs* within the Muslim *ummah* occur due to the concomitants which are attributed to the opposing school, without their explicit acceptance of those concomitants.

Ibn Hazm also believes that if in certain cases Muslim scholars have authorized the *takfīr* of their opponents, it does not imply the permissibility of killing them. Neither does it imply the necessity of separating them from their spouses and other rulings of the like. It only implies a rejection of the doctrines of their opponents. Therefore, although Ibn Hazm accepts the multifarious views espoused regarding the essence of *takfīr*, he says, "the main principle in this book is the consensus of the *ummah* that an evildoer cannot be separated from his wife, nor a heretic from his. The evildoer cannot be killed, as an infidel can be killed, and this invalidates the claims of those who engage in *takfīr* of Muslims."[39]

Ibn Hazm also uses the notion of "consensus" as a proof for his claim and states:

> And the proof of one who does not call another an infidel except through consensus, is that the one for whom the covenant of faith has been established through the consensus of people, cannot be stripped from him except through their consensus.[40]

Finally, Ibn Hazm interprets the *takfīr* on the part of some prominent *'ulamā* towards their opponents in a figurative sense. He states that none of them, having declared their opponents to be infidels, have then gone on to give a fatwa to kill the opponents, separate them from their wives or prohibit eating the meat slaughtered by them. Rather, individuals like Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, having declared Jahm ibn Ṣafwān to be an infidel, went on to pray for his corpse and the Muslims buried him in a Muslim graveyard. This issue demonstrates that the killing of Jahm was not due to his apostasy; rather it was a result of certain political considerations.

Ibn Qayyim and the Legal Consequences of Theological Debates:

Ibn Qayyim, who is a renowned Hanbali scholar, much like his teacher Ibn Taymiyyah, was opposed to the *takfīr* of Muslims at the hands of one another. Like Ibn Hazm, he interprets the views of some of the leading scholars in their

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[38] *Ibid*, p. 128 onwards.
[39] *Ibid*, p. 178 onwards.
[40] *Ibid*, p. 178 onwards.

takfīr of the followers or the founders of certain schools of thought in a figurative manner. He recognizes them as being referents of the following verse, "Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down, it is they who are the faithless." He states that the term *kufr* in this verse is not synonymous with apostasy, such that it would have special legal consequences for itself. Rather it is a figure of speech, in a similar manner to which ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, the great companion has stated about it, "It is not a *kufr* that leads to excommunication when he performs it and is then implicated of *kufr* for it; and he is not like the one who has disbelieved in Allah and the Last Day. Ṭāwūs and ʿAṭāʾ have also endorsed this view."[41]

Many other Muslim scholars have also sought to follow the policy of unity amongst Muslims. For example, Imām Fakhr al-Din Rāzī states, "And what we espouse is that we should not call anyone from the people of the *qiblah* (Muslims) an infidel."[42] Similarly, Ghazālī, despite taking a very harsh position vis-à-vis his opponents, announces his conformity with the practice of Imām ʿAlī (a) and states:

> Surely the judges appointed in Basrah by ʿAlī, may God brighten his face, sought his permission with respect to judging according to the testimony of the people of Basrah amongst the Khawārij and people other than them. He ordered them to accept it, as it was before the war, because they fought upon a [particular] interpretation, and rejecting their testimony would contribute to their obstinacy and lead to a renewal of conflict.[43]

In this manner, Ghazālī opts for the policy of unity between the Muslims. It is hoped that this brief article has shed light on the practice and precedents set by the leading figures of Islam.

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[41] *Sharḥ al-Qayyim*, Ibn Qayyim Jawziyyah.
[42] *Tārikh al-Jamhiyyah wa al-Muʿtazilah*, p. 98.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 98.

Imām ʿAlī and the Caliphs:
Their Relationship and Interaction

ʿAbd al-Karīm Bī-Āzār Shīrāzī
Translated by D. D. Sodagar

Abstract:

Unknown to many Muslims, both Shia and Sunni, Imām ʿAlī had congenial relations and productive interactions with the three caliphs that preceded him. In practice his magnanimity knew no bounds and he acted as their faithful advisor and would pray behind them. Though in principle the Imām and his successors enunciated their right to the leadership of the *ummah*, they never acted upon it to the detriment of Muslim unity. This article proves to be a source of inspiration for pressent-day Muslims who are beset by the scourge of sectarianism; it is especially pertinent for those who look up to the Imām as an exemplar to be emulated in words and deeds.

Keywords: Imām ʿAlī, caliphs, Muslim unity, sectarianism, *ummah*, companions of the Prophet, Shia-Sunni unity, Shia-Sunni cooperation.

Introduction

ʿAllāmah Majlisī narrates the following authenticated hadith from the Master of the Faithful regarding how Muslims should speak of the Prophet's companions:

Let me advise you regarding the companions of the Prophet of God (may His peace and blessings be upon him and his household). Avoid speaking ill of them, for verily they are the companions of your Prophet, companions who altered not the religion and respected not those who altered the religion. Yes, the Prophet (may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his household) thus advised me regarding them.[1]

In another instance, Imām ʿAlī thus describes the companions of the Prophet: "Verily I witnessed the companions of Muḥammad (may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his household), and I have not seen anyone like them."[2]

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[1] Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Ḥayāh al-Qulūb*, vol. 2, p. 621.
[2] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 97.

In their turn, the eminent companions would refer to Imām ʿAlī as "the fellow of the Reminder"[3] (*ahl al-dhikr*). For solving their problems and questions they would go to him. Thus in Masjid al-Nabī after each prayer, those seeking knowledge would circle around Imām ʿAlī to benefit from his illimitable knowledge. Jurists of Shām and ʿIrāq followed his verdict. Where the caliphs were unable to solve a problem, they would seek Imām ʿAlī's assistance. Where their judgments differed from Imām ʿAlī's, the Caliphs would usually defer to him.[4] In his *al-Mughnī*, Qudāmah al-Muqaddasī narrates the following statement from ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās: "Where we encountered ʿAlī's opinion, we would not take that of anyone else."[5]

Imām ʿAlī's Relation with the First Caliph

When Abū Bakr was selected as the first caliph, a group rushed to Imām ʿAlī's house with the intention to pledge allegiance to him as opposed to Abū Bakr. To their disappointment, however, Imām ʿAlī thus rejected their pleas:

O people! Break through the waves of turbulence on the arks of salvation, and avoid flaunting your gentility, and repudiate the crowns of pomp. Indeed felicitous is he who rises while he has an aid or he who submits and thereafter enjoys relief. This [the matter of caliphate] is an unpalatable drink, a morsel that chokes him who tries to swallow it. He who plucks a fruit before it is ripe is as a farmer who works on unprolific land.[6]

Imām ʿAlī was possessed of authority and imamate by divine ordainment, but some, unfortunately, viewed him as merely a political contender. The Imām, however, eventually made it clear that he despised worldly positions. On one occasion Imām ʿAlī said, "this, your world, is more abhorrent to me than the doe's phlegm."[7]

Imām ʿAlī was displeased with the people of his time as they failed to comprehend his true status. As Āyatullāh Mullā Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī rightfully explains, the reason why Imām ʿAlī so often took to reasoning regarding the caliphate and imamate was to underscore the spiritual status of which the Ahlulbayt were possessed. He was anxious to clarify the misunderstanding that some entertained regarding the imamate of the Ahlulbayt, taking it for a political and worldly office.[8]

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[3] Or "the fellow of remembrance" or "the fellow of knowledge." This is an allusion to surah Naḥl, verse 43, where God exhorts people to seek knowledge from *ahl al-dhikr*. [Tr.]

[4] See Muhammad Abd al-Rahim Muhammad, *al-Madkhal ilā Fiqh al-Imām ʿAlī* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith).

[5] See Muhammad Ridas Qalʿih Ji, *Mawsūʿah Fiqh ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr).

[6] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 5.

[7] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 3. "Doe's phlegm" is an idiomatic reference to something considered worthless and abhorrent. [Tr.]

[8] *Risālat al-Islām* periodical, "Imāmat wa khilāfat" by Āyatullāh Mullā Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī.

The Master of the Faithful had no choice but to suffer patiently and wait. In a famous sermon (widely referred to as the *Shaqshaqīyyah* Sermon), he thus describes this period: "I realized that to wait patiently was more prudent, so I suffered as one who suffers a thorn in his eye and a bone caught in his throat."[9] With his patience, he succeeded in uniting all Muslims and spreading peace. As a result, Muslims, instead of engaging in civil war (which would have been inevitable had Imām ʿAlī insisted on claiming his right), embarked on exporting Islam to other parts of the world. In a short period of time, Muslims acquired such strength that they were able to challenge the superpowers of the time, Rome and Persia, conquering Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine. This success was, without doubt, a result of Imām ʿAlī's divine authority (though in appearance political caliphate seemed to be in charge). Without his divinely inspired strategy of maintaining peace, it would have been impossible for Muslims to make such progress.

Imām ʿAlī's Magnanimity with Respect to the First Caliph

In a letter he wrote on the occasion of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr's martyrdom, Imām ʿAlī thus explained the situation following the Prophet's death: "When Abu Bakr seized control of matters [of governance], [on some issues] he was lenient, [on others] severe; he was moderate and judicious. Thus I associated with him as an advisor, and I obeyed him with diligence where he obeyed God. I never wished that he should die and I remain alive so that the matter in which we disputed[10] would return to me."[11] This letter demonstrates Imām ʿAlī's lofty spiritual status. After narrating this letter in his book, Skaykh Jaʿfar Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' writes, "This is the noblest position one can take [in such a situation]."[12]

Imām ʿAlī's Military Counsel to the First Caliph

Abu Bakr consulted with ʿAlī on a regular basis. When considering whether to wage war with Rome, Abu Bakr discussed the issue with several of the companions; some agreed and others disagreed. Then he sought Imām ʿAlī's counsel. Imām ʿAlī said, "If you embark on this work, you will succeed." Abu Bakr happily responded, "You bode well," and thereafter made a speech ordering people to prepare for war with Rome.[13]

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[9] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 3.
[10] That is, the leadership of the Islamic community. [Tr.]
[11] Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafī al-Kūfī, *Al-Ghārāt*, vol. 1. p. 307.
[12] *Mustadrak Nahj al-Balāgha*, fn. 120.
[13] *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī* (Beirut: Dar Sadir), vol. 2, pp. 132-33.

The First Caliph's Consultation with Imām ʿAlī on Matters of Religious Law

In his *Tārīkh*, al-Yaʿqūbī counts Imām ʿAlī among the authorities who resolved religious questions during the caliphate of Abu Bakr.[14] The following account is one instance where Abu Bakr referred a question of religious law to Imām ʿAlī.

In a letter to Abu bakr, Khālid ibn Walīd, one of the generals of the army of Islam, asked concerning "a certain man living on the fringes of the Arab world who marries as women marry[15]." Abu Bakr assembled a number of the companions, among whom was also ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, to decide on how to punish this man. ʿAlī said, "This iniquity was committed not by previous nations excepting only one.[16] That nation was afflicted with what you already know.[17] I assume that you should burn him with fire." Thus Abū Bakr wrote to Khālid that the man should be burnt.[18]

During the caliphate of Abū Bakr, Imām ʿAlī taught Qurʾān and participated in congregational prayers. So much so that in the Masjid a special spot was designated as his. He would sit at that spot and teach the Qurʾān, its interpretation, and wisdom. As the true inheritor of divine wisdom, he would often exhort people to ask him questions.

Imām ʿAlī's Relation with the Second Caliph

Two villagers had a dispute. They went to ʿUmar to judge between them, but ʿUmar referred them to ʿAlī. One of the disputants remarked, "Are you saying that he[19] should judge?" Infuriated, ʿUmar replied, "Woe to you! Do you know who he is? He is my master and the master of every believer. Whosoever accepts not ʿAlī as his master is not a believer."[20]

And again in another dispute when one of the disputants expressed displeasure with Imām ʿAlī's judgment, ʿUmar angrily cried, "Woe to you! He is the master of every faithful man and woman."[21]

On another occasion, when ʿUmar was criticized for showing great respect for ʿAlī, he responded, "He is my master."[22]

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[14] *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī* (Beirut: Dar Sadir), vol. 2, p. 138.

[15] That is, he commits sodomy. [Tr.]

[16] That is, the people of Sodom. [Tr.]

[17] They were turned to ashes. [Tr.]

[18] See *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl* (Beirut: Muʾassesah al-Risalah, 1989), vol. 5, no. 13643; *al-Mughnī*, vol. 8, p. 188; *Kashf al-Niʿmah*, vol. 2, p. 134; *Mawsūʿah Fiqh al-Imām ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr), pp. 546-47.

[19] That is, ʿAlī. [Tr.]

[20] ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Amīnī al-Najafī, *Al-Ghadīr fī al-Kitāb wa al-Sunnah wa al-Adab* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1977), vol. 1., p. 382.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 383.

Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī and al-Ṣadūq both narrate accounts of 'Umar's dissatisfaction with anyone who would in any way speak ill of Imām 'Alī. In one such instance, someone denigrated 'Alī in the presence of 'Umar. Pointing at the grave of the Prophet, 'Umar said, "Do you know who is buried here? Do you not know that his name is Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his[23] is 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib? Woe to you! You should not speak of 'Alī but good, for if you slight him, you have hurt whom is buried here."[24]

In his *Muḥāḍarāt al-Udabā*, the eminent Sunni scholar, al-Rāghib al-Iṣfihānī, narrates the following account. One day while walking with Ibn 'Abbās, 'Umar recited a Qur'ānic verse, in which there was an allusion to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and continued, "By God, 'Alī is more fit to rule than I and Abū Bakr." Ibn 'Abbās said, "O Master of the Faithful, why do you say this when you and your friend have subverted him?" 'Umar replied, "By God, we did not embark on this out of enmity. Rather, we were afraid that due to his youth, the Arabs and the Quraysh may refrain from submitting to his rule." Ibn 'Abbās said, "The Prophet of God never doubted him for his youth; why did you doubt him?" 'Umar responded, "This is not true. By God, we do not make a decision without him or perform an action but with his permission."[25]

The Second Caliph's Consultation with Imām 'Alī on Administrative Matters

Here is an excerpt from a lengthy hadith from the Master of the Faithful narrated by al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq: "Verily he who succeeded his friend[26] would consult with me on matters of governance and would thereafter execute them in accordance with my directions; he would request my opinion on the difficult matters of administration and would deal with them according to my opinion."[27]

Sunni historians and scholars, such as Dr. Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, are agreed that the first two caliphs would consult with Imām 'Alī on important adminis-

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[23] That is, Imam 'Alī. [Tr.]

[24] See al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Amālī* (Qum: Dar al-Thiqafah, 1414 A.H.), p. 431; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Amālī* (Qum: Mu'assesah al-Bi'thah, 1417 A.H.), pp. 472-73; Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib* (India), vol. 2, p. 154.

[25] See al-Rāghib al-Iṣfihānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-Udabā* (1961), vol. 4, p. 478 and Muḥammad Jawād Mughnīyah, *Ma'a Baṭalah al-Karbalā* (1412 A.H.), p. 57.

[26] That is, 'Umar.

[27] Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Khiṣāl* (Qum: Manshurat Jama'ah al-Mudarissin, 1403 A.H.), p. 374. Al-Shaykh al-Anṣārī and al-Imām al-Khumaynī cite this hadith in, respectively, *al-Makāsib* (Qum: Mu'asseseh al-Hadi, 1417 A.H.), vol. 2, p. 244, and *al-Bay'* (Tehran: Mu'asseseh Tanzim wa Nashr Athar Imam Khumeini, 1421), vol. 3, p. 96.

trative matters, as they acknowledged his superior intelligence, insight, and piety.[28]

Dr. Muḥammad Abd al-Rahim Muḥammad (*Al-Madkhal ilā Fiqh al-Imām ʿAlī*) assigns an entire chapter to describing Imām ʿAlī's outstanding knowledge and jurisprudence. He writes, "Historians and scholars are unanimous that ʿAlī was of the luminaries in Islamic law during the Period of the Companions. As such, experts in classifying the scholars of each age class him as one of the most distinguished jurists among the companions."[29]

The Noble Prophet (may God's peace and blessings be upon him and his household) sent Imām ʿAlī to Yemen to judge and teach; the Prophet said, "The most just judge in my community is ʿAlī."[30] Thus, when ʿUmar would convene a council of the companions of the Prophet, he would address ʿAlī and say, "Speak, as you are the most knowledgeable and the most meritorious of them all."[31]

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrates that the Prophet once asked Fāṭimah, his daughter, "Are you not happy that I have wed you to the first Muslim among my community, the most knowledgeable, and the most patient?"[32]

The caliphs, the companions, and the jurists of Shām and ʿIrāq would seek advice from Imām ʿAlī on difficult problems that they could not resolve on their own. When Imām ʿAlī disagreed with their judgments, they generally deferred to him.[33]

The Second Caliph's Consultation with Imām ʿAlī on Economical Matters

After conquering Iran, ʿUmar convened a council comprising ten of the eminent companions and including Imām ʿAlī to decide on the fate of the conquered land. Some of the companions proposed that the land be divided among the army of Islam. Imām ʿAlī, however, objected to this proposal. Instead, he advised that the wealth of Iran remain in the treasury of the Islamic state for the benefit of all Muslims, including future generations. ʿUmar accepted Imām ʿAlī's advice, thereby establishing the tribute tax.[34]

In the year 15 A.H., a time when successive victories brought the wealth of Persia's Sassanid dynasty to the treasury of the Islamic state, ʿUmar consulted with ʿAlī on how to spend the immense wealth. ʿAlī said, "Once every year, distribute the riches among all people and leave none remaining in the treas-

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[28] See Hasan Ibrahim Hasan, *Tārīkh Sīāsī Islām* (Intishārat Jawīdān).

[29] For more on this, see *Ṭabaqāt al-Shīrāzī*, pp. 41-43.

[30] See *Nūr al-Abṣār*, p. 79; *Maṣābīḥ al-Nabawī*, vol. 2:277.

[31] *Ṭabaqāt al-Shīrāzī*, p. 42.

[32] *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, vol. 5, p. 26.

[33] Ibn al-Qayyim, *Aʿlām al-Muwaffaqīn*, vol. 8, pp. 12-15.

[34] See al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Khilāf*, vol. 2, p. 334; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, pp. 173-74; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, pp. 2417-18; al-Māwirdī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭānīyyah*, p. 196; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, p. 36.

ury."[35] For implementing Imām ʿAlī's counsel, ʿUmar inquired from a Persian officer regarding the Sassanid Empire's budgetary system. Based on the Persian model, he arranged the treasury of the Islamic state so that all revenues and expenditures were recorded and that every Muslim was allotted a portion of the wealth.[36]

In the year 16 A.H., ʿUmar was deciding on establishing a distinctive Islamic calendar. Initially, he was regarding the year of the Prophet's birth as the starting point, but then he considered the beginning of the Prophet's ministry. Imām ʿAlī, however, suggested that the calendar begin with the *Hijrah* (the migration of Meccan Muslims to Medina); ʿUmar consented.[37]

Regarding the jewelry stored in the Kaʿbah, some suggested to ʿUmar that they should be used in reinforcing the army of Islam, for, as they assumed, that was a more urgent purpose. ʿUmar was convinced, but he also asked Imām ʿAlī for his opinion. Imām ʿAlī answered,

> When the Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet, God defined four types of wealth: first, personal property, which the Prophet respected by determining that it should be passed on to the deceased's heir in accordance with laws of inheritance; second, booty, which was apportioned to those whom deserved it; third, *khums*,[38] which was established according to God's command; fourth, alms, which God established for their particular use. The jewelry in the Kaʿbah were there at that time as well, but God left them as they were, and that was not out of inattention. You, too, leave them as God and the Prophet left them.
> And ʿUmar acquiesced.[39]

On his trip to Palestine, ʿUmar asked the most respected companions of the Prophet to accompany him so as to aid him on administrative matters following the conquest. He, however, appointed Imām ʿAlī to govern while he was gone.[40]

Imām ʿAlī's Counsel to the Second Caliph on Matters of War

In the war with the Persian Empire, ʿUmar intended to accompany the army of Islam. He consulted Imām ʿAlī, who thus answered him:

> The status of the ruler is like the string, which brings the beads together and makes them cohere. If the string brakes, the beads disperse and disappear, such

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[35] al-Māwirdī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭānīyyah*, p. 199.

[36] See al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1. pp. 411 and 2595; al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, p. 453; Ibn Ṭaṭaqī, *Al-Tārīkh al-Fakhrī*, pp. 112 and 114; Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Thaqafī, *Al-Ghārāt*, p. 48.

[37] Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 29; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 11; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 253.

[38] An annual tax, equal to one-fifth of one's surplus wealth. [Tr.]

[39] Al-Amini, *Al-Ghadīr*.

[40] Sayyid Husein Ja'fari, *Tashayyu' dar Masir Tarikh* (Tehran: Daftar Nashr, 1351 A.H. (solar)), p. 58.

that they can never again be restored. Arabs today, though few in number, are significant due to Islam and strong through unity. Thus, you should remain still as the column and make the Arabs encircle you as the millstone [rotates round its column]: by them ignite the flames of war. Should you leave this land, Arabs, from the corners and fringes of the Arab world, will annul [their pledges of allegiance to you], so that the dangers behind you would be of greater concern to you than that which would lie ahead of you. Indeed, if the Persians behold you tomorrow, they will say, "He is the root of the Arabs: Cut him down so that you may be relieved." Thus [your presence there] would only intensify their eagerness to [destroy] you.[41]

Thereafter 'Umar said, "Indeed, this is the right decision, and I wish to follow it."[42]

Imām ʿAlī's Relation with the Third Caliph

The Third Caliph came to power by the decision of the council arranged by the Second Caliph. Despite knowing that the council had conspired against him, Imām ʿAlī continued his peaceful ways so as to maintain Islamic solidarity. In a speech he made when pledging allegiance to 'Uthmān, 'Alī said, "You well knew that I was the most qualified for receiving the caliphate. But by God I swear that so long as the welfare of the Muslims is secure and it is only me whom is being oppressed, I will remain silent. I do this in the hope of reaping [spiritual] benefits and so that I may shun the worldly pleasures, which you are so fond of."[43]

One of the most momentous projects executed during the caliphate of 'Uthmān was the compilation of the Qur'ān and the establishment of a single standard Qur'ānic text. A number of the companions, such as Ibn Masʿūd, opposed this endeavour. Imām ʿAlī, however, oversaw the project and gave his final approval to it. In his response to the opponents of the project, and in defence of 'Uthmān, he said, "Do not make mention of 'Uthmān other than in a good way, because I swear to God that the work that 'Uthmān did with regards to the manuscripts of the Qur'ān was in our presence." The Imām then added, "Had I been the ruler, I would have dealt with the scriptures as 'Uthmān did."[44] Owing to Imām ʿAlī's firm support, Sunnis and Shias alike accepted 'Uthmān's compilation.

There are other instances of Imām ʿAlī's courteous relation with the Third Caliph. As Muslims grew dissatisfied with 'Uthmān's rule, they voiced their

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[41] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 146.
[42] Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, *Al-Irshād*, vol. 1, pp. 198-201.
[43] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 74.
[44] See al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, vol. 1, pp. 103-4; al-Zarkishī, *Al-Burhān*, vol. 1, p. 240; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, vol. 1, p. 21.

grievances to Imām ʿAlī. To moderate the situation, Imām ʿAlī advised ʿUthmān with these words:

> The people have lined up behind me and have requested that I be their spokesman to you. But by God I know not what to tell you? There is nothing that you are ignorant of. You know that which we know. We have not outdone you in anything of which we may inform you and have not gained exclusive access to any matter of which we may apprise you. You have seen that which we have seen and have heard that which we have heard; you accompanied the Prophet as we did. Ibn Ibī Quḥāfah[45] and Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb[46] [both ruled better than you, though] they were no more predisposed to righteousness than you. And you are closer in kinship to the Prophet than they were: you are the Prophet's son-in-law, whereas they were not. By God! By God! I warn you concerning yourself. By God, there is no blindness in you from which you need be cured or ignorance in you concerning which you need be instructed. Verily, the ways are clear and the signposts of religion erect. So then beware that the most meritorious servant of God before Him is a just ruler, whom has been guided and who guides, who upholds an orthodox tradition and destroys an unorthodox innovation.[47]

In the final days of ʿUthmān's caliphate, outraged crowds besieged his residence. Instead of utilizing this opportunity to his own advantage, Imām ʿAlī, in the interests of the Muslim community, strove to pacify the conflict. Thus, he gave orders to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, his sons, to stand guard and protect ʿUthmān. Imām ʿAlī later expressed, "By God, I defended him to the extent that I feared I may be a transgressor[48]."[49]

Praying with the Caliphs

Al-Shaykh al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī narrates the following two hadiths regarding the Ahlulbayt's praying with Sunni rulers: "Verily the Prophet intermarried with them[50] and ʿAlī prayed behind them;"[51] "Ḥasan and Ḥusayn would pray behind Marwān."[52]

ʿAllāmah al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn provides the following explanation on this topic:

[Imām ʿAlī] performed his prayer behind [the Caliphs] sincerely for God. Thus we submit to him and seek proximity to God by praying in congregation

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[45] The First Caliph.
[46] The Second Caliph.
[47] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 164.
[48] That is, transgressing God's Will. [Tr.]
[49] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermons: 240.
[50] That is, with ʿUmar and Abū Bakr.
[51] *Wasāʾil al-Shīʿah*, vol. 5, p. 383.
[52] *Ibid.*

behind Sunni imāms. This is approved by the school of the Ahlulbayt: wor-shippers are rewarded for praying in congregation behind Sunni imāms just as they are rewarded for praying behind Shia imāms. Those aware of our school know that in relation to Shia imāms, we consider *'idālah* (righteousness) a condition and as such regard praying behind a Shia imām who is *fāsiq* (un-righteous) or unknown impermissible. We, however, allow praying behind any Sunni imām.[53]

Conclusion

Thus Imām ʿAlī and his virtuous successors retained differences within rea-sonable limits so that the unity of the Muslim community would be preserved unharmed, as disunity would have been advantageous only to the enemies of Islam. It was in reference to this service of the Ahlulbayt that Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet and Imām ʿAlī's wife, said, "Our imamate is a security against dissension."[54]

As time passed, however, the interests of tyrants required that they foment conflict and provoke Muslims against one another so as to hinder progress. And today, though caliphate is not a political reality any longer, imperialist powers, assailing the Muslim world from every corner, try to rekindle the his-torical differences by inciting ignorant figures on both sides. And Muslims instead of standing up against imperialist powers, who are the real enemy, have preoccupied themselves with factional quarrel. Let me end with this poem:

O Muslims, what wonderful days we enjoyed.
Truly we possessed delightful authority and prestige.
As the rose and the nightingale, we were one another's confidant
In the orchard of loyalty, whose lush vegetation and fruit we cherished.
All the way to the Great Wall of China did we display the banner of Islam
As we had a firm and iron resolution.
Thus was our state so long as we were honest to one another
And lie and deception we abhorred.
The hand of hypocrisy found its way into our midst
And so the winds of disintegration consumed whatever authority and pres-tige we had.

وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا

فَقُلْ سَلَٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

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[53] *Ajwabah Masā'il Jār Allāh* (Qum: Majmaʿ Jahani Ahl Bayt, 1416 A.H.), p. 66.
[54] *Man lā yaḥḍaruhu al-faqīh,* vol. 3, p. 568.

When those who have faith in Our signs come to you, say, "Peace to You".[55]

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[55] Qur'ān 6:54

A Glimpse into the Melodiousness of the Qur'ān

Akram Dayyāni
Translated by Ali Karmali

Abstract:

One of the most important features of the Qur'ān's miraculous eloquence is the harmony of the rhythm and melodious nature that one finds within it. In so far as musical and melodious sounds play an effective role in the transformation of the human soul, it is no wonder that Allah has infused the verses of His Book with a music that is both extraordinary and miraculous. This article attempts to explore the divine melodious nature of the Qur'ān, as well as the factors and foundations underlying this melody.

Keywords: art, music, melodiousness of the Qur'ān, miraculous eloquence of the Qur'ān, rhythm of the Qur'ān, *tartīl*, forbidden (*harām*) music.

Introduction:

Man and art have evolved together since the dawn of time. Whereas, the origins of human disciplines such as philosophy, mathematics and experimental sciences are often traced back to a particular period within recorded history, the same is not the case for art. Defining art has not been an easy task and a number of differing opinions have been suggested by various scholars.

According to a French philosopher, "Art is the attempt to create beauty or to create the ideal."[1]

Tolstoy, a Russian writer, comments, "When a person consciously and through external means converts his sentiments obtained through experience in such a way that those sentiments are transmitted and causes the recipient to experience the same feelings that he had experienced, this act is called art, and the person, an artist."[2]

Herbert Reid remarks, "Art is the expression of every desire that the artist can infuse in an embodied form; art is the human attempt to create delightful forms."[3]
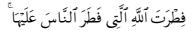
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[1] Muḥadathi, p. 63.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

As for Sayyid Quṭub, he remarks "Art is the attempt to portray the sensory effects resulting from the reality of existence in a beautiful, vibrant and effective manner."[4]

Much has been said and written about art and its role in the life of man, but in reality, these observations have been limited to a particular historical manifestation of the art of man. The true reality of art—as well as its role in relation to the different facets of man—has yet to be uncovered. Uncovering this hidden reality can only be carried out by religion and man's spiritual knowledge of the transcendence.

From ancient history until today, religion has traversed the labyrinth of man's life and existence in the same way that art has, and in fact, even deeper. It has polished the human soul with clarity and lustre, made smooth the rutted road of life, and has drawn out man from his terrestrial soil towards higher levels of existence.

During the span of history, art and religion have been so interwoven that separating them from each other is next to impossible. Perhaps this is due to the fact that both religion and art are rooted and concealed in the depths of man's existence and with them can be heard:

$$فِطْرَتَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلَّتِى فَطَرَ ٱلنَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا$$

the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind [5]

In the same way that religion is sacred and sublime, art too has its roots in the sacred and uplifting aspects of man. Moreover, just as faith is prone to straying without the assistance of the prophets, artistry too, if it does not fall under the guidance of the Creator of art (and existence in general), can easily swerve off its track. It is for this reason that the mutual relationship between art and religion must be maintained till the end of time, and man—being decadent and helpless—should seek refuge in its light to find a way towards human perfection.

From another angle, God the Almighty, Who is the Creator of mankind and all things beautiful, revealed the Qur'ān for the guidance and bliss of humanity and for developing his splendour and perfection.

The Qur'ān is a book that has a deep interior, a beautiful exterior and a sweet expression.[6] It is a glowing torch which will never extinguish and its rays will remain throughout the ages. Its novelty does not fade with age; in fact, as time passes, its core concepts and understanding become more evident. How many a deep concept and hidden intellectual secret has been revealed simply by

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[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Qur'ān 30:30.

[6] Kulaynī, vol. 4 p. 399.

the passage of time. The Qur'ān is an endless miracle that contains several extraordinary and wondrous aspects. Former and contemporary scholars have elaborated extensively as to the different facets of the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, and today, we can summarized these into three important and essential components:

1. Miracle of expression
2. Miracle of knowledge
3. Miracle of guidance (through the *shari'ah)*

Since the topic of the present article is about the Qur'ān and artistry, we shall describe and explain the miracle of Qur'ānic eloquence, concentrating on its melodious nature.

Miracle of Expression

The miracle of the Qur'ān's expressive nature can be divided into three sections:

1—The Qur'ān's Selection of Terminology:

From a grammatical point of view, Arab rhetoricians consider the Qur'ān's miracle to lie in its incredible fluency and eloquence. The clarity of its message, the fluidity of its phrases, the precision in the selection of its terminology and order, and the arrangement of its verses are such that when it comes to interpreting and transcribing the words of the Qur'ān, it is as if they have been woven and knit by the same thread in such a way that an inseparable unity is apparent throughout its verses and chapters. All of this attests to the fact that the Qur'ān is the word of God.

The terms in the Qur'ān have been selected so that:

1) The proportion of sounds of equal level is adhered to, such that the last letter of each preceding word is in vocal harmony with the first letter of the following word.

2) The meanings of the words are in accordance with each other such that, in terms of understanding, there is harmony between them.

3) The eloquence of the words selected are coherent with the conditions set forth in the science of oration and rhetoric, such that each word is placed in such a way that it is not possible to replace it with another.

Ibn ʿAṭiyyah in his exegesis writes, "If a word of the Qur'ān is removed and the entire Arabic language is searched for a replacement, such a term will not be found."[7]

On the same point, Ibū Sulaymān Bastī writes:

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[7] Maʿarifat, *al-Tamhīd*, 1396 A.H., p. 21.

> Know that the underlying pillar of the eloquence of the Qur'ān is based on the fact that each word has, in its essence, a peculiarity that qualifies it for a specific place appropriate to it, such that if another word is used in its place, either the overall meaning would change causing the intent of the verse to become corrupt, or it would give up its beauty and thereby lose its eloquence.[8]

Shaykh ʿabd al-Qāhir Jurjānī regarding this says:

> The scholars of grammar and eloquence were completely fascinated by the precision and selection of the words of the Qur'ān, since they were unable to find a case of a word that was inappropriately placed or a word uselessly placed, nor could they find a word more worthy than what was used. Instead, they found it so precise that it dumbfounded the wise and bewildered the masses.[9]

This type of emphasis with regards to the selection and placement of the Qur'ānic words, points not only to the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, but also to the fact that such attention and skill is beyond the capability of man. This is due to the fact that the precision in the selection of words and sentences, the complete proficiency and expansive knowledge of vocabulary, and the acute attentiveness required in such an endeavour, is usually not possible for the common person.

In this regard, the words of Walīd ibn Maghīrah Makhzūmī, who is counted as one of the most famous orators and distinguished Arab leaders, and who also was one of the staunch opponents of Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ), is worth noting. Upon passing by the Prophet (ṣ) in the state of prayers and hearing him recite several Qur'ānic verses from the chapter of Believers (Mu'min), he took towards the Makhzūm tribe and regarding the Qur'ān, remarked:

> I swear by God, I heard speech from Muḥammad (ṣ) that is neither similar to that of man nor that of jinn. I swear on God that his speech had a special sweetness, beauty and freshness, just like a fertile tree with branches full of fruits and roots deep and extensive. Verily, this speech has superiority over others and there will never be a speech superior to it.[10]

Regarding the beauty and attractiveness of the Qur'ān he also said, "That which the child of *Abū Kabshah*[11] says, by God, it is neither poetry nor magic nor exaggeration; without a doubt his speech is the speech of God…"

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[8] Maʿarifat, *ʿUlūm-e Qurānī*, p. 375.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Ṭabarī, 1392 A.H., p. 98 and Ibn Hishām, 1355 A.H., p. 288.
[11] The unbelievers used to refer to Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) by this name, referring to the Prophet's maternal grandfather, who opposed the Quraysh in matters of religion.

Similar confessions regarding the attraction and effectiveness of the Qur'ān, from amongst the opponents of Islam have been vastly reported, and this itself denotes the unmatched miraculous nature of the Qur'ān.

2—The Qur'ān's Method and Style of Expression:

Even though the expressive style of the Qur'ān was attractive to the Arabs, its style was not similar to any of those that were prevalent at the time. The Qur'ān gave way to a new method of expression that was unprecedented and could never be replicated afterwards. Even though the order and writing of the Qur'ān was completely new, it was not outside the confines of Arabic speech. This is one of the wonders of oration where the orator creates a style in such a way that it is accepted and liked by the listener despite it being unconventional. What is more miraculous is that it gains superiority over all other styles without containing even a trace of them within itself.

The types of speech, in general, that were present amongst the articulate Arabs at the time were poetry, prose and rhymed prose, each of which had its own virtues and flaws.

The Qur'ānic style contains the attraction and eloquence of poetry, the total freedom of prose, and the elegance found in rhymed prose, without becoming dependent on rhythm or rhyme, nor becoming fragmented, nor putting itself into difficulty or arduousness. This fundamental matter astounded the Arab rhetoricians since they found themselves faced with speech that although new and peculiar, had a certain attraction and elegance that was not found in any other formal discourse of that time.

Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, a learned jurist and famous grammarian, remarks:

> The outstanding order and exotic manner of the Qur'ān—which is unlike the style used by the Arabs in their poetry or prose—had no parallel neither before them nor after them, and no one had the aptitude to compose something similar. Instead, they were astonished and left bewildered, not knowing how to approach it—whether to consider it as poetry, or as prose, or as rhymed prose, or as epic verses that were in fashion at that time ... and so it was that the Arab elite and their foremost rhetoricians fell to their knees in the face of the Qur'ān.[12]

Naḍir ibn Ḥārith ibn Kaldah—considered one of the leaders of the Quraysh and known for his cleverness and wit amongst the Arabs—displayed an open enmity towards the Prophet of Islam (ṣ). In a gathering amid the heads of Quraysh, while discussing the problem that the Prophet (ṣ) posed for them, he said:

> I swear by God, an event occurred when Muḥammad (ṣ) was a proper young man amongst you, likable by all, but you did not search for a

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[12] Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, p. 107.

resolution. In his speech, he was the most honest, and in his safekeeping, the most trustworthy ... until white hair became apparent on the two sides of his face and he brought that which he brought. At that time you said, "He is a magician". No, By God! In no way is he similar to a magician. You said, "He is a soothsayer". No, By God! His speech is not that of a soothsayer. You said, "He is a poet". No, By God! In no way is his speech on the pattern of poetry. You said, "He is crazy". No, By God! He is in no way similar to a crazy person. Therefore you realized, and correctly so, that a great event happened and this cannot be underestimated".[13]

3—The Qur'ān's Rhythm and Music:

One of the most important aspects that contributes to the miraculous eloquence found in the Qur'ān is its rhythm and music. In his definition of muslic, Ibn Khaldūn states:

> Music is defined as infusing a tune into rhythmic poetry through the separation of sounds into proportionate segments. Each of these sounds, when paused upon, brings about a complete "seal"[14] which, in turn, forms a tune (a pleasing sound). This tune, thereafter, is combined with others in accordance with specific relationships, and it is for this reason that the equilibrium that comes about from these sounds becomes pleasing to the ear.[15]

As musical and melodious sounds play an effective role in the transformation of the human soul, Allah has interlaced the verses of His Book with a music that is both extraordinary and miraculous. The rhythm and tune of the words are not only in harmony with the meaning and intent of the verses, but also help create an atmosphere of sanctity, purity, passion, enthusiasm, and lure in the human soul, such that having been caught in the clutches of the Qur'ān, the soul inevitably becomes intoxicated in traversing the path (*sayr wa sulūk*) within the celestial ambience of the verses.

The rhythm that lies in the words of the Qur'ān produces a heart-warming melody and a heart-rendering cry that excites the soul and infatuates it with the Qur'ān. The beauty that lies in the resonance of the Qur'ān stirs the hearts of all who hear it, including those who are not Arabs. While listening to the uplifting tone of the Qur'ān, the first thing that attracts a person is the novel audible structure and style. In this structure, the punctuation and pauses have been adorned in such a way that it affects the soul of the listener. This impressive effect starts with the proper pronunciation of the characters and words, and continues when an expressive tune is adhered to; the climax of it is

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[13] Ibn Hishām, 1355 A.H., p. 320-321; Suyuṭī, 1377 A.H., p. 180.

[14] "Seal" (*tawqīʿ* or *irtiqāʿ*) is the beginning of the "stride" in musical terms which means to tune or pitch sounds.

[15] Ibn Khaldūn, 1997, p. 844.

achieved when it is recited in a sombre ambience according to the particular tone along with its precise high and low pitches.

The fluency of the words and expression, the eloquence and miraculous precision in the selection of these words, and the harmony the Qur'ān displays in relation to its content and context, arouses a tornado in the human soul and takes him out of the state of sluggishness and sleep. It is no wonder that in the traditions found within the school of the *Ahl al-bayt* (ʿa), reciting the Qur'ān in its Arabic tone (*laḥn-e-ʿarabī*) has been emphasised.

As an example, the Prophet of Islam (ṣ) has said, "Everything has a decor, and the decor of the Qur'ān is its beautiful recital."[16] He also said, "Adorn the Qur'ān with your pleasant recitals."[17] It is no surprise, then that the Arabs called the Qur'ān magic:

فَقَالَ إِنْ هَـٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُؤْثَرُ

Saying, 'It is nothing but magic handed down.'[18]

Dr. Darrāz, regarding the musical effects of the Qur'ān remarks:

> When a person observes that from cinder ducts (of the larynx), glittering gems come out in the form of ordered letters as if decorations on a street, he would reach a state of endless rapture and attain an everlasting source of energy. It is as if, the first letter is playing, the second is reverberating, the third is a whisper, the fourth is a cry, the fifth shakes the breath, while the sixth closes its passage, and you find the beauty of its rhythm within your reach. It is a composite and harmonized compilation that is neither repetitive nor redundant, neither mellow nor harsh, and there is no decay in its letters or sounds.
>
> In this manner, the Qur'ān is neither the harsh speech of the Bedouins nor the soft speech of the urban dwellers; rather it is contains the firmness of the first and the delicateness of the second. It is as if there is a blending of both languages and the result is an intermingling of the two dialects.
>
> Indeed, the Qur'ān has both novelty and beauty and this combination is like a shell which contains valuable pearls and precious gems within itself. So if the beauty of the crust does not prevent you from seeing the buried treasure held within, and if its novelty does not become a curtain between you and the hidden secrets that lie beyond it, and if you remove the crust from the pith and separate the shell from the pearl, and if you reach the order and adornment of its words in the splendour of its meaning ... it is then that a more wonderful and magnificent essence will manifest itself to you and you will find the clarity in its meaning. It is

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[16] Kulaynī, p. 420.
[17] Majlisī, p. 90.
[18] Qurān 74:24.

here that lies the soul and depth of the Qur'ān, where the flame that pulled Prophet Musa (‘a) to the burning tree in the blessed mausoleum on the shores of the valley of faith, and where the breeze of the Holy Spirit says, "Indeed I am Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!"[19]

Regarding the music of Qur'ān, Sayyid Quṭub also adds:

This melody has come about as a result of a particular structure, the harmony between the letters in a word, and the concordance between the words in a section. It is from this perspective, that the Qur'ān has both the special characteristics of prose and the particularities of poetry, with this distinguishing factor, that the meaning and expression of the Qur'ān has been freed from the restrictions and limitations of rhyme, while at the same time, containing within it both prose and poetry.

During the recitation of the Qur'ān, the inner rhythm can be completely perceived. This rhythm, displays itself more within the short chapters—where the "spacing"[20] is closer together, and in general, within its illustrations and sketches—and less so within the long chapters. In both cases, though, the rhythmic order is always present. For instance, in *Surah Najm*, we read:

وَٱلنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ ۝ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ ۝ وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ ۝ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْىٌ يُوحَىٰ ۝ عَلَّمَهُۥ شَدِيدُ ٱلْقُوَىٰ ۝ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَٱسْتَوَىٰ ۝ وَهُوَ بِٱلْأُفُقِ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ ۝ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ ۝ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ ۝ فَأَوْحَىٰٓ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِۦ مَآ أَوْحَىٰ ۝ مَا كَذَبَ ٱلْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰٓ ۝ أَفَتُمَٰرُونَهُۥ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ ۝ وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ ۝ عِندَ سِدْرَةِ ٱلْمُنتَهَىٰ ۝ عِندَهَا جَنَّةُ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰٓ ۝ إِذْ يَغْشَى ٱلسِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ ۝ مَا زَاغَ ٱلْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ ۝ لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ ءَايَٰتِ رَبِّهِ ٱلْكُبْرَىٰٓ ۝ أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ ۝ وَمَنَوٰةَ

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[19] Ma‘arifat, p. 381-382.

[20] What is meant by "spacing" is the last word of each verse, similar to the rhyming pattern in poetry or the symmetry within rhyming prose.

ٱلثَّالِثَةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰ ۝ أَلَكُمُ ٱلذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ ٱلْأُنثَىٰ ۝ تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ

ضِيزَىٰٓ ۝ ²¹

These "spacings" have approximately the same beat although they are not based on the prosodic order of the Arabs, and the rhyme has also been adhered to, and both of these make up another distinctiveness of the Qur'ān, which unlike rhyme and beat, may not be apparent. By the synchronization of the letters in the words and the coordination of the words within the sentences, a melodious rhythm has been created. Due to an internal sense and musical understanding, this latter distinctiveness is the reason that between the rhythm of the Qur'ān and other rhythms—even though the "spacing" and beat may be the same—a difference exists.

In accordance with the science of music, the rhythm of its sentences is neither short nor long but of a moderate length, and by relying on the *ruwwī*[22] character, it produces a rhythmic chain. All of these characteristics are perceivable, in some "spacings" more so then others. For example, consider the above mentioned chapter of Qur'ān:

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ ۝ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلثَّالِثَةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰ ۝

If it would have said:

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلثَّالِثَةَ

the rhyming effect would have been lost and the tune disturbed. Alternatively, if it would have read:

أَفَرَءَيْتُمُ ٱللَّٰتَ وَٱلْعُزَّىٰ وَمَنَوٰةَ ٱلْأُخْرَىٰ

The beat would have been disrupted. Similarly, consider the next line in the divine speech:

أَلَكُمُ ٱلذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ ٱلْأُنثَىٰ ۝ تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَىٰٓ ۝

If it was said:

أَلَكُمُ ٱلذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ ٱلْأُنثَىٰ تِلْكَ قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَىٰٓ

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[21] Qur'ān 53:1-22.
[22] The technical definition of *Ruwwī* in the science of prosody is the principal rhyming word which sets the basis for the rhyming scheme.

the tune which was made consistent by the word إِذًا would be disrupted. This does not mean however that words such as الأَخْرَى or الثَّالِثَةَ or إِذًا are redundant or extra and that they only appear to preserve the pattern or to adhere to the rhyme. Rather these words have a more important role which is to collaborate in conveying the meaning which is yet another special characteristic of the art of the Qur'ān: that a word can both convey meaning as well as preserve a particular tune or beat, and it does both such that neither has preference over the other.

As was stated, in verses and in "spacings," there is a rhythm that is apparent throughout the Qur'ān. The proof for this is that if a word appears in a particular way, and it was replaced with a synonym or relocated in the sentence, disorder would arise.

Below, a few examples will be demonstrated:

First type:

قَالَ أَفَرَءَيْتُم مَّا كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ۝ أَنتُمْ وَءَابَآؤُكُمُ ٱلْأَقْدَمُونَ ۝

فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّىٓ إِلَّا رَبَّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ ۝ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَنِى فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ۝

وَٱلَّذِى هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِى وَيَسْقِينِ ۝ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ۝

وَٱلَّذِى يُمِيتُنِى ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ ۝ وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَطْمَعُ أَن يَغْفِرَ لِى خَطِيٓئَتِى يَوْمَ

ٱلدِّينِ ۝ [23]

In these verses, the first-person pronoun "ي" has been omitted in the words يَهْدِينِ , يَسْقِينِ , يَشْفِينِ , يُحْيِينِ for the preservation of the rhyming effect with words like تَعْبُدُونَ, ٱلأَقْدَمُونَ, ٱلدِّينِ. Similarly in the verse:

وَٱلْفَجْرِ ۝ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ ۝ وَٱلشَّفْعِ وَٱلْوَتْرِ ۝ وَٱلَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسْرِ ۝

هَلْ فِى ذَٰلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِى حِجْرٍ ۝ [24]

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[23] Qur'ān 26:75-82.
[24] Qur'ān 89:1-5.

the original "ي" of يَسُر has been omitted so as to be in harmony with عَشْـر, فَجْر, حِجْر, وَتْر. Or in the verses:

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ ۘ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ ٱلدَّاعِ إِلَىٰ شَيْءٍ نُّكُرٍ ﴿٦﴾ خُشَّعًا أَبْصَرُهُمْ
تَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ ٱلْأَجْدَاثِ كَأَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنتَشِرٌ ﴿٧﴾ مُّهْطِعِينَ إِلَى ٱلدَّاعِ ۖ
يَقُولُ ٱلْكَفِرُونَ هَـٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ ﴿٨﴾ ٢٥

if the "ي" of the word الــدَّاع was not omitted the pattern would be broken. Likewise, if in the verse:

قَالَ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۚ
فَٱرْتَدَّا عَلَىٰ ءَاثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا ٢٦

we prolong the "ي" of نَبْـغِ—to correspond to analogy—the pattern would be disturbed. This same state would occur if a ة was added to the first-person pronoun "ي" in the following verses:

فَأُمُّهُ هَاوِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا هِيَهْ ﴿١٠﴾ نَارٌ حَامِيَةٌ ٢٧
فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَبَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَآؤُمُ ٱقْرَءُواْ كِتَبِيَهْ ﴿١٩﴾ إِنِّى
ظَنَنتُ أَنِّى مُلَقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَهُوَ فِى عِيشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٢١﴾ ٢٨

Second type:

Unlike the first type where we consider changing a particular word, in this type, we look at the order of the words where if they were rearranged, the musical rhythm of the verses would be disrupted. For example, consider the verses:

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[25] Qur'ān 64:6-8.
[26] Qur'ān 18:64.
[27] Qur'ān 101:9-11.
[28] Qur'ān 69:19-21.

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّآ ﴿٢﴾ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَآءً خَفِيًّا ﴿٣﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى وَهَنَ ٱلْعَظْمُ مِنِّى وَٱشْتَعَلَ ٱلرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ

بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ﴿٤﴾ ٢٩

If the word مِنِّى was to precede الْعَظْمُ and therefore the phrase would be قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى وَهَنَ مِنِّى الْعَظْمُ it would feel like the pattern was disturbed.

Therefore as was mentioned, a type of inner melody within the Qur'ān exists which is perceivable but difficult to describe. This melody is the warp and weft of the words, and is hidden within the internal structure of the sentence, which is only perceived by a subconscious faculty or through the power of the Almighty. In this way the internal music of the Qur'ān accompanies it, and with these rhythmic words, raises the sensations such that the slightest change would cause it to fall into disorder. This is despite the fact that these words are not poetry and do not have the limitations associated with many poems—which not only limit the freedom of expression, but also prevent man from attaining his goals.[30]

Muṣṭafā Rāfʿī, regarding this, states:

> The Arabs used to compete and revel with each other in writing poetry and reciting prose, but the style of their words was always based on one form. They were free with their speech and had mastered the art of oration. On the one hand, however, their eloquence was instinctual, and on the other, it received its inspiration from nature. But when the Qur'ān was sent down, they noticed that a new style had appeared. The letters were the same as what they knew, but they noticed that this new style was free-flowing, and its order, coordination and harmony were at a peak. As a result, they were astonished by its splendour and eminence and they realized the weakness of their own abilities and the emptiness of their own intelligence. Moreover, the eloquent amongst the Arabs saw a type of expression that they had never seen until then. In the letters and words and sentences of this new speech, they witnessed a wonderful tune. All of these words were so appropriately arranged next to each other that it seemed as if it was one piece. The Arabs clearly saw that a rhythmic order flowed within the depths of these words, and it was this that conveyed to them their own weakness and inability in this domain.
>
> All who have experienced the secret of the music and the philosophy of the fluency of the Qur'ān, are firmly of the belief that no skill can compete or even compare with the natural arrangement of the words of the

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[29] Qur'ān 19:2-4.
[30] Sayyid Quṭub, 198, p. 80-83.

Qur'ān and the sounds of its letters, and no one can find fault in even a single of its letters. From another point of view, the Qur'ān is much greater than music, and this particularity affirms the fact that the Qur'ān is essentially not music. In musical songs, the factors that contribute to the excitement of the soul include a variety of sounds, flows, echoes, soft and hard tunes, and the various vowel sounds that it includes, as well as the high and low pitches and treble, which is all referred to as 'eloquence of sound' in musical terms. When we consider this aspect of reciting the Qur'ān, we realize that there is no language more eloquent than the language of the Qur'ān, and it is this very aspect, which uplifts human emotions of both Arab and non-Arab. Keeping this understanding in mind, the philosophy of encouraging the recitation of the Qur'ān in a audible manner becomes clear. These "spacings" with which the verses of the Qur'ān end, is a complete image of the dimensions which the melodious sentences end with. The "spacing"—in its own essence—is deeply connected to sound, and by the type of sound and the manner in which it is pronounce, it has a uniqueness like no other. From one perspective, most of these "spacings" end with the two characters, *nūn* and *mīm* (both of which are customary in music), or with the prolonged vowel (*harf-e-madd*)—all of which is inherent in the Qur'ān.[31]

Some experts have said:

In the Qur'ān, many of the "spacings" end with the characters *madd* and *līn*, and the addition of the letter *nūn*, and the wisdom of using these characters is to create a type of tune. However, even if the "spacing" does not end with one of the aforementioned characters—for example, if it ends with an un-vocalized (*sākin*) character—there is still no doubt that its selection is still the most appropriate. Of course, most of the aforementioned characters appear in short phrases and consist of *qalqalah* letters (letters that resonate in the ear) or other letters that maintain the musical tune. The effect of this method of inciting the heart by means of the tongue is natural in all people. In the Holy Qur'ān, a wondrous rhythmic pattern presents itself to the listener, whether he understands Arabic or not. Therefore, the words of the noble Qur'ān are composed of letters which, if removed or replaced or added to, will create disruption in the pattern. In the process, the beat, the resonance and the tune will appear weak, and it will make itself audibly apparent; ultimately, it will appear to be in error with regard to its unity of structure, anthology of sounds and position of letters, and when listening to it, it will give way to discordance.[32]

The miraculous speech of the Qur'ān is the apex in terms of creating an indescribable feeling in the heart of the reciter and the listener. In other words,

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[31] Rafi'ī, 1393 A.H., p. 188-216.
[32] Ma'rifat, *'Ulūm Qur'ān*, p. 386-387.

characters come together next to each other in an unprecedented way such that without any musical instrument and without the presence of rhyme or pattern, a splendid tune resonates in the ear. This miracle can be clearly seen in these samples:

1. Prophet Zakariyya's ('a) speech to Allah:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى وَهَنَ ٱلْعَظْمُ مِنِّى وَٱشْتَعَلَ ٱلرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ

بِدُعَآئِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا ٣٣

2. Prophet Isā's ('a) speech from the cradle:

وَجَعَلَنِى مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُ وَأَوْصَنِى بِٱلصَّلَوٰةِ وَٱلزَّكَوٰةِ مَا دُمْتُ

حَيًّا ٣٤

3. The verse regarding the obedience of the prophets:

أُوْلَـٰئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـنَ مِن ذُرِّيَّةِ ءَادَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا

مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْرَٰءِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَٱجْتَبَيْنَآ إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ

عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَـٰتُ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ خَرُّواْ سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ٣٥

4. The verse describing seeing Allah on the Day of Judgement:

وَعَنَتِ ٱلْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ ٱلْقَيُّومِ ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ٣٦

5. The verse in which Allah the Merciful speaks to the Prophet (ṣ) in a sweet and heart pleasing manner:

طه ١ مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰ ٢ إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن

تَخْشَىٰ ٣ تَنزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ٱلْأَرْضَ وَٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ ٱلْعُلَى ٤ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ

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[33] Qur'ān 19:4.
[34] Qur'ān 19:31.
[35] Qur'ān, 19:58.
[36] Qur'ān, 20:111.

عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ ۝ لَهُۥ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا

بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ ٱلثَّرَىٰ ۝ وَإِن تَجْهَرْ بِٱلْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُۥ يَعْلَمُ ٱلسِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى

۝ ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ۝ ٣٧

6. The verse regarding those who commit crimes and their promised pun-
    ishment. In this verse the tone changes into a harsh one, reverberating in
    the ears:

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِى يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ ۝ تَنزِعُ ٱلنَّاسَ

كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنقَعِرٍ ۝ ٣٨

7. The verse that talks about the Day of Resurrection. In this verse, cut-
    phrases and alerting words are used:

وَأَنذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ ٱلْأَزِفَةِ إِذِ ٱلْقُلُوبُ لَدَى ٱلْحَنَاجِرِ كَـٰظِمِينَ مَا لِلظَّـٰلِمِينَ

مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاعُ ٣٩

8. In the chapter of *al-Nās*, in which the beat, tune and repetition of the char-
    acter *sīn* and the physical form of it (س), brings to light the hidden whis-
    perings to man:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ ٱلنَّاسِ ۝ مَلِكِ ٱلنَّاسِ ۝ إِلَـٰهِ ٱلنَّاسِ ۝ مِن شَرِّ

ٱلْوَسْوَاسِ ٱلْخَنَّاسِ ۝ ٱلَّذِى يُوَسْوِسُ فِى صُدُورِ ٱلنَّاسِ ۝ ٤٠

9. In the following verse:

وَٱلضُّحَىٰ ۝ وَٱلَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ ۝ مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ ٤١

This verse may be lacking in rhyme, rhythm and the prevalent half-verse stan-
zas, but it is overflowing with music and each character has a heart-rendering

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37 Qur'ān 20:1-8.
38 Qur'ān 54:19-20.
39 Qur'ān 40:18.
40 Qur'ān 114:1-5.
41 Qur'ān 93:1-3.

cry. This is what is meant by the "inner Qur'ānic music" referred to previously.

This inner rhythm or Qur'ānic music is one of the structural secrets of the Qur'ān. No other grammatical structure is parallel to it. This structural rhythm has not had and will not have any parallel in Arabic literature. Amongst Arabic texts, the Qur'ān is in its own class as an ineffable phenomenon.

Factors of the beauty and divine music of Qur'ān:

The Arabic pronunciation of the letters and words, their tone, the order of the verses, the voice of the recitor, his spiritual piety and his inner purity are four important factors that contribute to the celestial music of the Qur'ān. The most important of these factors, which causes a psychological and spiritual transformation in the soul, is the fourth one: the reverential fear exhibited by the recitor.

Regarding this, it is said of Imām Sajjad ('a), "He ('a) was the most pleasing of the recitors of the Qur'ān, such that the water-carriers—who used to pass by his house—would pause by his door and listen to his recitation."[42]

At times, the effect of the Imām's ('a) heavenly voice was so profound that it would cause his audience to collapse into a swoon. It has been narrated that a man went to Abū al-Ḥasan and reminisced about the recitation of the Qur'ān. The Imām ('a) said, "Certainly, 'Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn ('a) used to recite the Qur'ān, and many a times a person would pass by him and fall into a swoon due to the pleasantness of his voice; truly, if the Imām ('a) revealed even a single secret regarding his pleasant voice, people would not be able to endure it."[43]

The Foundation of the Qur'ān's Celestial Music:

The Qur'ān is a book of seriousness:

$$\text{إِنَّهُۥ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ ۝ وَمَا هُوَ بِٱلْهَزْلِ ۝}$$

It is indeed a decisive word and it is not a jest.[44]

It is also a reminder of mankind's grave responsibility and a forewarning of the ill fortune awaiting those who carry false beliefs or have corrupt souls, and who don't pay attention to the realities of this world and the hereafter. From this point of view, the revelation of Qur'ān is mixed with sorrow and grief.

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[42] Kulaynī, p. 420.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 419.
[44] Qur'ān 86:13-14.

The Infallibles (ʿa) have recommended the recitation of Qurʾān in a state of sorrow. Regarding this, Imām Sadiq (ʿa) says, "Surely, the Qurʾān has been revealed for grief (in the impression it imprints on the human soul); therefore recite it in a grievous tone."[45]

In another tradition, it has been narrated, "Allah revealed to prophet Musa (ʿa): 'Whenever you stand before me, stand like a destitute and whenever you recite the Torah, let me hear it in a sorrowful voice'."[46]

This sorrow stems from knowing oneself, one's weakness and one's lack of means, and understanding the station of the Lord's essence (dhāt-e-rubūbī). It is mixed with fear, self restraint, struggle and perseverance in the path towards the Divine.

The Difference between Forbidden Music and the Music of the Qurʾān:

It is evident that recitation in a state of deep affliction and sorrow—which is based on the idea of a sense of responsibility towards the Divine and in accordance with the principles of recitation—is different than music of debauchery and libertinism.

The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) regarding this has said:

> Recite the Qurʾān with the sound and style of the Arabs and keep away from music of those who are immoral and who perform major sins. Without doubt, a group of people will appear after me who will churn the Qurʾān in their throats like the churning of covetous sounds and hymns of monks which don't go beyond their throats. Their hearts and the hearts of those who are amazed by their work are, in reality, inverted.[47]

The criterion used in this *hadith* to differentiate Qurʾānic music from the decadent form of music that the Prophet (ṣ) alluded to is precise and worth noting:

1. It should not be similar to sinful music. Immoral music instigates animalistic instincts, slackness, pitilessness, and languidness in carrying out divine commands. It creates a lack of vivacity in worship and spirituality, and transforms one away from a state of seriousness and sorrow.

2. Qurʾānic music has a goal of spiritual transformation in terms of guidance and growth in human values and responsibilities, whereas immoral music not only inhibits positive spiritual transformations, but also eliminates the sacred drive and vivacity.

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[45] Kulaynī, p. 418.
[46] *Ibid* p. 419-420.
[47] Kulaynī, p 419.

3. If a person is pious and vivacious in his worship, the music that emanates from his throat is of a divine nature, whereas for one who is uninterested in worship and piety, his music is an instigator of corruption.

From all angles, the noble Qur'ān is an interpretation of human nature (*fiṭrah*) and its music is in line with its orderly content. It speaks with the language of the soul and the divine nature, satisfying man's needs. For this reason, every person—even a stranger to the Qur'ān—can indirectly benefit from its meaning through its very music.[48] In the words of Arberry[49] and Pikthal, the Qur'ān is, "an inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy."[50]

Reciting the Qur'ān with a Pleasant Voice:

After a brief examination of the inner music and the beautiful rhythm of the Qur'ān, it is worth noting that in the traditions, it has been highly recommended that the Qur'ān be recited with a pleasant voice. Moreover, the recitor has been encouraged to pay attention to the slightest details, including prolonging various sounds, and adhering to their high and low pitches. Some examples of traditions in this regard are:

"And resonate your voice in your throat during the recitation of the Qur'ān; for Allah (Glorified and Exalted) loves beautiful voices that resonate in the throats.[51]

"Indeed, the adornment of the Qur'ān lies in the beauty of its recital."[52]

"Recite the Qur'ān and weep; and if you cannot weep, make as if you are weeping, for he who does not recite the Qur'ān with its particular melody and with a pleasant voice is not of us."[53]

Regarding the following verse:

$$\text{وَرَتِّلِ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانَ تَرۡتِيلًا}$$

and recite the Qur'Án in *tartīl* [54]

Imām Sadiq ('a) has said, "What is meant by *tartīl* is to recite the Qur'ān in a measured tone, and to make your voices beautiful."[55]

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[48] Naqī pūr, 1993, p. 413.
[49] Marmaduke Pickthall and Arthur John Arberry separately translated the Qur'ān into English. In his translation, Arberry has attempted to highlight certain aspects of the music of the Qur'ān.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Kulaynī, p. 421.
[52] Majlisī, p. 190.
[53] Muttaqī Hindī, 1405 A.H., p. 2794 and Majlisī, vol. 89, p. 191.
[54] Qur'ān 73:4.
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The Sunni-Shia Ruse

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Abstract:

In response to Western imperialism, the Islamic movement during the twentieth century grew rapidly culminating in the 1979 victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran under the leadership of Imām Khumaynī. Unfortunately, its further success was halted by a lack of unity and cooperation between Muslims within the *ummah*. In light of the dissemination of false information amongst the Muslims which has contributed to further dividing the *ummah*, this paper attempts to survey the views of various Muslims leaders—from both the Shiʿah and Sunni schools of thought—regarding the need and urgency of Muslim unity amongst the different *madhāhib*.

Keywords: Islamic movement, *Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, Islamic Revolution of Iran, Imām Khumaynī, Shiʿah- Sunni, Muslim unity, *ummah*.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Islamic world has been faced with a new encounter from the West—generated by the industrial revolution—which had followed upon the hatred developed during the Crusades. The first strike was an attack from the French, which resulted in the fall of the Caliphate—our political system—and the occupation of the lands of Muslims. The West continues to attack our moral and ideological principles, replacing them with their feeble secular substitutes. Moreover, [sixty] years ago it managed to attain one of its dangerous aims when it formed the Zionist state in the heart of the Islamic world and gave its agents and protégés the confiscated power to rule.

This evil plan can be visualized in a chainlike series of inter-related events. The success of their endeavours would not be possible without the establishment of the Zionist state, which required the fall of the Caliphate. The continuation of the Zionist entity requires regimes in the Islamic world to be aligned with neo-colonial powers. Such regimes are the natural and logical product of this encounter and are, collectively, one face of the coin, of which the Zionist state is the other.

Events appeared to be like this until the late 1970's when the West believed it was directing its final, fatal strikes at a supposedly "collapsing" Islamic culture. It was then that the Islamic Revolution in Iran directed its first arrows at

the West and achieved the first victory of Islam in the modern age. Life returned to the Islamic body which they thought had died, and it is awakening and arising from the very region where their satanic effects were the strongest and greatest. A new era is dawning. We have discovered our 'selves' and are arising after two hundred years of humiliation and centuries of backwardness and illiteracy.

It was this Islamic Revolution which aimed to establish many facts, some of which are as follows:

1. Removing the sense of fear of the "great" states and powers from the minds of the whole world, particularly Muslims and other oppressed people of the world.
2. Bringing to mankind our exemplary new cultural pattern while putting the Western pattern in what may be called "the defendant's corner". As Roger Garaudi, the well-known French thinker, says, "Khumaynī has placed the western pattern of development in the defendant's corner". He further says, "Khumaynī gave meaning to the lives of the Iranian people."
3. Confirming the historic role that revolutionary Islam is to play in the lives of the people of the region after more than a century of Islam being subjected to attempts at displacing it from power and influence.

However, Are Western agents leaving the revolution [and the Islamic Republic] to itself? They counteract it and try to break its spirit. Does it remain silent about the joy that filled the hearts of the people just as when rain falls upon the dry earth after a long period of waiting? And does it allow this longing for Islam generated by the revolution to continue and spread?

They were struck by the uprising of this Muslim nation and its "impossible" revolution. They tried hard to prevent the revolutionary Muslims from reaching power. But they failed! Then they started to work on many interlinked schemes such as:

1. Stirring up issues relating to minority groups, making use of what they called the 'state of disorder' through which the revolution was passing.
2. Supporting certain Iranian groups who opposed the revolution, such as the 'royalists', 'savakists' and other secular organizations that took up arms to fight the revolution.
3. Imposing an economic and political embargo, directed by the USA and Western Europe, which was apparent during the hostage-spy crisis.
4. Utilizing direct external invasion via the use of Saddam Takriti and the pitiful Iraqi army.
5. And stirring up social disharmony between the two wings of the Muslim ummah, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, in a final attempt to contain the revolutionary tide, and prevent its effects from reaching the Sunni populated regions that either are rich in oil or are confronting the Zionist entity.

The revolution managed to crush the rebellion of certain Western-led groups like the royalists, as well as the agents of the secular opposition. It faced the sanctions with such strength that Imām Khumaynī optimistically told the students who were following his program, "We did not revolt to fill our stomachs; therefore, their fear tactics of imposing sanctions upon us will not silence us. We arose for the sake of Islam, as did the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, and we have not yet suffered much in comparison to the sufferings faced by the Prophet (ṣ) of Islam." He further added, "As long as you are bound by servitude, you have relinquished your intellects." With respect to the external invasion, it backfired directly into the hearts of the invaders—bringing pain, suffering and total defeat.

The fifth aspect of the conspiracy—the stirring up of social disturbances between Sunnis and Shi'ites—has achieved some success, but only up to a certain extent and only temporarily. The Muslim ummah is rapidly realizing what kind of personalities are fanning the fire of these artificial social disturbances, and how the community of neo-colonialists want to separate the Islamic nations so as to isolate them in their confrontation with their tyrant rulers.

Moreover, the neo-colonialists and their agents—that is, the rulers of some oil-rich states and other tyrannical puppets—understand that this front does not need weapons or armies, but rather all that it needs is an impostor or a group of impostors who can hand out ready-made religious edicts. Hence, they assign this role to some Muslims, who wear turbans and have beards, whether they are part of the official legion or outside of it. Some of them slyly attacked the revolution, insinuating that the Islamic Revolution is nothing but a Shi'ite revolution—the Shi'ite being supposedly an "outcast atheistic sect"—and Āyatullah Khumaynī, who they once said has "shaken the world while sitting on his prayer mat", was just an 'outcast atheist' as well.

The scene of a Muslim carrying a book full of lies and unsupported charges has become a familiar and common theme. He carries it from one mosque to another trying to propagate the lies it contains to the people. Perhaps some of those people work with the best of intentions, thinking that they are working for the sake of God, but as we know, the road to hell is full of such good-willed people. When such people discover that they are executing an imperialist conspiracy, with their good intentions, they should try to save themselves before it is too late.

The stand that some Muslims have taken against the revolution has resulted in others having a suspicious view of it, particularly of its principles, motives and aims. This has put the Islamic movement in a grave predicament, which it did not encounter in the past. Those who want to sooner or later destroy this movement, particularly in occupied Palestine, will only destroy themselves because they are standing in the way of a moving tide of history. What they fail to see is an Islamic Revolution led by an Imām "who is the honor and pride of

Islam and Muslims" as stated in one of the statements of the International Organization of Muslim Brothers.

Is it simply a coincidence that a Palestinian Muslim who has visited many Muslim countries, firmly believes that the most extreme form of attacks against the Islamic Revolution of Iran is found in his own occupied country, while at the same time, he will also state that no nation as a whole has greater appreciation and strong enthusiasm towards the revolution as his.

This essay begins, in general, by presenting some important facts to Muslims, and, in particular, by showing the basis of the Islamic movement. Instead of offering more evidence in support of the fact that Sunnis and Shi'ites are brothers in Islam and how they form part of the same ummah, we are obliged to take another approach in this age in which illiteracy and sectarian fanaticism seem common. This essay argues for Muslim unity from another angle—that is, by reporting the stands and opinions of Muslim leaders and thinkers, the leadership of most of whom is collectively accepted by the followers of the Islamic movement.

The Challenge Within

It is clear that the position of those against the revolution, who emphasize social disharmony between the Sunnis and Shi'ites, is not a natural position but rather a provisional one—one dictated to young people by others who implant suspicion and pessimism within them. Thereafter, they seemingly 'discover' that the revolution, which lit up their hopes and triggered them off, was not an Islamic revolution but a "Shi'ite" one, and that the Shi'ites are apparently "infidels".

Muḥib al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, author of a sectarian book (of which 50,000 copies were reprinted in Palestine), brings further fictional evidence to show that the Shi'ites are supposedly infidels, deviates and alienated from Islam. He accuses them of having a Qur'ān which is different from the one in the hands of Sunni Muslims, and of other false and unfounded charges. Some people publish these false, deceptive and misleading thoughts of al-Khātib while they forget and leave out other opposite and concrete facts stated by distinguished Muslim leaders in their own movements.

Mr. al-Khaṭīb is the same man who fought the 'Islamic Caliphate state'. He worked with one of the nationalist movements, *Ṭalāyah al-shabāb al-'arabī,* (The Vanguard of Arab Youth), and in 1905, when his affairs became unveiled during his stay in Istanbul, he escaped to Yemen, only to join Sharīf Ḥusayn and his Arab revolt. When the Islamic Caliphate issued a death sentence against him, he went back to Damascus which is when the

Turkish army failed and the Arab army entered. Thereafter, he took the responsibility of editing the first Arabic paper in Damascus.[1]

Efforts to Unite

Let us go back to our main purpose which is to review the stands and opinions of the Islamic movement and thinkers about this religiously unlawful social subversion or ruse and the baseless uproar accompanying it.

The martyred Imām Ḥasan al-Bannā, who was one of the pioneers of the modern Islamic movement, had revived the thought of bringing the Sunnis and Shi'ites together. He was one of the leading participants in the works of *Jamā'at al-taqrīb bayn al-madhāhib al-islāmiyyah* (The League to Bring Together Islamic Schools of Thought). This was believed by some to be impossible to achieve but al-Bannā as well as other Islamic scholars and leaders believed it possible and very near to being achieved. They agreed that Muslims should come together on the basic beliefs and principles which are accepted by all of them, and that they should accept each other's opinions on matters which neither constitute a condition for the faith nor a pillar of the religion, nor amount to denying what is known to be one of the necessities of the religion.

Dr. 'Abd al-Karīm Bī-Āzār Shīrāzī says in the book, *al-Waḥdat al-Islāmiyyah* (Islamic Unity), which is a collection of reports and articles of religious leaders from the Shi'ites and Sunnis, and which was first published in the magazine *Risālat al-Islām* (*The Message of Islam*) and edited at al-Azhar University, on the subject of *jamā'at al-taqrīb*,[2] "They agreed that a Muslim is someone who believes in the One God, Muḥammad as the Prophet, the Qur'ān as the Book, the Ka'bah as the direction for ritual prayer and the house for pilgrimage, as well as someone who believes in the five known pillars, the Day of Resurrection, and the practice of what is known to be obligatory according to the Divine Law." These principles, mentioned as examples, were the points of agreement among all the representatives of the four known Sunni schools of thought and the two known Shi'ite schools of thought, the *al-imāmiyyah* and *al-zaydiyyah*, who attended the meeting.

Moreover, al-Azhar's foremost religious scholar and the highest jurist for religious edicts at that time, Imām 'Abd al-Majīd Salīm, and the distinguished scholars, Imām Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Rāziq and Imām Maḥmūd Shaltūt, were among the effective participants in that group. At present, we do not have precise information on the special role performed by the mar-

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[1] Refer to *Uṣūl al-Taqaddum 'inda Mufakkirī al-Islām fī al-'Alam al-'Arabī al-Ḥādith* (The Basis of Progress According to Muslim Thinkers in the Modern Arab World) by Dr. Fahmi Jadan, First Edition, June, 1979, p. 561-2.

[2] P. 7.

tyred Imām al-Bannā in this respect. One of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn's thinkers, Sālim al-Bahnasāwī, says in *al-Sunna al-Muftarā ʿalayhā* (*The Tradition Being Falsified*)[3], "Since the formation of the group of bringing together Islamic schools of thought, in which Imām al-Bannā and Imām al-Qummī clearly participated, cooperation existed between the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn and the Shi'ites that led to the visit of Nawāb Ṣafawī to Cairo in 1954." He also says on the same page, "This kind of cooperation is not surprising or strange because the beliefs, of both groups (the Sunnis and the Shi'ites) naturally lead to it."[4]

It is well known that Imām al-Bannā met the Shi'ite Imām, Āyatullah Kāshānī, during his pilgrimage in 1948 and an understanding occurred between them. This was referred to by one of today's distinguished personalities of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn and a student of the martyred Imām al-Bannā—that is, ʿAbd al-Mutaʿāl Jabrī—who says in his book, *Limādhā Ughtīla Ḥasan al-Bannā* (*Why Ḥasan al-Bannā was Assassinated*)[5] quoting Robert Jackson's words, "If the life of this man (al-Bannā) had been longer, it would have been possible to gain many benefits for this land, especially in the agreement between al-Bannā and Āyatullah Kāshānī, one of the Iranian Muslim leaders, to uproot the discord between the Sunnis and Shi'ites. They met each other in the Hijāz in 1948. It appears that they conferred with each other and reached a basic understanding but Ḥasan al-Bannā was quickly assassinated."[6] Mr. Jabrī comments on this saying, "Jackson is right and realized, by his political common sense, the efforts of Imām al-Bannā in bringing together various Islamic schools of thought."[7]

From this we deduce many important facts, some of which are: First, every Sunni and Shi'ite must consider each other as Muslim. Second, meeting with and understanding each other, as well as overcoming the differences between them is, not only possible, but urgently required, and it is a responsibility of the religiously committed, conscious Islamic movement. Third, the martyred Imām Ḥasan al-Bannā took great efforts towards this goal.

Dr. Isḥāq Mūsā al-Ḥusaynī stated in his book, *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*—which was about one of the greatest modern Islamic movements—that some Shi'ites who were studying in Egypt joined this group. Also it is well known that the ranks of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn in Iraq contained many Shi'ites. When Nawāb Ṣafawī visited Syria, he met Dr. Muṣṭafā al-Sabāʿī, the general observer of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn. When the latter complained

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[3] P. 57.

[4] P. 57.

[5] *Dār al-Iʿtiṣām*, 1st edition, p. 33.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

to Ṣafawī that some Shi'ite youths were joining the secular and national movements, he addressed a large number of Shi'ites and Sunnis saying, "Whoever wants to be a true Ja'farī should join the ranks of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn."

Who is Nawab Ṣafawī? He is the leader of the Fidayyin Islam Organization. Mr. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ḍanāwī, in his book, *Kubrā al-ḥarakat al-islāmiyyah fī al-ʿasr al-ḥadīth (The Greatest Islamic Movements in the Modern Age)*[8] quotes Bernard Lewis, "In spite of their Shi'ite school of thought, they believe in Islamic unity to a great extent similar to the belief of the Egyptian Muslim brothers and there was a great deal of communication between them."

When al-Ḍanāwī summarizes some principles of the Fidāyyīn Islam Organization, he says, "Islam is a comprehensive system for life. Moreover, there is no sectarianism between Muslims—that is, between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites." He then quotes Nawāb's words, "Let us work jointly together for Islam and let us forget everything save our struggle for the sake of the dignity of Islam. Has not the time come for Muslims to understand and resolve the division of Sunni and Shi'ite?"

In his book *al-Mawsūʿah al-Ḥarakah (Encyclopedia of Movements)*[9], Fatḥī Yakan writes about the visit of Nawāb Ṣafawī to Cairo and the strong enthusiasm and warm welcome given him by the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn. He then writes about the death sentence given to him by the Shah, saying, "There was a strong reaction to this unjust sentence and the Muslim masses were shocked on hearing it for they appreciated the heroic deeds of Nawāb Ṣafawī and his struggle. They condemned this sentence, demonstrated against it and sent thousands of telegrams from various parts of the Muslim world denouncing such an unfair sentence to this faithful hero and struggler. His death was considered a great loss in the modern age." Thus a Shi'ite Muslim came to be considered one of the great martyrs of the Ikhwān. Moreover, Fatḥī Yakan considered Nawāb and his companions in their martyrdom as those who "joined the procession of eternal martyrs," and that "their pure blood would become the torch that shall illuminate the path of the next generation of freedom and sacrifice." This is exactly what has happened now that the wheel of time has turned and the Islamic Revolution has emerged in Iran. It demolished the throne of the tyrant Shah who became a fugitive in the world. As God says,

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[8] P. 150.
[9] P. 163.

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا إِنَّهُمْ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ لَهُمُ ٱلْمَنصُورُونَ ۝ وَإِنَّ

جُندَنَا لَهُمُ ٱلْغَٰلِبُونَ

And most certainly Our Word has gone forward to Our Prophets
that they are the victorious and our hosts are the conquerors.[10]

In his book, *Al-Islām, Fikr wa Ḥarakat wa Inqilāb (Islam, Thought, Move-
ment and Revolution)*[11] Fatḥī Yakan says, "Now that the Shah's Iran has
recognized the Zionist state, it is imperative that the Arabs realize the exis-
tence in Iran of Nawāb and the brothers of Nawāb; but the Arab regimes
have not yet done this and they do not realize that the Islamic movement
is supporting its affairs outside the Islamic world itself. Is there another
'Nawāb' in Iran today?" So Fatḥī Yakan was waiting for another 'Nawāb'.
But by God, why were so many people upset when another 'Nawāb' ap-
peared in Iran who is even greater than 'Nawāb'?"

The magazine *al-Muslimūn,* published by the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn in its
first issue[12] under the title "With Nawāb Ṣafawī", it states, "The beloved
martyr had a strong relationship with the Muslimūn. He had stayed as a
guest in their house in Cairo during his visit to Egypt in January, 1954." The
magazine also mentions the opinion of Nawāb on the arrest of several
members of the Ikhwān, "When the tyrants oppress the men of Islam any-
where, the Muslims must rise above differences of their schools of thought,
condole their oppressed brothers and share in their sufferings, pains and
sorrows. There is no doubt that by our positive Islamic struggle we can
destroy the plans of the enemies that are aimed at creating social disturbances
among Muslims. There is no harm in the existence of many schools of
thought and we cannot abolish them. But what we have to do is pre-
vent the manipulation of such a situation, which only benefits the enemies of
Islam."[13]

At the end of the article, the magazine quotes Nawāb as saying, "We are
confident that we will be killed sooner or later but our blood and sacrifice
will revive Islam and lead to its resurrection. Today Islam is in need of
this blood and sacrifice and will never rise without it."

Before we set aside this part of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn's relations with the
Shi'ites, we would like to mention that the general observer for the Ikhwān al-
Muslimūn in North Yemen up to a few years ago was a Shi'ite, 'Abd al-Majīd al-

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[10] Qur'ān 37:171-3.
[11] P. 56.
[12] 5th vol., April, 1956, p. 73.
[13] P. 76.

Zindānī. Also there are a large number of Ikhwān al-Muslimūn in North Yemen who are Shi'ites. Turning again to the Jamā'at al-Taqrīb and to the words of a distinguished member of this group, the great Imām Maḥmūd Shaltūt, the late head of al-Azhar University, who said, "I believed in the idea of bringing together Islamic schools of thought as a correct principle and participated from the beginning in this group." He also says, "Al-Azhar has agreed on the basic rule of this group of leaders of various Islamic schools of thought and has decided to teach the jurisprudence of various Islamic schools of thought, based on convincing evidence, proof and a lack of prejudice favouring this group or that." He continues in his speech, "I would like to talk about the meetings in Dār al-Taqīb, where the Egyptian sits beside the Iranian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Pakistani or another member of one of the various Muslim nations. There are also the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī who sit beside the Imāmī and Zaydī at one round table with voices full of knowledge, devotion and jurisprudence as well as the spirit of brotherhood, friendship, love and devotion to knowledge and understanding *('irfān)*."

Moreover, Imām Shaltūt indicated that there were some people who fought the idea of bringing together Islamic schools of thought believing, as he says, "This group wants to demolish the schools of thought or amalgamate them." He also says, "This idea has been opposed by some people of little intelligence and others who have certain unworthy purposes. There is no nation which is free from such people. It was also opposed by those whose security—the security of their interests and livelihood—was based on the present division, those following their own interests or their private desires, and those who hire themselves out to divisionist policies with their direct and indirect purposes and methods to stand against any reform movement and prevent any progress in joining and uniting Muslims and bringing their expression together."

Before we leave aside al-Azhar, we would like to mention the verdict which Imām Shaltut issued concerning the Shi'ite school of thought, in part which says, "The Ja'farī school of thought, which is also known as *al-shī'ah al-ithnā 'ashariah, is* a school of thought that is religiously correct to follow in worship as other Sunni schools of thought. Muslims must know this and ought to refrain from unjust prejudice to any particular school of thought, since the religion of God and His Divine Law was never to follow a certain school of thought. All are jurisprudents and accepted by Almighty God."

As to the League for Bringing Together the Schools of Islamic Thought, its countless groups of Muslim thinkers beginning with Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazzali says in his book, *Kayfa Nafham al-Islam (How Do We Understand Is-*

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lam?)[14], "And the religion never escaped the fate of disturbances that affected the ruling policy which includes pride and selfishness. Therefore, whoever is not of their belief results in two great divisions of Muslims, the Shi'ites and the Sunnis, although both divisions believe in the One God and in the message of the Holy Prophet and neither of them excel the other in being endowed with the aspects of Islamic belief that benefit religion and thought through which they seek salvation."

Then on the same page, he writes, "Although I seek many of my judgments about cases through other than what the Shi'ites use, still I do not consider my opinion a religion, so that anyone who views differently would be sinning, and the same is true of my stand regarding the common differences of opinions on matters of jurisprudence between the Sunnis.[15] He adds later, "And at the end of the path, the divisions between the Shi'ites and Sunnis were connected to the principles of belief in order to rip the one religion in half and divide the one nation into two. Anyone who aids this division by even one word is referred to in the Qur'ānic verse,

$$ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا۟ دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا۟ شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِى شَىْءٍ ۚ إِنَّمَآ أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى $$

$$ ٱللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَفْعَلُونَ $$

Those who divided their religion and became groups; you are not
from them in anything; their matter returns to God; then He tells
them about what they were doing.[16]

Be warned that rushing into pronouncing others as being non-believers is easy in argument and to accuse one's opponent of disbelief, because of an opinion he expresses, is an easy matter in the heat of discussion."

Shaykh al-Ghazzāli continues, "The two schools base their connection with Islam on the belief in the Book of God and the Traditions of His Messenger and they agree absolutely on the collective principles of this religion. And if opinions differ on jurisprudence and in areas of legislation, still the schools of thought of Muslims are all equal in the fact that a (real) Muslim jurist *(mujtahid) is* rewarded whether he is right or wrong. When we enter the field of comparative jurisprudence and experience the difficulties of opinions or the differences as to whether or not a Prophet's saying is correct or doubtful, we find that the distance between the Shi'ites and Sunnis is similar to the distance between Abu Ḥanīfah's school of thought and that of

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[14] P. 142.
[15] P. 143.
[16] Qur'ān 6:159.

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Mālik or Shāfiʿī. We see everybody equal in seeking the truth even though the ways are different."[17]

Similarly, in his book *Naẓarāt fī al-Qurʾān,* we find Shaykh al-Ghazzālī introducing the words of one of the Shiʾite scholars saying, "He is of the Shiʾite jurists and one of the great men of letters. We have undertaken to mention all his words because some people, who have a low level of intelligence, think that the Shiʾites are outside of Islam and have deviated from its path. I will mention in the section on miracles what will increase the knowledge of the people."[18]

He introduces another scholar, Hibbat al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī Shahristānī, and says that he was, "of the splendid Shiʾite scholars. And we have undertaken to publish the summary completely so that the Muslim reader will know the extent of the knowledge of this scholar about the nature of miracles, and hence of the extent of honour the Shiʾites have for God's Book."[19]

This is how Shaykh al-Ghazzālī, one of the important thinkers of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn speaks about the Shiʾites, countering all naive imagination in order to disperse, by the light of the truth, the darkness of ignorance, hatred and selfish interests.

Dr. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ says in his book, *Maʿālim al-Sharīʿah al-Islāmiyyah (Features of Islam's Divine Code),* "In the sayings of the Shiʾite Imāms, they never said anything except what agrees with the Prophet's traditions. Then he says, "About the prophetic traditions, they (the Shiʾites) hold a great status for it and believe them to be among the sources of legislation after the Book of God."[20]

Saʿīd Hawiy writes in his book *al-Islām,* about the Islamic state and administrative classification, "The practical reality of the Islamic world is that it is composed of schools of jurisprudence, each one dominating an area, or of schools of belief, each school dominating an area, and, confronting this reality. Is there any religious prohibition which prevents taking these realities into account in administrative classification? A single-language region will become a (semi-autonomous) state, the Shiʾite region will have a (semi-autonomous) state and a region of a certain school of thought will also have such a state; moreover, each state will elect its rulers provided that it is under the control of the central power represented in the Caliphate."[21] This is a clear and frank confession from one of the foremost leaders of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn today that the existence of the numbers of schools of

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[17] P. 144-5.
[18] P. 79.
[19] P. 158.
[20] P. 82.
[21] Vol. 2, p. 165.

thought including the Shi'ites will neither harm people's belief in Islam nor their religion and that the Shi'ites will have a ruler from among themselves in the state of Islam.

In his book *Islam bilā madhāhib (Islam Without Sects)* the Islamic researcher, Dr. Muṣṭafā al-Shakʿah says, "The twelve Imām Shi'ites are the group of Shi'ites who are living amongst us these days and are connected to us Sunnis by ties of forgiveness and by striving to bring together the schools of thought, because the heart of religion is one and its core is original and does not allow separation."[22] Then he writes about this branch of Islam (who comprise the majority of Iran's population) and their moderation by saying, "They are innocent from what is being said in articles by some groups and they consider it infidelity and deviation."[23]

The respected Shaykh Imām Muḥammad abū Zuhrah saying in his book *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah (The History of Islamic Schools of Thought)*, "There is no doubt that Shi'ism is a branch of Islam. If we exclude examples like the Sab'iyyah who considered ʿAlī as being God, and others like them (knowing that the Sab'iyyah are considered infidels in the opinion of the Shi'ites as well) there is no doubt that everything this sect says is related to Qur'ānic verses or sayings related to the Prophet."[24] He continues, "They are friendly towards those Sunnis who become their neighbours and they do not repel them."[25]

Dr. ʿAbd al-Karīm Zaydān, one of the important members of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn in Iraq, in his book, *al-Madkhal lidirāsat al-Sharīʿah al-Islāmiyyah (Introduction to the Study of Islam's Divine Code)*, says, "The Jaʿfarī school of thought exists in Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan and in Lebanon and has followers in Syria and other countries. The difference between the Jaʿfarī school of law and other schools is not any more than that between any two of the other schools."[26]

Ustād Sālim al-Bahnasāwī, one of the important thinkers of the Ikhwān, who dealt with this matter in detail in his important book *Sunna al-Muftarā ʿalayhā (The Tradition Being Falsified)*, "In answer to those who *claim* that the Shi'ites have a holy book other than ours, the holy book which the Sunnis have is the same as that which exists in the mosques and homes of the Shi'ites."[27] Furthermore, he says, "The Jaʿfarī Shi'ites (followers of the Twelve Imāms) think of those who question the authenticity of the Qur'ān, which has been certified as perfectly authentic by the whole

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[22] P. 183.
[23] P. 187.
[24] P. 39.
[25] P. 52.
[26] P. 128.
[27] P. 60.

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ummah since earliest Islamic age, as infidels."[28] Similarly, in answer to the claims of Muḥib al-Dīn Khaṭīb and Iḥsān Ẓahīr on the subject of distortion in the Qur'ān, he introduces a letter on the ideas of many Shi'ite scholars and jurists, quoting Imām Khu'ī, "It is known among Muslims that distortion in the Qur'ān never occurred and the one existing in our hands is the Qur'ān sent to the great Prophet."[29] He also quotes Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, "That which is in our hands is the whole Qur'ān sent to the Prophet, and whoever claims anything different is falsifying or doubting and none are on a right guidance, since the Word of God is such that *wrong never comes to it from before it or behind it.*" Then he quotes from Imām Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', "In it, there is no deficiency, no distortion, no addition, and on this they are all agreed."

There are many ideas to return to on the aforementioned pages. Undeniable narrations are rejected by the Shi'ite just as is the case with the Sunni Muslims. Bahnasāwī discusses the case of infallibility and says, "Regarding the infallibility that is rejected by the Sunnis, if both parties viewed it upon the basis of the qualities the twelve Imāms had, nothing would have existed to cause either group to consider the other disbelievers. This is because the qualities of the twelve Imāms did not put them out of the path of Islam according to the Sunni belief; rather, the acceptance of infallibility was denied by the Sunnis since it was not mentioned in tests that they considered correct and it is known that infidelity results from denying what one knows, which is affirmed by the Qur'ān and the traditions, while if one neither knew nor believed in the truth of a certain quotation, one has not disbelieved in God, for there is no full evidence."[30]

Anwar al-Jandī in his *al-Islām wa Ḥarakat al-Tārīkh (Islam and the Movement of History)* says, "The history of Islam has been filled with disagreement, ideological conflicts and political differences between Sunnis and Shi'ites. The foreign invasion began with the Crusades and continued until today by feeding these differences to deepen their effects so that the world of Islam will not fuse into one. Moreover, the movement for Westernization was behind the quarrel between Sunnis and Shi'ites and their division in addition to the intensification of the hatred between them. The Sunnis and Shi'ites all have noticed and realized these conspiracies and worked to narrow the distance of differences."[31]

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[28] P. 263.
[29] P. 69.
[30] P. 61.
[31] P. 420.

Countering False Information

Have we understood who is stirring these religiously unlawful social disturbances? Who is benefiting from them? Have we understood that *it is satan who has called us to divide, disbelieve and consider each other as disbelievers?* The differences are much less than some people, who have fallen for the ruses of this satan, imagine them to be. Al-Jandī says in the above cited book, "The truth is that the difference between the Sunnis and Shi'ites is not more than what exists between the four sects of the Sunnis."

Al-Jandī continues, "For the sake of the truth, the researcher must be alert in differentiating between Shi'ites and extremists—those who have been attacked by the Shi'ite Imāms themselves. Moreover, the Shi'ite Imāms warned people about those extremists for their false statements."[32]

Samī' 'Āṭif al-Zayn, author of the book, *al-Islām wa Thaqāfat al-Insān (Islamic Human Education)* wrote a book named *al-Muslimūn man hum (The Muslims - Who are They?)* in which he discussed the matter of Sunnis and Shi'ites. He writes in the preface, "That which induced me to write this book is the blind division between Shi'ite Muslims and Sunni Muslims, a division that should have vapourized with the eradication of illiteracy, but unfortunately still has some roots in ill-minded people because its roots were very firmly planted by groups of people who ruled the Islamic world on the basis of dividing brothers, while stimulating love for the enemies of this religion as well those who refuse to live unless as parasites on the blood of others. I will tell you my brother Shi'ite Muslim and brother Sunni Muslim, the most important basis of differences lies in understanding the Holy Book; the Sunnis and Shi'ites have never disagreed on the Holy Book and the Traditions but on their understanding."[33]

At the end of his book, Samī' 'Āṭif al-Zayn adds, "After having realized the most important elements that stormed this nation, we finish this book by saying that it is our duty as Muslims, especially in the present age, to stop and push back the ill-intentioned ones who use the Islamic schools of thought as a route for misleading the people and playing with the minds of the masses as well as increasing suspicions. We must eradicate the sectarian spirit, which is full of hatred, and bar the road of those who spread rumors and quarrels in religion until Muslims can return to how they were before: 'One society, cooperative and friendly rather than divided, separated and hating each other.' Moreover, they must resemble the cooperative attitude of the Orthodox Caliphs."[34]

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[32] P. 421.
[33] P. 9.
[34] P. 98-9.

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In this aspect, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī wished to bring about harmony between the Sunni and Shi'ite, while saying to the Egyptian Islamic magazine, *al-I'tiṣām*[35] "And if this action should be done (i.e., bringing together Muslims) a unique revolution in the history of revitalizing Islamic thought will have taken place."

Ṣābir Ṭu'aymah, in his book, *Taḥaddiyyāt amam al-'Urūbah wa al-Islām (Challenges Facing Arabism and Islam)*, says, "In truth it must be said that there is no difference between Sunnis and Shi'ites in the general principles of the religion, as we all agree on the Oneness of God; but the difference is in the secondary matters and is similar to that between different schools of thought of the Sunnis themselves (the Shāf'ī and Ḥanafī) as they all believe in the foundations of religion, as mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ān and the pure traditions. Similarly, they believe in the necessities of faith; without such a necessity they will be far from Islam. As a matter of truth, the Sunni and Shi'ite are two schools of thought which gain support from the Book of God and the tradition of His prophet."[36]

As for the scholars in jurisprudence, they consider that there is no consensus *(ijmā')* unless the Shi'ite jurists agree absolutely just as there is no consensus unless Sunni jurists agree. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Khilāf in his book *'Ilm Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Knowledge of the Principles of Jurisprudence)* says, "There are four pillars for a consensus without which the consensus is not legitimate; the second of these pillars is that: Muslim jurists must agree on a religious verdicts in a case or a happening, during the time of its occurrence, regardless of their city, race or sect. So, if only the jurists of Mecca agree on a religious verdict, or only the jurists of Iraq, or only the jurists of Hijāz, or the *ahl al-bayt* (Shi'ites), or jurists of the Sunnis without the jurists of the Shi'ites ... that verdict will not be legitimate, since such an agreement cannot be considered as a consensus. Moreover, the latter will not happen unless the jurists of the Islamic world all agree at the time of that case, given that a non-jurist is not included."[37]

If the agreement of the Shi'ites is necessary to fulfill the conditions of a consensus of Muslims, is it possible then to consider them as deviated and in hell? Aḥmad Ibrāhīm Bayg, the teacher of Shaykh Shaltūt and Shaykh Abū Zuhrā and Shaykh Khilāf, in his book, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh wa yalīhi Tārīkh al-Tashrī' al-Islāmiyyah (The Knowledge of the Principles of Jurisprudence Followed by the History of Islam's Divine Law)* says in the section related to the history of Islam's Divine Law, "The Shi'ite Imāmiyyah are Muslims who believe in God and His Messenger and in the Qur'ān and in everything the Prophet

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[35] 1398 A.H.
[36] P. 208.
[37] 14th printing, p. 46.

brought and their belief is widespread over the land of the Persians."[38] Then he says, "And among the Shi'ite Imāmiyyah in the past and the present, are great jurists and scholars in every field of knowledge who are deep thinkers and widely educated. Their writings are counted by the hundreds of thousands and I have looked over many of them."[39] Also, in the footnote of the same page, he says, "There are among the Shi'ites, those who are extremists and who went out of the bounds of Islam, but those are ignored by the masses of the Shi'ites."[40]

After this study of the works of various scholars in this field, it is necessary to touch on those who tried to expand the ideas of Ibn Taymīyah against the *rāfiḍah,* a name given to Shi'ite extremists—which according to them included many of the Shi'ite sects including the Shi'ite Imāmiyah—and by so doing, used it against the Islamic Revolution in Iran. These people have made many grave mistakes for they have never pondered as to the reason for why they have not found similar verdicts in the history of Islam before Ibn Taymīyah, despite the fact that he lived in the seventh Islamic century—that is, more than six centuries after the appearance of Shi'ism. They did not grasp or understand the age of Ibn Taymīyah and the conditions faced by the Muslim society of his time that was in confrontation with foreign invasion. They did not try to hide their hatred against the Islamic Revolution in Iran or to hide their political stand against it. They did not try to inquire about the word *rāfiḍāh ,* which was mentioned by Ibn Taymīyah and whether or not it is applicable to the twelve Imām Shi'ites.

Anwar al-Jandī in his book *al-Islām wa Ḥarakat al-Tārīkh (Islam and the Movement of History),* writes, "The *rāfiḍah* are other than Sunnis and Shi'ites."[41] Also, Imām Muḥammad abū Zuhrah reviews in his book, "Ibn Taymīyah mentions some Shi'ite sects like the Zaydiyah and the twelve Imām Shi'ites without mentioning any negative views of his towards these two; whereas when reviewing the Isma'īlī sect, he writes: 'This sect is the one, whose followers, Ibn Taymīyah was opposing, and he fought against them by his knowledge, tongue and sword.'"[42] That is why we find Imām abu Zuhrah expanding his study about this sect, as he himself says.

Support for the Islamic Revolution

This was the stand of some Islamic movements and their leadership about this false outcry between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis. Moreover, the

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[38] Printed in *Dār al-anṣār,* p. 21.
[39] P. 22.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] P. 422.
[42] P. 170.

Islamic Revolution which arose in the beginning of 1978 has awakened the soul of the Islamic nation from Tangiers to Jakarta and the Muslim societies are watching Tehran and Qum and remembering the astonishing victories of the beginning of Islam. With the progress of the revolution, the attraction of people towards it is increasing. These societies have expressed their delight and happiness in the streets of Cairo, Damascus, Karachi, Khartum, Istanbul and even around Quds, and, in fact, everywhere that Muslims live. In West Germany, ʿIṣām al-ʿAṭṭār, one of the historic leaders of the Ikhwān movement—who is known for his sincerity, his long struggle, and the purity of his revolutionary ideas—was a man who spent his life never yielding to a ruler and never approaching a prince's castle. He was writing a comprehensive book about the history of the revolution, its roots and stands. Besides supporting the revolution and telegraphing his congratulations more than once to Imām Khumaynī, he asked for blessings. Moreover, his cassette-recorded speeches of support have been distributed amongst Muslim youth. In addition, the magazine in which he shares an important part, *al-Rāʾid* stands in support of the revolution and explains the revolution and what it stands for.

In Sudan, the stand of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn movement and the youth of Khartum University was one of the most magnificent stands that an Islamic capital has seen, when they demonstrated in support of the revolution. Ḥasan al-Turābī, the leader of the movement in Sudan, who is known for his wide education and acuteness in politics, travelled to Iran where he announced his support for the revolution and its leader.

In Tunisia, the Islamic movement's magazine, *al-Maʿrifah* was supporting the revolution, asking for blessings for it and calling upon all Muslims to aid it; this continued until it reached the point where the leader of the Islamic movement in Tunisia, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, wrote in the same magazine nominating Imām Khumaynī for the leadership of the Muslims. This matter led to the closure of the magazine and the arrest of the movement's leaders by the government of Habib Bourguiba.

In the book *al-Ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Taḥdīth (The Islamic Movement and its Renewal)*, Ghannūshi considers the new Islamic approach as one that has been clarified and given a firm shape by Imām Ḥassan al-Bannā, al-Mawdūdī, Sayyid Quṭub and Imām Khumaynī, the representatives of the most important Islamic approaches in the contemporary movement.[43]

The author considers that the success of the revolution in Iran will start a new Islamic civilization.[44] Under the topic, "What do we mean by the expression 'The Islamic Movement'?" he says, "What we mean is that the

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[43] P. 16.
[44] P. 17.

approach that stems from the meaning of the comprehensive Islamic state, on the basis of the comprehensiveness of Islam and this definition, coincides with three major approaches: the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, the Jamāʿat al-Islāmiyyah in Pakistan and Imām Khumaynī's movement in Iran.[45] He says, "An operation has begun in Iran which may be one of the most important happenings in the history of freedom movements in the whole region, freeing Islam from the control of governments which are using Islam (as a cover) to prevent the revolutionary tide in the region."[46]

As for Lebanon, the Islamic movement's support there for the revolution was one of the clearest and deepest stands and Fatḥī Yakan, the leader of the movement, and his unique magazine, *al-Amān* took an honorable Islamic position. Fatḥī Yakan has visited Iran more than once and participated in its celebrations and given lectures in its support. In Jordan, Muḥammad ʾAbd al-Raḥmān Khalīfah, the general observer for the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, announced his support for the revolution before and after his visit to Iran. Also Yūsuf al-Aʾthūm, in his famous poem published in more than one magazine (including *al-Amān)*, called all to give their allegiance to Imām Khumaynī, saying in the last part of it: "Khumaynī is a leader and Imām, who destroyed tyranny and never feared battle; we award him medals and robes of our blood while moving forward; we destroy polytheism and remove darkness, so the universe will return to light and become full of peace."

In Egypt, *al-Daʿwah, al-Iʿtiṣām* and *al-Mukhtār al-Islāmī* magazines stood beside the revolution emphasizing its Islamic nature and supporting its leader. When Saddam began his invasion of Iran, *al-Iʿtiṣām* wrote on its October, 1980 cover, "Comrade Saddam Takriti ... student of Michel Aflaq who wants to make a new Qādisiyyah (a historic battle) against Islamic Iran..." On page 10 of the same issue, *al-Iʿtiṣām,* gave the cause of the war, "The fear of the spread of the Islamic Revolution to Iraq," then said, "Saddam Takriti saw the transition period in which Iran's army is going through being a concerted effort to form an Islamic army out of an imperial one, as a golden and unrepeatable opportunity to destroy that army before it became an undestroyable power, because Islamic belief will take over the hearts of its officers and soldiers."

Moreover, in the December, 1980 issue, Jābir Rizq, one of the outstanding journalists of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn, in *al-Iʿtiṣām,* ascribed reasons for the war by saying, "The time when this war started is the very time that all U.S. conspiracies and plots against the Muslim people of Iran had failed."[45] He also said "Saddam Takriti forgot that he will fight a nation that counts four times more than Iraq's nation and that this nation

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[45] *Ibid.*
[46] P. 24.

is the only Muslim nation able to resist against the crusader-Zionist im-
perialism."[47] Then he continued "The Iranian nation with all its organiza-
tions and groups is determined to continue the war until the victory of
overthrowing the bloody Bathist party ... Moreover, the spiritual and psy-
chological make-up of all individuals of the Iranian population has never
been anything like the present example, and the desire for martyrdom has
taken the form of a competition. Also, the Iranian people are confident
that the victory at the end will be for the Muslim Iranian Revolution."[48]

Then Jābir Rizq explains the purpose of the colonialists in the war as
aiming to bring down the revolution by saying, "In bringing down the
revolutionary Iranian system, the danger such kind of tyrants are facing
would be removed. These tyrants are shaking due to their belief that
their nations might revolt against them and depose them as the Iranian
Muslim nation did against the agent Shah." At the end of the article, he
says, "But the role of God, in this conquest and struggle and martyrdom,
is imperative. God gives victory to those who aid his cause and God is the
Mighty, Powerful."

These are, therefore, the motives behind the war and not what is being
repeated by the Saudi regime, their followers and some good people
who do not know anything about the world, and who say that the
Shi'ite Iranian system wants to destroy the Sunni Iraqi regime. How sad
is such blindness, and how dangerous the guilty ones who cultivate this
ignorance and hatred in the peoples' hearts. In the Safar, 1401 (June,
1981) issue, the cover of *al-I'tiṣām* stated, "The revolution which reversed
the calculations and changed the measures," and later the magazine raised
the questions, "Why is the Iranian Revolution considered the greatest Revo-
lution in the modern age?"[49]

At the end of the article, written on the second anniversary of the vic-
tory of the Iranian Revolution, after the author wrote on the strength
of the Shah's army and its oppressive means, the article continued, "De-
spite all that, the Iranian Revolution succeeded after the fall of thousands
of martyrs. It was, then, the greatest revolution in modern history in its
activities, positive results and effects that reversed the calculations and
changed the criteria."

The International Organization of the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn issued a
statement to the Islamic movements in the world during the spy-hostage
crisis saying, "If the subject concerned was about Iran alone, it would
have agreed on a moderate solution after it had become clear what it is
all about; but since it is Islam and its nations everywhere that are a trust on

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[47] P. 27.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] P. 39.

the shoulder of the only Islamic government in the world, it is this that forced it in the 20th century to establish the rule of God above the rule of the rulers, colonialists and international Zionism."

The statement referred also to those who were against the Iranian revolution: "He is either 1) a Muslim unable to comprehend the era of Islamic blood and is still living in the period of surrender—in which case, he should ask forgiveness from God and try to complete his lack of understanding of the struggle and dignity of Islam—or 2) he is an agent working for the interests of the enemies of Islam under the cover of brotherhood and a fake concern about Islam, or 3) he is a naive Muslim motivated by others who neither have an opinion of their own nor a will, or 4) he is a hypocrite wavering between the two."

When Saddam's invasion of Islamic Iran began, the Ikhwān al-Muslimūn issued a statement addressed to the Iraqi nation in which it attacked the infidel Bath party. A part of it read, "This war is not a liberation war for the oppressed men, women and children, who neither have a way out nor a way for guidance. The Iranian Muslim nation has freed itself from the oppressor and from American-Zionist colonialism through a heroic and marvelous struggle, through a stormy Islamic Revolution, which is unique in the history of mankind, under the leadership of a Muslim Imām who is without doubt an honour for Islam and Muslims." The statement further mentions the aims of Saddam's attack, "The annihilation of the Islamic movement and the, putting out of the light of Islamic liberation which emerged from Iran." At the end of the statement, it calls for the Iraqi people to "Kill your butchers. The opportunity has come that will never be repeated. Put down your weapons and join the camp of the revolution. The Islamic Revolution is yours."

The position of Pakistan's Jamā'at al-Islāmī in regard to the Islamic Revolution of Iran is reflected in the *fatwā* (religious edict) of the late Mawlānā 'Abd al-'alā Mawdūdī, which was published in Cairo's *al-Da'wah* magazine, in its August 29, 1979 issue. It was in answer to a question put to Mawlānā Mawdūdī about the Islamic Revolution. The late Mawdūdī's answer was: "The Revolution of Khumaynī is an Islamic Revolution, the participants of which are Islamic groups and youths tutored by the Islamic movements. All Muslims in general, and the Islamic movements in particular, must support this revolution and cooperate with it in all respects."

This was the stand of the late Mawdūdī, one of the greatest and most influential scholarly figures of the present century. From the point of view of Mawdūdī, supporting the revolution was the legitimate obligation of every Muslim, and this makes clear the illegitimacy of the crusade launched against the Islamic Revolution by various groups linked to the Islamic movements.

Before going on to another issue, it is important to relate the following incident. A young man once asked a person about Mawdūdī's withdrawal of his verdict regarding the revolution. The person was surprised at the question of this young man who had apparently heard from someone that Mawlānā Mawdūdī had withdrawn his *fatwā* about the revolution. The wicked hands that had fabricated this rumour were soon discovered. If the rumour was true, was it not the responsibility of the *al-Da'wah* magazine to print the withdrawal or abrogation, if Mawdūdī had really done so? However, *al-Da'wā* had not published anything like that. In fact the first man to know about this matter was the one who had fabricated this rumour! Another interesting point to note is the delayed manner in which this rumour came about: Mawlānā Mawdūdī had died within one month of the publication of this edict while the rumour of abrogation was spread months later.

The famous al-Azhar university's stance was made known by its former Shaykh in an interview with *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*, published from London and Jeddah, in its February 3, 1979 issue. He said, "Imām Khumaynī is our brother in Islam. Muslims, despite their differences in their schools of thought, are brothers in Islam and Imām Khumaynī stands under the same banner as I do: Islam."

In his last book entitled *Abjadiyyāt al-Taṣawwur al-Ḥarakī li al-'Amal al-Islāmī (The ABCs of the Practical Knowledge of Islamic Work),* popular among the youth devoted to the Islamic movement, Ustād Fatḥī Yakan reveals the conspiracies of the colonialists and superpowers against Islam. He writes: "There is a living example of what we have said, (i.e. about the plots of colonialists and superpowers against Islam) and that is the contemporary experiment of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. We have an example in which all the infidel powers of the earth have rushed to fight and strived to abort this Revolution, because it is Islamic and because it is neither of the East nor of the West."[50]

One is sometimes led to wonder about the evil hands that want to manipulate the opinions of our Muslim youth. These youth would not be misled if they paid attention to their sincere leaders such as the late Mawlānā Mawdūdī and Ustād Fatḥī Yakan, instead of being duped by "mullahs" who have a religious appearance but who, in reality, are attached to suspicious interests.

The latest item at our disposal is what the *al-Da'wah* wrote in its May, 1982 issue: "In the world of today an expanding Islamic awareness exists, an indication of which is the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which was

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[50] P. 48.

capable, despite obstacles, of destroying the most ancient of empires and the most vicious of regimes and adversaries of Islam and Muslims." [51]

The *al-Da'wah* magazine, in one of its later issues, considered the Islamic Revolution of Iran a result of the global Islamic awareness that was referred to at the beginning of this study. As for the obstacles and hurdles that have been created against this revolution, it is our view that it is the duty of all true Muslims to help in their removal.

Final Remarks

What we have described above are the opinions of well-known Sunni scholars and thinkers related to Islamic movements. To catch a glimpse of the stand taken by the Shi'ites regarding the issue of Muslim unity, it is sufficient to quote the reply given by Imām Khumaynī to a question that was put to him about the foundations of Iran's Revolution. Imām Khumaynī said, "The reason for making Muslims into Sunnis and Shi'ites does not exist today. Today we are all Muslims. This is an Islamic Revolution and we are all brothers in Islam."

Ustād al-Ghannūshī in his book *al-Ḥarakat al-Islāmīyah wa al-Taḥdīth* quotes these words from Imām Khumaynī: "We want to be judged and governed by Islam as it was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him and his descendants, and in which there is no such distinction between a Sunni and a Shi'ite, since the various schools of thought did not exist at the time of the Prophet." [52]

In the fourteenth conference on Islamic thought that was held in Algiers, one of the participants and a representative of Imām Khumaynī said, "Oh brothers! The enemies do not differentiate between the Shi'ites and the Sunnis. They want to destroy Islam as a faith, a school of thought and an ideology. Those who, through their word and deed, seek to divide Muslims into Shi'ites and Sunnis, stand within the ranks of infidels and are opposed to Islam and all Muslims. Hence as declared by Imām Khumaynī in his *fatwā*, it is religiously forbidden. It is the duty of all Muslims to prevent it."

Should we not strive to understand the core of this revolution, its historical goals and its Divine objectives? Today Islam stands again on its feet and is striving to face the challenges thrown at it by the West. The Iranian Muslims, together with all true and aware Muslims, have taken up the banner of reviving Islam and of its victory upon the earth. This is the highest goal of the life of every Muslim and in it lies the pleasure of God, the Almighty. Let us see what Ghālī Shukrī, an Egyptian Christian

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[51] P. 20.
[52] P. 21.

and Marxist, has to say about the Divine qualities of this Revolution. While he attacks this revolution in an article published in *Dirāsāt al-ʿArabīyyah (Arabic Studies)* he says, "Some of these existing contradictions are still noticeable: Thinkers, who are known for their Marxist background have turned into staunch Muslims in the blink of an eye; others, who according to their birth certificates are Christians, turn in a moment into Muslim extremists; thinkers, who by education belong to the West and were bred and brought up in its fashions and styles, without the least amount of reserve, turn into fanatic Easterners. Under the banner of Khumaynī, educated Arabs return to the fold of tradition like lost sheep returning to their fold after prolonged banishment and separation and all of this with the excuse of returning to the facts and reality and with the excuse of the bitter failure of Marxism, secularism, liberalism or nationalism."[53] These words of Ghāli Shukrī, with his bitter and sarcastic criticism of Imām Khumaynī and the Islamic Revolution, gives us a better opportunity to understand the depth and span of this revolution more than many Muslim writers calling to Islam!

We end our article with the words of Imām Khumaynī, given in a speech in Qum years ago. There, the Imām said, "The filthy hands which aggravate the differences between the Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, belong neither to the Shi'ites nor the Sunnis. They are the hands of the colonialists which plan to take Islamic countries out of our hands. The colonial powers who want to plunder our wealth through various schemes and conspiracies are the ones who hatch plots for creating division under the pretext of Shi'ism or Sunnism."

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* The author was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in 1951 to a Sunni Muslim family from Jaffa. After his secondary education he stayed in Gaza and taught mathematics. He then went to Egypt to study medicine at the esteemed Zagazig University. During his period of study he became acquainted with Shaykh Ḥasan al-Bannā' and started to associate with the Ikhwān al-Muslimīn. Graduating in 1981 he returned to occupied Palestine and began to practice Medicine in Jerusalem. Later he shifted to Gaza and served in a children's hospital. He was arrested by the Zionist forces and sentenced to one year in 1983, and to three years in 1986, for his Islamic-political activities. Then in August 1988 he was deported by the regime to South Lebanon. From then on he carried out his activities from Beirut and then Damascus. He propagated Islamic ideology and revived the culture of Jihad among the Muslims of the area. He was assassinated in Sliema, Malta by Mossad agents of the terrorist regime on 26 October, 1995; his funeral in Damascus on 1 November, 1995 was attended by some 40,000. The present article was published by *Shahīd* Shaqāqī in Egypt. It was translated into English and first published by the Islamic Propagation Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in Canada, with the title, *Sunni vs. Shi'ah: A Pitiful Outcry,* and under the pen name of the author, Ezzoddin Ibrahim. [Ed.]

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[53] The quotation is from *al-Bayādir al-siyāsī* magazine, vol, II, February 1, 1982, p. 3.

Religion in a Secular World:
The Case of Sharīʿah Law in Canada

Rizwan Rashid

Abstract:

As large numbers of Muslims continue to establish themselves in the West, they inevitably have to deal with the challenge of secularism. The fundamental question which is often asked is: how can a Muslim maintain his faith in a largely secular environment? Attempts to deal with this issue have led to the establishment of religious centres, Islamic schools, and various faith-oriented organizations, all within the framework of a multicultural society. A more recent effort is the attempt to incorporate *Sharīʿah*-based arbitrations within the secular legal structure. In Canada, such an effort was met with unfortunate results. This paper attempts to understand the reasons for the unsuccessful endeavour to establish a *Sharīʿah*-based tribunal system in Canada within the greater context of the conflict between religion and secularism, particularly in the modern world.

Keywords: *Sharīʿah*, Islamic law, *Sharīʿah* law in Canada, multiculturalism, Muslims in Canada, Muslims in secular liberal democracies, religion and modernity.

Introduction:

> "Controversial *Sharīʿah* Law is becoming a part of the Ontario legal system. Is this the triumph of multiculturalism or is it a threat to the separation of church and state in Canada? That's the debate tonight on Counterspin."[1]

With these words, the host of CBC Newsworld's Counterspin initiated what soon became a heated debate entitled "Is there room for religion in the justice system?" Only two days earlier a similar debate was broadcasted on CBC Radio's 'The Current'. In both cases, the topic of discussion involved the idea of establishing *Sharīʿah* sensitive tribunals to mediate disputes between Muslims as an alternative to seeking arbitration in Ontario's civil courts. In both cases, the invited panelists who spoke for and against the idea, identified themselves as Muslims, and represented various Muslim organizations within Canada.

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[1] Carol Off, "Is there Room for Religion in the Justice System," Counterspin (March 10, 2004).

While the *Sharī'ah* is accepted as the legal and ethical code governing the private and public conduct of all Muslims, the idea of integrating it within the Ontario legal system has not met with unanimous approval from the Muslim community. Furthermore, the notion of incorporating *Sharī'ah*-based arbitrations into the legal system, has been met with antagonism if not outright hostility from the rest of the Canadian public. This is despite the fact that the legal framework which permitted such integration had been in existence since 1991. In an attempt to ease the burden on the judicial system, the Canadian government introduced the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) provisions within the Arbitration Act, which allowed parties the option of resolving civil, family and religious disputes using culturally sensitive parameters—be it religious or otherwise. In fact, other communities had already implemented ADR procedures such as the Jewish rabbinical courts, known as the Beis Din in Ontario, as well as various tribunals set up by the First Nations' Peoples of Canada. However, never had discussions resulted in the division of community members and incited such a strong reaction from the media as it did with the attempt to formalize and centralize an Islamic tribunal system in Canada.

As a result, the government commissioned Marion Boyd, Ontario's former attorney general, to conduct a review of ADR procedures and how they were being used by various communities. The resulting 150 page report supported the continued use of ADR procedures by faith-based communities with recommendations for various legislative, regulatory and public support changes to curb any potential misuse.[2]

To much surprise, however, on September 11, 2005, Premier Dalton McGuinty ignored the report's recommendations, and announced that only one family law would be followed in Ontario. Bill 27—passed by the Ontario Legislature early the following year—effectively limited the domain of the Arbitration Act. The bill stipulated that family law arbitrations in Ontario, which are conducted according to Canadian law only and ignore religious laws or principles, would have legal status and be enforceable by the courts.

What began as a group's attempt to establish an Islamic-based alternative to the secular court system under the existing legal framework ended with the amendment of a legislative act to prevent it. Whether this was due to mistrust against the perceptions of the Islamic *Sharī'ah* or whether there were, in fact, legitimate concerns about the issue, the debate must be assessed within the context of a 'multicultural Canada' whose liberal humanistic values are often in conflict with those of a traditional religion such as Islam.

This article attempts to assess the debate on *Sharī'ah* law that took place between 2004 and 2006 in the province of Ontario. It will begin by examining the meaning of 'multiculturalism' in Canada and the role that Muslims play

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[2] Marion Boyd, "Dispute Resolution in Family Law: Protecting Choice, Promoting Inclusion," (2004).

within the nation's cultural mosaic It will then discuss the concept of the *Sharī'ah* in Islam in an attempt to clarify the motivation for establishing *Sharī'ah*-based tribunals in Ontario as well as the concerns that many Muslims and non-Muslims have voiced in opposition to it. The final section of this paper will attempt to highlight some of issues raised by the *Sharī'ah* court debates in the greater context of the conflict between religion and secularism and its implications for Muslims in a liberal democracy such as Canada.

Origins of "Multiculturalism" in Canada

Canadians have historically prided themselves in the widely held belief, taught almost as dogmatic truth since the early years of a child, that Canada is a cultural mosaic committed to the idea of multiculturalism. The image of a cultural mosaic and the idea of a nation united through diversity is often juxtaposed with the opposing image of a melting pot where ethnic, cultural and ideological differences are lost in the giant cauldron of assimilation. But the concept of multiculturalism is not as self-evident as we may believe, and in the Canadian context, it may refer to any of three different, yet related, notions.

As a descriptive term, multiculturalism can be used to describe the demographic and social reality of Canada that defines the ethnic make-up of this nation. One can argue that Canada has always been multicultural from even before the arrivals of the Europeans, as the native inhabitants of this land were already divided into several linguistic and cultural groups, each reacting and developing uniquely to its own regional conditions. With colonization—and, as some would argue, the confiscation—of the land, by the British and French, as well as the subsequent migration of many Europeans, the multicultural nature of Canada shifted to accommodate these changes. Within the last few decades, the cultural mosaic has visibly altered with the arrival of immigrants from non-European countries. In fact, of the 1.8 million immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 2001, 58% came from Asia and the Middle East, 11% from the Caribbean, Central and South America and 8% from Africa.[3] The increased migration of such a large and continentally differentiated group of individuals has contributed in making Canada a very diverse society. Yet Canada is not unique in this regard and to understand the idea of multiculturalism in Canada, one must examine the other ways in which the term has been used.

As a proscriptive term, multiculturalism refers to an ideal. It is based on the idea of cultural pluralism which considers each culture or ethnicity as a valuable entity in its own right. It also involves the idea that all cultures can and should coexist peacefully, and in the postmodern context, it implies that no particular culture has the right to impose its hegemony over any other culture. It is important to realize, however, that the notion of multiculturalism as an

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[3] Census 2001.

ideal cannot be isolated from the liberal humanistic framework under which it is commonly understood.

Finally, multiculturalism is also a state policy and a relatively new one in the history of Canada. It is the term used for the "umbrella of government policy and program initiatives designed to respond to ethnic and racial diversity within Canadian society."[4] First established by Prime Minister Trudeau in 1971, it emerged in response to the recommendation in Book IV of the Report from the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which recognized the contribution of other ethnic groups in Canada. Through it, the government agreed in principle to assist "all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada".[5] This is a radical change from the government's earlier position which sought "integration through assimilation", a policy which had devastating effects on aboriginal reservations, communities and children attending residential schools. With the establishment of this new policy, the term 'assimilation' was replaced with terms such as 'equal opportunity,' 'cultural diversity' and 'mutual tolerance.' But the policy did not only wish to tolerate the multiplicity of ethnicities in Canada; it sought to validate their differences with the somewhat vague idea that it would be 'culturally enriching' for Canada to do so.

It is in this context that we may understand the establishment of the Alternative Dispute Resolution scheme, for it is incomprehensible in the absence of a state policy on multiculturalism. Yet precisely because of the state commitment to ethnic preservation, many ethno-cultural groups had utilized the ADR scheme on the grounds that through it they would ensure the survival of their culture in Canada. Furthermore, the state had pronounced its support to all ethno-cultural groups equally, "the small and weak groups no less than the strong and highly organized."[6] This implies that in the absence of valid reasons, any attempt on the part of the state to prevent one group from utilizing the ADR provision would be deemed discriminatory. It was this premise that legally permitted Muslims to propose the establishment of Islamic-sensitive tribunal systems to cater to the religious needs of a growing Muslim population in Canada.

Muslims as an ethno-religious group in Canada

Muslims have been immigrating to Canada in large numbers from all parts of the Muslim world. According to the 2001 census, Canada has a total popula-

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[4] Harold Troper and Morton Weinfeld, "Canadian Jews and Canadian Multiculturalism," in Howard Adelman and John H. Simpson, eds., *Multiculturalism, Jews and Identities in Canada* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), p. 30.
[5] "Statement of Prime Minster Trudeau," *House of Commons Debates*, 171, October 8, 1971.
[6] *Ibid.*

tion of 580,000 Muslims, a staggering increase of 130 percent since 1991.[7] Of these, over half live in Ontario. Since it is not possible to isolate any one particular region from which the majority of Muslims in Canada have emigrated, an interesting question arises: taken as a collective, can one consider the Muslims in Canada—with all their ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, and ideological differences—as a distinct entity? Furthermore, the question of whether or not there is such a thing as "the Muslim community" in Canada is an important question since within the multicultural framework of Canada, group status, and especially ethnic group status becomes increasingly important.

One way to answer this question is to examine how Muslims generally view themselves. In the case of adherents of the Jewish tradition, most of them, regardless of their nationality, have a shared sense of peoplehood, and hence it is not surprising that they identify themselves and are identified by others as a separate ethnic group. A similar phenomenon can be found in the Islamic faith as well, and it can be argued that Muslims of all ethnicities also feel a shared sense of 'people hood'—that they too belong to one community, that of the Prophet Muḥammad , which in Islamic terminology is called the *'ummah* of Muḥammad ', or simply the *'ummah'*. In fact, in the very early history of Islam, one of the first things carried out by the Prophet Muḥammad after his migration from Mecca to Medina was to formally solemnize a brotherhood between those of his followers in Mecca (known as the *muhājirūn*—"the migrants") and those who welcomed him in Medina (known as the *ansār*—"the helpers"). The significance of this event was immense: this new religion would be united not through tribal loyalty, but through the acceptance of a new Islamic identity. While several regional, sub regional and sect based rituals have evolved, the *hajj* is perhaps the most profound expression of the universal unity of the *ummah* where each and every Muslim—Shi'ite and Sunni, Arab and non-Arab, rich and poor—is required to perform the rites of the pilgrimage together in their effort to reorient themselves to God.

The bond that unites the *ummah* then is based on faith and not ethnicity. Although the Qur'ān recognizes different nations, it judges people on their relationship with God.

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ

لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind! Indeed We have created you of a male and a female, and
made you into tribes and nations that you may know one another;
surely the most honourable of you in the eyes of God is the one who

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[7] Census 2001.

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has *taqwa* (i.e., God-consciousness). Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.[8]

It is for this reason that those of the Christian and Jewish traditions, for example, are considered "*Ahl al-Kitāb*" (i.e., "the people of the book")—regardless of their ethnicity—and, in the traditional Islamic world, have enjoyed greater privileges than other groups such as polytheists or atheists.

The rise of individual nation-states and the movement towards nationalism has posed a great challenge to the notion of the *ummah*. The dilemma is: Where does the loyalty of a Muslim lie as he is both a citizen of an independent state and a member of the Muslim *ummah*? In an article on the Islamic view of ethnicity and nationalism, Muhittin Ataman discusses some of the responses to nationalism on the part of various scholars of the Islamic world throughout the twentieth century. In his research he points out that most, if not all, mainstream Islamic scholars find the notion of nationalism contrary to the basic spirit of Islam.[9] A person of the Islamic faith is first and foremost a Muslim, and then belonging to a certain tribe or nation and even yet in more modern times, a nation state.[10] Yet in the context of a multicultural system, if one's primary loyalty is not to the state but to a transnational entity, what happens when there is a conflict between the position of the state and that to which one has given his or her loyalty? In fact, one of the reasons why the debate on incorporating *Sharī'ah* law in Canada is fueled with so much emotion is due to the fact that on the global level, Western democratic countries, including Canada, find themselves increasingly at odds with the Muslim world.

Another problem that confounds the matter is the modern notion of 'identity'. As the world is coming to adopt more secular and humanistic values, so too are many Muslims, and yet their identity as 'Muslims' remains intact. In other words, it is becoming quite common for one to be a Muslim by identity, and yet not practice, or even believe in the basic tenets of the faith. Traditionally, the concept of a secular Muslim, a homosexual Muslim or a non-believing Muslim was unfathomable.[11] Yet today, to deem someone a Muslim, is simply to identify them with the Islamic heritage and speaks nothing of their loyalty to Islam or to the *ummah*. As Michael King states:

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[8] Qur'ān 49:13.

[9] Muhittin Ataman, "Islamic Perspective on Ethnicity and Nationalism: Diversity or Uniformity?" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 23, 1 (2003), pp. 98-100.

[10] The confusion between national identity and religious identity in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in an interesting example. On the one hand, there is no doubt that a certain Palestinian nationalism is at play in the conflict. On the other hand, however, the support for the Palestinian cause—whether real or figurative—on the part of the majority of Muslims around the globe speaks to their belief in the idea of the *ummah*.

[11] This does not mean that all Muslims were observant or heterosexual throughout the history of Islam. What it means is that if there were such individuals who were non-practicing, or tended towards homosexuality, they would not publicize it or identify themselves as such within society.

> Muslim identity no longer exists as a unified concept. This leaves Muslims to pick and choose between different versions of Islam, which reflect, not different schools of quranic exegesis, but rather different degrees of permissible *individuality*. Yet this freedom to choose more or less individualist versions of a Muslims identity simply does not exist within traditional Islam.[12]

The ramifications of this have made it possible for many to identify themselves as Muslims and yet deny fundamental aspects of Islam. This may shed some light on the issue of the *Sharīʿah* law debate, where those on either side have identified themselves as 'Muslim'.

Let us return, then, to the question that was posed at the beginning of this section: can one consider the Muslims in Canada as a distinct ethno-religious group in the matrix of the cultural mosaic of Canada? Although traditionally Muslims have considered themselves as a distinct entity belonging to a unified *ummah*, in an age of nation-states and secularism, one wonders how sensible it is to group all Muslims together as a homogenous entity. To be Muslim, it seems, is becoming yet another vague term, and it is no wonder, then, that a host of adjectives—from 'modern' to 'fundamentalist', from 'liberal' to 'traditional'—is now needed to qualify the term 'Muslim'. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Canadian government has often interacted with "the Muslim community" as a collective, and it is this interaction, as it applies to the *Sharīʿah* law, that we can now examine.

The Definition, Perception and Practice of Sharīʿah in Canada:

As a collective entity, or a 'minority group', Muslims have already had legal concessions granted to them by the government. A common example is that Muslims are permitted to slaughter animals in a manner that adheres to the tenets of their faith.[13] In Islam, these same tenets which dictate what a Muslim may or may not eat also govern other aspects of a Muslim's life, and it is not surprising, then, that the Arabic word for this ethical and legal code in Islam is *Sharīʿah*, which means 'the way'. Ultimately, Islam is a way of life, for there is no division of church and state in Islam, between the public and the private, and between the social, economic or political life of a Muslim. From the devotional acts such as prayers and fasting to the most mundane aspects of an individual's life, the *Sharīʿah* guides the believer in all his activities. Michael King,

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[12] Michael King, "The Muslim Identity in a Secular World," *God's Law versus State Law* (London: Grey Seal, 1995), p. 113.

[13] Jews, of course, have also been granted a similar concession. Interestingly, recent 'discoveries' in modern science suggests that cows and poultry take up to two minutes to lose consciousness after their throats are cut. Hence, efforts are underway by animal-rights activists to end the concessions granted to Jewish and Muslim communities since they do not allow for pre-slaughter stunning. One wonders at the philosophical assumptions behind such efforts.

in *God's Laws versus State Laws* describes the all-encompassing notion of the *Sharī'ah*:

> What differentiates God's law from state law is its universality. It transcends all temporal and national boundaries. It is for all places at all times. It travels as part of the spiritual luggage of its adherents across borders and continents. It also traverses time. The divinity of its inspiration frees God's law from the need to change in response to changes in social conditions. Of course, this does not mean that it does not change, but that, unlike state law, its legitimacy does not depend upon its adjusting to developments in the external world.[14]

Furthermore, the devout Muslim knows that he must comply with the *Sharī'ah* for to do otherwise is to commit an offense. It is not sufficient to believe in God and His revelation; one must also believe in the validity of the law as exemplified by the *Sharī'ah*. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr explains:

> The *Sharī'ah* is the Divine Law by virtue of accepting which a person becomes a Muslim. Only he who accepts the injuctions of the *Sharī'ah* as binding upon him is a Muslim although he may not be able to realize all of its teachings or follow all of its commands in life. The *Sharī'ah* is the ideal pattern for the individual's life and the Law which binds the Muslim people into a single community … Law is therefore an integral aspect of the revelation and not an alien element.[15]

There are many misconceptions about the *Sharī'ah* law which has fueled the debate over it. The *Sharī'ah* is not a static law that was developed a millennium ago; rather, it is a sophisticated and dynamic law, which, under the science of *fiqh* (i.e., jurisprudence) and through the process of *ijtihād* (i.e., legal interpretation), has adapted itself to various conditions in order to fulfill the following: to reorient temporal conditions to eternal principles. In this way, the principles which guide and direct the *Sharī'ah* have always remained constant. This is important to emphasize because the very permanence of these principles is what legitimizes any cumulative changes that occur in its interpretation and application.

Where the observant Muslim has difficulty is when the Islamic laws are either not recognized or are in direct violation of secular state law. For example, under the *Sharī'ah* law, the right to initiate divorce lies with the husband, whereas under the secular legal system each partner has an equal right. Yet just as a religious divorce is not recognized by the state, so too a civil divorce is not recognized in Islam. Until now, disputes such as these would generally be handled by the *imām* (i.e., religious leader) of a local community. The problem,

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[14] Michael King, *God's Law versus State Law* (London: Grey Seal, 1995), p. 1.
[15] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The *Sharī'ah*—Divine Law, Social and Human Norm", *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), pp. 93-95.

however, is that in a country such as Canada, any arbitration issued by the *imām* cannot be legally binding since it is not recognized by the state, and if one of the parties is non-practicing, the moral obligation to abide by the arbitration has no effect. With this in mind, one may understand the motivation on the part of many Muslims in their efforts to establish an Islamic tribunal system under the guidelines of the ADR, through which the arbitral award (i.e., the decision of the arbitrator) would not only be formalized, but also, be legally binding and enforceable by the public courts.

As mentioned earlier, the ADR framework was already in use by various Jewish and First Nations groups. It was only recently that the Islamic Institute of Civil Justice (IICJ), spearheaded by a Canadian lawyer, Mr. Syed Mumtaz Ali, applied for registration under the ADR provisions to provide 'Islamically sensitive arbitrations' to those wishing to use the service. The plan envisioned by the IICJ was to centralize the mediation service under one organization, with representatives from all the traditional schools of thought. But it was this very undertaking that caused an uproar from many quarters of Canadian society, and it is to this debate, then, that we must now turn.

The Debate

Those who supported the idea of providing arbitration based on the *Sharī'ah* were generally observant Muslims whose primary loyalty was to Islam. For the majority of them, this undertaking was simply a move to preserve their religion in an increasingly secular world. They argued that they were only utilizing an already legal framework, which has been used by others before them to provide similar arbitration; in this regard, they were actually quite surprised at the outcry by the Canadian public. Furthermore, they were quick to point out that since this *was* an alternative to the secular courts, seeking mediation through it was entirely voluntary.

Despite these arguments, there was strong opposition to the idea by vocal 'Muslim' and non-Muslim organizations in Canada. Many of them were principally against all or part of the *Sharī'ah*, considering it to be outdated and inapplicable in today's society, and in fact, some of their members had fled from countries in which the *Sharī'ah* law was applied. Furthermore, such organizations as the Canadian Council of Muslim women regarded the *Sharī'ah* as having a male bias since it has largely been interpreted by male scholars. They pointed to various inheritance and divorce laws which, according to them, 'favoured' men over women.

Many critics who objected to the use of the *Sharī'ah* were generally those who had embraced the values of secularism. Homa Arjomand, a former Muslim and coordinator of 'the International Campaign against the *Sharī'ah* Courts', in a letter to Marion Boyd, unequivocally states: "We need a secular

state and secular society that respects human rights and that is founded on the principle that power belongs to the people and not a God. It is crucial to oppose the Islamic Sharia law and to subordinate Islam to secularism and secular states."[16]

There is no doubt that secularism is becoming the dominant phenomenon in the modern world and most Canadians consider this a positive trend. It is in this light that we can understand the reaction of the media as well as secular organizations—both 'Muslim' and non-Muslim—against the establishment of the *Sharī'ah* tribunals; for the attempt to revive religion and give it legal status seems to go against the so-called 'evolutionary' movement that is taking the world away from religion.[17] It is unfortunate, however, especially in the eyes of devout Muslims, that the reaction was specifically against the *Sharī'ah* courts and not against the other religious or culturally based tribunals. This brings us back to the question posed by Caroll Off at the beginning of this paper: Is this the triumph of multiculturalism or is it a threat to the separation of church and state in Canada?

The "Triumph" of Multiculturalism

If this is perceived as a "triumph" of multiculturalism for one segment of Muslims and Canadians, then it is certainly not one in the eyes of many others. This begs the question: How can Canadians consider the notion of multiculturalism as a hallmark of their society and yet not agree with its implications? It is a paradox because the very policy of multiculturalism allows various ethno-religious groups, on the basis of cultural protection, to propose ideas which are anathema to the modern Canadian mentality. It is not surprising, then, that it has come under attack by Canadians themselves. Neil Bassoondath and others have asked a very basic question about the boundaries of tolerance: to what extent should the state accommodate the 'rights' of minority groups who do not subscribe to modern secular values?[18] As society is seen to be 'evolving' towards secularism, there is an inherent conflict when ethnic and religious loyalties pull together against the demands of secular assimilation. Ultimately, it seems that religious freedoms can be granted only when its beliefs do not strike at the fundamental mores of society.[19] What, then, are the fundamental mores of Canadian society in relation to religion? First, that the

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[16] Homa Arjomand, "Letters to Mrs. Boyd," *International Campaign against Sharia Court in Canada*, [http://www.nosharia.com/let2boyd.htm#1].

[17] According to the 2001 Census, 4.8 million Canadians claim no religious affiliation. This is the largest single group in the "religious" mosaic of Canada after the Roman Catholics, and is a 44 percent increase from a decade earlier.

[18] Neil Bassoondath, "I am Canadian," *Saturday Night*, October, 1994.

[19] A. Bradney, *Religions, Rights and Laws* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), p. 157.

separation of church and state must be maintained, and second, that secular liberal and humanistic values must not be compromised.

Separation of Church and State

Most Canadians may be surprised to find that on paper, "Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God."[20] In practice, however, this is far from the case. Ever since Western European countries revolted against the Church during what became known as the "Enlightenment," a separation between church and state has ensued. Since then, the idea of modern, fair and just government has been elaborated on by many Western intellectuals. The predominant view put forth is that society consists of a voluntary association of self-determining individuals, who agree to unite under a political entity in order to ensure the protection of each member.[21] With the rise of the nation-states in Europe, citizenship has become a vital part of one's social and political identity. Whereas the Church once held exclusive loyalty from the members of its faith, today, loyalty is first and foremost to one's nation state.

The interaction between the state, religion and law through the course of history is an interesting topic. In an article entitled "Religious Pluralism and the Law", Antony Allott lists six ways in which law and religion have related to each other.[22] The range includes: fusion, infusion, co-ordination, subordination, toleration and, finally, suppression—where fusion represents the synthesis between law and religion and the commitment by the ruler to protect and promote a particular religious view, and where suppression represents a situation where the law purports to outlaw any and all religious views. An example of the former, according to Allott, is the Islamic state, under which most Muslims have lived for most of Islamic history. It was only after the fall of the Ottoman Empire that the newly emerging 'Muslim' nation-states began subordinating religion to the state or even suppressing it outrightly. As for Canada, Allott would consider it an example of toleration. In Canada, the state no longer serves as an enforcement agency on behalf of the dominant religious institution; instead, it takes the position of "impartial guardian of order between the competing religions."[23]

The separation of church and state has also led to a reshuffling of what is considered private and public. In Western democratic countries, governance

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[20] *"Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom"* in *The Constitution Act, 1982.* [http://laws.justice.gc.ca /en/const/annex_e.html]

[21] Paul Morris, "Judaism and Pluralism: The Price of Religious Freedom," in Ian Hamnett, ed., *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 181.

[22] Antonny Alott, "Religious Pluralism and the law in England and Africa: A case study," in Ian Hamnett, ed., *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief: Studies Critical and Comparative*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 208.

[23] Peter Berger, "Social Sources of Secularization," in Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman, eds., *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 240.

has become the domain of the public life and religion has been relegated to the private sphere of individuals.[24] This is quite foreign to Islam, which, as mentioned earlier, influences all aspects of a Muslim's life. As Nasr explains, "Islam never gave unto Caesar what was Caesar's. Rather, it tried to integrate the domain of Caesar itself, namely, political, social and economic life, into an encompassing religious world view."[25] In Islam, the notion of governance is fundamentally different from the modern Western conception. It is religion, in fact, which legitimizes governments, for the state is the church and the church is the state. Therefore, in the classical political theory of Islam, God's saint is His true representative on earth. It is for this reason that the Prophet Muḥammad (s) was not only the spiritual guide of his *ummah*, but also the political ruler of the Islamic state.[26]

The separation of the church from state affairs is not simply a divorce of religion and religious values—for a state cannot exist without an overarching paradigm to provide the basis from which laws are enacted, affairs are governed, and civil servants, with the rest of society as a whole, carry out such responsibilities as will ensure justice and encourage order. In Western democratic countries, including Canada, what replaced the Church was a paradigm based on liberal secular humanism and it is this paradigm, which ultimately puts it at odds with religion.

Liberal Secular Humanism and the Conflict with Religion

In their analysis of Canada's multicultural policy, Janet McLellan and Anthony Richmond state, "A new vision must be one that celebrates our common humanity and seeks to reconcile differences."[27] The idea of celebrating a common humanity stems from the philosophy of Humanism—a movement that gained widespread support by the literary elite during the Renaissance, and which came to espouse the view that individualism and human self-interest should be the basis for all philosophies; in effect, it made human beings the

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[24] In fact, postmodern thought has contributed significantly to this outlook. From the postmodern paradigm, there can be no universal or foundational claims since objective truth is unintelligible. Religion, therefore, also becomes unintelligible—a social construction. With the absence of objective truth, each person simply chooses whatever suits his or her own individual tastes—all facets of religion, therefore, become reduced to private spirituality.

[25] Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, p. 95.

[26] The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) is both 'abd Allah' (God's servant) and 'rasūl Allah' (God's messenger). The former is a necessary prerequisite for the latter, not only for the Prophet (ṣ) but for man in general. As Nasr states in his artcle "Who is Man?": "With the function of *khalīfah* was combined the quality of *'abd*, that is, the quality of being in perfect submission to God. Man has the right to dominate over the earth as *khalīfah* only on the condition that he remains in perfect submission to Him who is the real master of nature," in Jacob Needleman, ed., *The Sword of Gnosis* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc, 1974), p. 207.

[27] Janet McLellan and Anthony H. Richmond, "Multiculturalism in Crisis: a Postmodern Perspective on Canada," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17, 4, (1994), p. 680.

measure of all things.[28] In fact, the greatest hallmark in our century, from a humanistic point of view, is the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which grants each and every individual equal and inalienable rights. The Canadian version of this is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which gives courts considerable authority to strike down any federal or provincial statutes and regulations that contravene the rights enumerated within it.[29] And it was perhaps the Charter more than any other document which was used as a basis to prevent the setting up of a formal Islamic tribunal structure, with the claim that the *Sharī'ah* or its interpretation has often discriminated against certain segments of society.

Although Muslims may agree with many of the rights listed in the Charter, they do not, in principle, agree with the idea that all individuals possess these rights simply because they are human. Islam has its own view of anthropology. What defines man's position is not his humanity, but his relationship to God; ultimately, it is only God Who grants humans their rights. In fact, in order to counter the globalizing discourse of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an attempt was made by Muslims in France to offer an Islamic parallel to the document. A line from the forward reads as follows:

> Human rights in Islam are firmly rooted in the belief that God, and God alone, is the Law Giver and the Source of all human rights. Due to their Divine origin, no ruler, government, assembly or authority can curtail or violate in any way the human rights conferred by God, nor can they be surrendered.[30]

Moreover, along with rights come responsibilities and, in Islam, the *hadīth* literature seems to emphasize the latter more than the former.[31]

From a secular point of view, however, the concept of rights has a more recent and yet particular importance in legal parlance. In a multicultural state such as Canada, when the government interacts with various religious or cultural communities, the specific needs of that community can only be dealt with when they have been reformulated to correspond to the dominant legal framework. As King explains:

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[28] Humanism in the West has also given rise to individualism. On this point, many have noticed the contradictions between a multicultural policy which focuses on group interests and a humanistic value which stresses the individual. As McLellan states, "Catering to group interest may be seen as contrary to liberal democratic values that emphasize the individual rather than collective rights, and universalism rather than particularism." *Ibid.*, p. 673.

[29] It is precisely because of the Charter that Canada's abortion law was struck down and in the case of Alberta, homosexuals were included within those protected against discrimination.

[30] "Foreward," in *Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights*, 19th September, 1981.

[31] Interestingly, in the *Risālat al-Ḥuqūq* (Treatise of Rights) of Imam 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn ('a), the great-grandson of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), all the rights that the Imam ('a) lists in the short treatise are rights that others have upon the individual and not the other way around. The same is the case with many of the prophetic traditions. Moreover, the first right listed in the Imam's treatise is God's right over man, and hence man's responsibility towards God. From this, follows man's responsibility towards himself and by extension towards others.

> How then does modern law reconstruct Islam? In the first place, as one might expect, Islam is split and classified according to the conceptual meaning categories that exist in the modern world … obligations which were at one time a matter of 'individual conscience' … are transformed into impersonal rules enforceable by state authority. Thus law tends to reconstruct religion as rights of worship and performance of ritual. Once reconstructed in this way, each religion may be seen as constituting for law a set of rights, such as … the right to kill and prepare animals for food according to ritual rules … Once constituted as rights, religions may take their place in a legal world where their particular demands and obligations may be related to, compared with and placed in rank order with all other rights, obligations and demands.[32]

In other words, the only way that multiculturalism as a state policy can ef-fectively[33] and harmoniously cater to different ethnicities and religions is to reduce them to their outward form or expression. Yet in so doing, it essentially destroys these entities and the underlying principles that hold them together for religion cannot continue to exist when it is reduced to personal spirituality and its observances are deemed as 'rites' and 'rituals'. In this sense, multicul-turalism, in a secular humanistic context, is the burial of religion rather than its acceptance.[34]

Of course, many have realized this dilemma of living as Muslims in a secu-lar state—even one with a state policy of multiculturalism—and the degree to which their faith can actually be consciously lived. Among this group were ones who did not support the *Sharī'ah*-based tribunals, not because they did not agree with the *Sharī'ah*, but because they felt the idea of having a secular country enforce divine laws was contrary to the spirit of their faith. If God's laws were to be followed, according to them, it was because they were divine, and not because they had been reconstructed as legally binding alternative laws in order to adapt themselves to the Western legal system. For them, the whole undertaking was seen as yet another step in the reconstruction of religion and religious values in order to accommodate them into an increasingly secular world.

Two other values of utmost importance in liberal democracies are the oft-repeated slogans of 'freedom' and 'equality', and the *Sharī'ah* in particular is

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[32] King, p. 108.

[33] An interesting point is raised in the relationship between citizen and state, for the rights-focused society is only a recent tendency in Western democratic societies, and in some ways, within an increasingly neoliberal context, can be seen as contributing to factors that threaten to strip the role of the state. The narrow perspec-tive of secular norms may be in contradiction with a more long term view of citizenship that might, through religion refocus the responsibilities of individuals on their citizenry to the state. Such a move, while politically unpopular and at the mercy of the market, should be considered in the subtext of such arguments where relig-ion is treated as a threat, rather than as an informal partner to nation building.

[34] This can be compared to a zoo, where when one encages an animal and denies them their place in the ecol-ogy of nature, one ultimately destroys their 'way of life'.

often criticized by secularists on the grounds that it denies individuals both freedom and equality. These same secularists argue that Western democratic societies have leveled out class, race, and gender-based social hierarchies, and have offered individuals many freedoms including those of conscience, religion, belief, speech, expression, and association. Of course, these freedoms have their limits as is seen with the decision to prevent faith-based arbitration, but the modern secularist will insist that it is much better than what religion has offered. There is no denying this claim, of course, for the freedoms that liberal democracies have conceded to are quite extensive.[35]

For the devout Muslim, however, the 'freedom' that the modern secularists parade is a purely horizontal freedom and it is this that he objects to. In Islam, he would argue, true freedom is vertical—it is that gift which allows human begins to move up towards God or down towards multiplicity, fragmentation and disintegration. Since there is a hierarchy of being in Islam, the choice is a matter of not what an individual 'can' do, but what an individual 'should' do.[36] Law in Islam is meant to guide a Muslim in his path towards God. Although he has the freedom to disobey the law, he also has the freedom to abide by it. But the freedom is not as important as the *choice* he makes. It is for this reason that the supporters of the *Sharī'ah* law, may not necessarily wish to impose their laws on others, but to simply offer the opportunity to those Muslims who feel that by abiding by the *Sharī'ah* in their disputes, they are making a better choice in their lives[37]. This is becoming increasingly important for them, because there is an unspoken feeling that the choices which the Western world is making (and the adversarial approach that many features of the legal framework in society is creating) is in the wrong direction, and through the process of globalization, is leading other cultures and communities to the same antagonistic and adversarial end.

Secularists today, of course, feel that Western nations are going in the right direction, it is not surprising then that the idea of 'progress' has become one of the most fashionable and penetrating notions that has gained authority today. The idea of progress places a positive quality to the historical changes that the

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[35] In the field of science and technology, the free-reign granted to industry has produced many an efficient gadget but many an unnecessary one too—all at the expense of the social and physical environment which is inhabited by the citizenry. In the field of social relations, the argument for legalizing same-sex unions was that it was an extension of unions between a male and female. If freedom is the underlying principle, one wonders why this union is limited to only two. According to Andrew Bainham, "It is a great paradox of a society in which sexual liberation outside marriage is a norm, and yet sexual exclusivity within marriage is an ideal." Andrew Bainham, "Family Law in a Pluralistic Society," *Journal of Law and Society*, 22, 2, (1995).

[36] One is reminded of Ian Malcolm's words in Jurassic Park to the 'visionary' industrialist: "your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could that they didn't think if they should."

[37] In the context of the adversarial court system and the increasing costs that this places on individuals, Muslims may actually find the more accommodating and flexible mores inherent to their cultures and ethnicities of origin within the framework of *Sharī'ah* law. However, the perceptions of opponents seems to have outweighed examination of such benefits.

West has experienced. The ancients and all things "ancient"—including religion—may be tolerated, even admired, but not respected as authorities. Furthermore, evolutionary historicism has reduced all history to simply stages of liberalism, thereby forming a built-in protection of any criticism against itself.

It is this last phenomenon—i.e., the prevalence of the idea of 'progress'—that has ultimately put religion at odds with the Modern West, and has contributed in fueling the debate regarding the incorporation of *Sharī'ah* in the modern legal system. Since the *Sharī'ah* has not "evolved" in the same ways that the modern legal code has "evolved", it is seen as being outdated and hence, not applicable in our times. As mentioned previously, the laws in the *Sharī'ah* do change, yet the principles upon which they are based are deemed immutable. Moreover, even when new laws are added to the *Sharī'ah*, they are not added so as to accommodate the fashionable ideas of the dominant group of the period. What bothers the "traditional" Muslim so much is the intellectual arrogance found in Western thought, which presumes that the path it is taking is one which leads to 'progress', and yet the path that other civilizations have taken or continue to take is somehow harkening back to the "olden days".

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the innate conflict between the values of modern liberal secularism and the principles of religion. It is precisely because of this conflict that many Muslims are finding it difficult to be both Muslims and Canadians. It could be argued, as it has been, that if Muslims do not agree with these values then they should either find a nation that does, or simple return to their original homelands.[38] Yet the matter is complicated not only because many Muslims have lived on Canadian soil for over two generations, but also because through the process of globalization, even the traditional lands from which they may have come are undergoing great change. As some have commented, while we are celebrating our differences in Canada, traditional cultural societies are being destroyed by neoliberal globalization. The governments of many 'Muslim' countries have become secularized and religion has succumbed to sectarianism and politicization to the point where, ironically, it is more difficult for a Muslim to practice his religion there than in North America. In this case, a Muslim may be grateful even, that Canada has not followed the same path. Nevertheless, for many Muslims, acts such as implementing the *Sharī'ah* law in Canada is a way for them to maintain their religious heritage in a time when the world is abandoning religion. Their mission in 'diaspora' seems more important to them than in their home countries.

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[38] This is a popular argument found in the opinion sections of newspapers and discussion sites on the Internet against those immigrants resisting secularization; Of course, one imagines that the same argument could have been put forth by the First Nations' Peoples to their colonizers if given a chance.

So where does this leave us? Is it possible to a find a common ground between modern liberal democracy and religion in an era where there is some recognition that neoliberalism is flawed and alternatives are required? Must one system override the other or can a compromise be made? The notion of Canada returning to its religious roots is almost unthinkable for the vast majority of Canadians, and flies in the very face of 'progress' that has embraced secularism. There is the option for Canada to abandon her multicultural policy and treat all religions and ethnicities equally *unfavorably*. This, of course, seems to be in step with the direction Premier McGuinty was heading with his announcement of one family rule for all in Ontario. Incidentally, this option would remove the one major difference between Canada and her southern neighbour. A third option is for the government to continue its multicultural policy, yet realizing that this is at the expense of reducing religious cultures to their outward expressions.

There is, however, another possibility and in his article on "Judaism and Pluralism", Paul Morris discusses the idea of establishing a sub-legal framework, which would allow religious traditions autonomy in the areas of self-definition, education and family law.[39] In fact, the conversant Muslim is not alien to this suggestion for within the Islamic world, a similar system existed where non-Muslim minorities had autonomy in governing various aspects of their communal lives. In one sense, it was a state within a state; in another, it was a state beyond the state in so far as they owed loyalty to the heads of their respective denominations.[40] If Canada does accept this possibility, it must be prepared for two changes: First, it must accept religious and ethnic stratification; and second, if each group is given room to 'flourish' in a true mosaic, the cost of this may be an increase in inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflict, which, of course, the state would somehow have to deal with[41]. In the end, whatever option Canada chooses, it can only make an intelligent decision if it realizes the principles under which it and other systems operate.

Returning to Carol Off's question, it seems that this is neither the triumph of multiculturalism nor a threat to the separation of church and state in Can-

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[39] Morris, p. 191.

[40] This is not a completely foreign idea to Canadian history since the First Nations' Peoples of Canada have received a certain degree of autonomy within the nation. Of course, many would argue that the situation of the First Nations' Peoples should not be compared to that of other ethnic or religious communities; after all they were the original inhabitants of the land. Yet when one studies the interaction between the Canadian government and the First Nations Peoples, one wonders to what extent this argument was considered.

[41] As mentioned earlier—the search for alternatives in an increasingly competitive environment does not undermine the role of the state and the identity of Canada in a neoliberal world. Policy makers and strategists within and across levels of government might consider incorporating value frameworks of religious groups and communities to raise the standards of governance and citizen participation that builds society, even at a grassroots level, by recognizing common principles inherent to state hood.

ada.[42] The separation between church and state is far too pronounced for it to be threatened, and it seems that Canadians have ultimately chosen secularism over religion. But nor is this a triumph of multiculturalism even for the Muslim (and perhaps especially for him) because this form of multiculturalism only relegates and restricts his faith to its outward form in order to be molded into a secular legal system, a process which destroys the very spirit that is required for his faith to be meaningful.

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[42] Inherent in this question, of course, is the presumption that the separation of church and state has been a positive choice on the part of the West.

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الدين في العالم العلماني: أحكام الشريعة في كندا نموذجاً

رضوان راشد

الخلاصة:

على المسلمين في الدول الغربية التعامل مع تحدي العلمانية بموازاة مساعيهم لتوطيد أنفسهم في تلك الدول، والسؤال الذي يطرح هنا هو: كيف يمكن للمسلم أن يثبت على دينه وإيمانه في أجواء علمانية؟ لقد أدى التعامل مع هذه القضية الى تأسيس مراكز دينية ومدارس اسلامية ومؤسسات ذات توجهات دينية، كلها في اطار مجتمع متعدّد الثقافات. المسعى الاخير الذي حصل في هـــذا المجال هو تحكيم الشريعة في النظام القضائي، وقد واجه هذا المسعى شيئاً من سوء الحظ ونتـــائج مخيبة في كندا. المقال يسعى لتسليط الضوء على هذا المسعى ودراسة أسباب عدم نجاح تأســـيس نظام قضائي يعتمد الشريعة بكندا في خضم صراع بين الدين والعلمانية في عالم يعيش الحداثة.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الشريعة، الاحكام الاسلامية، الاحكام الشرعية في كندا، التعددية الثقافيـــة، المسلمون في كندا، المسلمون في العالم الديمقراطي والليبرالي والعلماني، الدين والحداثة.

خلاصة المقالات

المدخل الى معرفة موسيقي القران
اكرم دياني

الخلاصة:

لاشك ان احد جوانب الاعجاز البياني للقران هو الايقاع الداخلي والموسيقي المتميزة التي يتَّسـم بها، بما تمتلكه من تاثير عميق على النفس لاسيما اذا كانت مصحوبة بصوت حسن، وقد مزج الله تعالى ايات كتابه بموسيقي رائعة ومدهشة، تعرَّض هذا المقال الى بيان جانب من تلك الموسـيقي الملكوتية والعناصر المؤثرة فيها.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الفن، موسيقي القران، الاعجاز البياني للقران، ايقاع القران، الترتيل، الموسيقي الحرام.

سني و شيعي، ضجة مفتعلة
الشهيد فتحي الشقاقي

الخلاصة:

نمت الحركة الاسلامية بتسارع في القرن العشرين في قبال الامبريالية الغربية، وتتوّجت بانتصارات بلغت ذروتها بانتصار الثورة الاسلامية في ايران بقيادة الامام الخميني عام ١٩٧٩. ومن سوء الحظ أن الانتصارات اللاحقة قد تعثرت بسبب انعدام الوحدة والتنسيق بين المسلمين والامة الاسلامية، وفي ظل نشر معلومات مغلوطة وكاذبة تهدف الى تمزيق المسلمين وتقسيمهم أكثر. المقال يسـعى لدراسة آراء مختلف قادة المسلمين ــ من الشيعة والسنة ــ في مجال الحاجة الى الوحدة بين المسلمين وضرورتها في ضوء اختلاف المذاهب.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الحركة الاسلامية، الاخوان المسلمين، الثورة الاسـلامية في ايــران، الامــام الخميني، الشيعة والسنة، الوحدة الاسلامية، الامة.

سيرة الرسول(ص) وائمة المسلمين في تعاملهم مع مخالفيهم

التقريب

سيد صادق سيد حسيني تاشي

الخلاصة:

أخذت بعض الفرق الاسلامية في العهود الاخيرة تصوراتها المذهبية في مجالات خاصة ذريعة لتكفير باقي المسلمين؛ وذلك لاجل تبرير قتلهم بل طبع صبغة القداسة على ذلك. ويوردون نماذج مـــن سيرة قادة المسلمين وبخاصة الرسول والخلفاء الراشدين وائمة المذاهب والعلماء البارزين كشواهد على صحة سلوكياتهم. والمقال في خضم طرحه تحليلاً شاملاً للشخصيات التي تعدّ اسـوة لهـذه الطوائف يكشف عن أن سلوكيات متطرفة من هذا القبيل لم تقرّرها هذه الشخصيات الكبرى.

الكلمات الرئيسة: التكفير، السيرة، الوهابية، السلفية الدينية في الاسلام، عـــدم اباحـــة دمـــاء المسلمين.

الامام علي والخلفاء: العلاقة والتفاعل

عبد الكريم بي آزار شيرازي

الخلاصة:

الكثير من المسلمين ــ من الشيعة والسنة ــ لا يعلم أنه كانت للامام علي(ع) علاقـــة مناســبة وتفاعل مثمر مع الخلفاء الثلاثة الذين تقّدموا عليه، وبرغم أنه ما كان يرى قيداً في ممارسة شهامته وشجاعته كان يعمل كمستشار صادق لهم ويصلي خلفهم. وبرغم اعلانه واعلان الخلفاء من بعده (أولاده) أحقّيتهم في قيادة الامة الاّ أنّهم ما كانوا يمارسون حقهم على حساب وحدة المسلمين. المقال يدعو لجعل تجربة الامام علي في تعامله مع الخلفاء مصدراً للايحاء الى المســـلمين في مجـــال الوحدة في الوقت الراهن، حيث تطارد الامة سوط الطائفية، وبخاصة لاولئك الذين ينظـــرون الى الامام علي كنموذج يحاكى في كلامه وعمله.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الامام علي، الخلفاء، الوحدة الاسلامية، الطائفية، الامة، صـــحابة الرســـول، وحدة الشيعة والسنة، التعاون بين الشيعة والسنة.

الحج تجلٍّ للوحدة
شجاع علي ميرزا

الخلاصة:

الحج أكبر رمز للوحدة، فهو يعبر عن أحدث مستوى لاستقامة المسلمين ووحدتهم. الحقيقة الذاتية للحج ترتبط بفكرة الولاية وفكرة وليٍّ الله، وفكرة أن الله هو المسبِّب في العالم الدنيوي وأنه أعـــدَّ للمؤمنين الجنة في الاخرة. صاحب المقال يرى أن المسلمين سيحصلون علــى أرفـــع مســـتويات الوحدة وأشكالها من خلال النهل من هذه الافكار، وتعد الطائفية أحد أكبر الموانع التي تقـــع في طريق وحدة المسلمين، ثم يطرح بعض الارشادات العامة التي على المسلمين اتباعها كخطوط عامة لمنهج الوحدة.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الحج، التوحيد، الوحدة الاسلامية، الامة، الولاية، الامام، الوحدة المتعالية بين المذاهب الاسلامية، الوحدة بين الشيعة والسنة، الجدل الشيعي السني.

عناصر الوحدة
آية الله جوادي الآملي

الخلاصة:

تحدث اللغة والزمان والعرق اختلافاً بين البشرية، لكن لا شيء من هذه الامور تعدُّ جـــزءً مـــن جوهر البشرية. الانسانية تنبع من طبيعة الانسان التي تشترك البشرية بنحو متساو فيها. وهذا هو العنصر الذاتي الذي تتّحد فيه البشرية، فهو العنصر الباقي والفاعل دائماً، وليس نتيجـــة توافـــق واتفاق بين بني البشر. المقال يبحث موضوع ضرورة الوحدة بالنسبة الى الانسان في الظروف التي يعيشها حالياً، ويعدُّ مجموعة من عناصرها ويبيِّن مبانيها القرآنية.

الكلمات الرئيسة: وحدة المسلمين، عناصر الوحدة، طبيعة الانسان، حسن الاخـــتلاف، نزعـــة التوحُّد، وحدة الشيعة والسنة، علاقة المسلم بالكافر.

خلاصة المقالات

تفاعل بنّاء بين الاديان في العالم: اطار عمل لتأسيس نظام عالمي
آية الله جوادي الآملي

الخلاصة:

لا يمكن بلوغ السلام العالمي ولا نظام عالمي دائم ولا تفاهم وتعامل سليم بين شعوب العالم دون اعتماد اسس فكرية وروحانية، ولا يكفي اعتماد المشتركات في الثقافة واللغة والعرق والاقتصاد أو النظام السياسي وما شابه ذلك. وما يتطلبه الامر هو مبادىء غير متغيرة تنسجم مع فطرة الانسان والانسانية. يتضمن هذا المقال محاولة في تحديد بمجموعة من هكذا مبادىء ذات طابع ديني محتوم.

الكلمات الرئيسة: أديان العالم، الوحدة الدينية، الوحدة المتعالية بين الاديان، السلام العالمي، الاسلام والتعددية الدينية، الارتداد، انتهاك المقدسات، طبيعة الانسان.

التعددية الدينية والوحدة المتعالية بين الاديان
الدكتور رلاند بيتش

الخلاصة:

تعددية الاديان المختلفة ووحدتها المتعالية تهدف الى تعلُّم وتفهُّم الاديان في تنوعها ووحدتها الذاتية. المقال يرسم في البداية صورة عن المعنى الممكن للتعددية الدينية ثم يوضح تعاليم الوحدة المتعالية بين الاديان، وفي النهاية يخرج بالنتائج التي يستبطنها اختلاف الاديان.

الكلمات الرئيسة: التعددية الدينية، الوحدة المتعالية بين الاديان، الاديان العالمية، الوحدة الدينية، الحداثة، العلمانية التقليدية، الحكمة الخالدة، الحصرية الدينية، التصوّف.

التقريب