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Editorial

Religion is innate to the human condition and all men, to some extent, know what is meant when the word 'religion' is mentioned. In all languages, the same word is also used in its plural form as 'religions', and once again, the meaning is understood. What this simple fact tells us is that when we observe a number of 'religions' in human society we see them as entities that are different, unique, and countable. However, it also tells us that there is something that is common to all of them; otherwise, we would not be able to point to any one particular religion and claim that it is a 'religion'. Hence, there is a perspective in which every religion is unique, and there is also a perspective in which the religions are the "same" and share commonalities.

Religions are unique vis-à-vis their particular form, their method, and their "branches" while they are the same in their essence, their origin-destination, and their "root". Religions are the same in so far as they are from the same limitless Source of manifestation and His boundless treasures *(khazā'inahu)*, while they are unique in so far as they—as manifested form—have limits *(bi qadarin ma'lūm)* (cf. Qur'ān 15:21). Again, they are the same in that they are revealed and radiate from the Light of the heavens and the earth, but upon refraction, they differ in their intensities and colours. There is an aspect to all true religions where we are told not to differentiate, *(lā nufarriqu bayna aḥadin minhum,* cf. 3:84; 2:136; 2:285; 4:152); and then there is another aspect to them that situates the religions and their founders within a hierarchy *(faḍḍalnā ba'ḍahum 'alā ba'ḍin,* cf. 2:253). Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī writes,

> Religion is everywhere permeated by the kernel and the light, and since light has degrees and levels of intensity and dimness—and as the religious practice of individuals has degrees and levels of strength and weakness—so too does religion itself have degrees of strength and weakness; the principles of religion are like the intense light, while the branches [and precepts] of religion are like the weak light.[1]

> A study of religions reveals that their multiplicity is gradational *(tashkīkī)* and not oppositional *(tabāyunī).* That is to say, divine religions hold many of their doctrinal, ethical, legal, and jurisprudential

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[1] Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Dīn Shināsī*, p. 71.

lines of thought in common—but they are of various levels and degrees: some are perfect while others are more perfect.[2]

The fact that religions are effectively of different levels or "colours of light" does not harm their essential unity, nor does it negate the fact that religion as such is one single reality. Religion is like an existential universal or archetype that gives rise to numerous particulars or instances.

> The use of the word 'religion' in its plural form ('religions') is with respect to the perfection of religion on the plane [or arc] of descent. It is the manifestations of religion that undergo perfection; it is not the case that religion was once imperfect and then became perfected, thereby reaching its most perfect and most complete level. That is to say, the reality of religion is one—sometimes the lower levels [of this single reality] become apparent, sometimes its intermediate levels descend, and sometimes its higher levels manifest themselves...[3]

By the same token, the essential unity of all religions does not denigrate the unique nature and identity of any one particular religion. In principle, this is because when each religion was revealed by God, it partook of His will in a direct fashion. Whenever God sent a prophet with a "new" religion, He did so in consonance with the fullness of His Identity and the divine "I". God affirms this truth to the Prophet (ṣ) in the Qur'ān in the following manner:

$$ \text{وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِىٓ إِلَيْهِ} $$

$$ \text{أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا۠ فَٱعْبُدُونِ} $$

We did not send any apostle before you but We revealed to him
that 'There is no god except Me; so worship Me.' (21:25)

This divine Identity or *anā* of the Absolute and the fact that all of the divine Names, despite their conceptual variances, refer to this one and only Reality, means that the particular divine Name that a prophet is sent with to institute a "different" religion is shrouded in a cloak of absolutism. Hence, every religion is intrinsically motivated to "protect" its integrity and genius—giving rise to a divinely sanctioned exclusivism on the level of forms. Āyatullāh Jawādi Āmulī explains this in this fashion:

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[2] Ibid. p. 205.
[3] Ibid. p. 73.

> A religious person ... does not retreat from his beliefs and ideological stances on the doctrinal level, nor from his principled precepts on the practical level.[4]

He also speaks about an "exclusivism" that is common to all true religions whereby they distinguish themselves from error and disbelief in general. In this case all these religions, together, are seen as being examples of the single and perennial tradition of "Islam" and thereby as excluding or being opposed to the secular, atheistic, or humanistic perspective on reality. He writes:

> God Immaculate speaks in two ways in the noble Qur'ān: 1 – within the [religious] fold, whereby each and every one of the religious schools of thought *(madhāhib)* and divine religions *(adyān)*, in its own measure *(andāzeh)*, partakes of the truth in general; 2 – without the [religious] fold, whereby only the religion of Islam is the truth and everything outside of Islam is error and does not partake of the truth at all; hence the fundamental existence of God and His unicity *(tawḥīd)* is the truth, while heresy and polytheism *(shirk)* is error.[5]

In expounding upon this inclusive-exclusive dichotomy within religion and before setting forth some of the practical consequences of this idea, two important notes are in order. First, esoteric tendencies and an over-emphasis on inclusivism have led some thinkers to posit the equality of the exclusivisms of all the various religions. In supporting their claims, such thinkers sometimes refer to Ibn al-ʿArabī's example of the water in the cup becoming 'coloured' by the colour of the cup—the water standing here for the Absolute within, and the cup denoting the particular religion that carries the truth of the Absolute. It is inferred that what is important is the *water* contained in the cup and not the shape or colour of the specific cup in question, and that effectively, in so far as they are containers for water, all cups are the same and hence equal.

In his exceptional article—included in this issue of the journal—Dr. Reza Shah-Kazemi, an authority on Comparative Religion, uses the cup-water symbolism to first expound the positive meaning that one may take from this imagery:

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[4] Ibid. p.201.

[5] Ibid. p. 220. On the previous page Ay. Jawādī set the stage for this comment of his in these words, "God Immaculate, holds that the truth is commonly shared by all those who believe in the general principles and original features of religion, while having faith in and practicing the same, even though they are made distinct from each other by way of their [particular] methodology and [practical] law. But as for those who do not accept God, according to the Qur'ān, 'So what is there after the truth except error?' (10:32)".

> In terms of the image of the water and the cup, briefly alluded to above: the cup might be seen to symbolize the form taken by Revelation, while water stands for the Essence of Revelation. Water, in itself, is undifferentiated and unique, whilst undergoing an apparent change of form and colour by virtue of the accidental shape and colour of the receptacles into which it is poured. The receptacles, the forms of Revelation, are fashioned according to the specificities of the human communities to which the specific revealed message is addressed: *And We never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make the message clear for them* (14:4). Just as human communities differ, so must the 'language' of the 'message' sent to them: the cups cannot but differ. However, the one who knows 'water' as it is in itself, that is, the essence of that which is revealed, and not just its forms, will recognize this 'water' in receptacles other than his own.

While the essence of the revealed religions is one, Shah-Kazemi is quick to remind us of "the proper level at which we can say that all religions are one. It is not on the level of forms that they are one; rather, they are one in God as their source." Hence, one can only differentiate and judge between them according to their forms and their efficacy—since, in their content or essence, they are non-delimited and one. To repeat the same idea using the cup-water analogy, it can be said that it is the cup that is limited; it is limited not only in its shape and colour—which define the original genius of the religion in question—but, like all worldly limitations, it is also limited in time and by the intrinsic qualities of the temporal world such as change, mutation, and deterioration. Hence, the formal aspect of any religion, unlike its essential core, is open to degeneration from the outside, so to speak. Given the ever-increasing degenerative and entropic forces of the lower and limited world of manifestation, even the best of cups are prone to decay, disrepair, and leaks. Therefore, while all cups hold water and give it the appearance of a certain shape or colour, given the vicissitudes of time, some will do it better than others. It is because of Islam's temporal positioning as the last religion for humanity that it can be claimed that its "cup" is in better shape and has not degenerated as other formal religions. It is also for this reason that one can make the intellectual argument that divine wisdom would prefer a container and vehicle that is the most sound; hence, the general divine will supports the use of this container for the masses at large in our time.

There is one other reason to give preference to Islam in our age. It has to do with the fact that, even on the exoteric and "exclusive" level, Islam has a

certain universality that includes other religions. In this regard, Martin Lings writes:

> It should be mentioned that there is a lesser universality as well as the greater one which we have been considering. All mysticisms are equally universal in the greater sense in that they all lead to the One Truth. But one feature of the originality of Islam, and therefore of Sufism, is what might be called a secondary universality, which is to be explained above all by the fact that as the last Revelation of this cycle of time it is necessarily something of a summing up. The Islamic *credo* is expressed by the Qur'an as belief *in God and His angels and His books and His Messengers.* (2:285) The following passage is also significant in this context. Nothing comparable to it could be found in either Judaism or Christianity, for example: *For each We have appointed a law and a path; and if God had wished He would have made you one people. But He hath made you as ye are that He may put you to the text in what He had given you. So vie with one another in good works. Unto God ye will all be brought back and He will then tell you about those things wherein ye differed.* (5:48) Moreover—and this is why one speaks of a 'cycle' of time—there is a certain coincidence between the last and the first. With Islam 'the wheel has come full circle', or almost; and that is why it claims to be a return to the primordial religion, which gives it yet another aspect of universality. One of the characteristics of the Qur'an as the last Revelation is that at times it becomes as it were transparent in order that the first Revelation may shine through its verses...[6]

Another way of saying that Islam is more universal than the other existing world religions is to say that it is closer to the essence of religion and the perennial tradition of Truth *(dīn al-ḥaqq)* that the Qur'ān speaks about. This explains the relatively-absolute superiority of the last religion, or more accurately, the fact that this last religion is the singularly greatest particular[7] of the pervasive or existential universal known as the *dīn al-ḥaqq*. By virtue of its essential identity with this universal, primordial, or ultimate Tradition, "Muḥammadan Islam" becomes the ultimate and final point of reference and actually protects and confers on the other preceding religions a relative "right" to exist. (cf. Qur'ān 5:48).

The second important point regarding the inclusive-exclusive dichotomy, or the question as to whether the religions are unique or the same, is

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[6] What is Sufism?, p. 23.
[7] The 'particular' here refers to the individual or the referent—the *miṣdāq*—of the existential universal—the *kullī sa'ī*.

to know that the Islamic perspective would want to emphasize that Islam includes, without contradiction, both of these perspectives at the same time; and that it is wrong and even impossible to take any one without the other in any *real way*. Or to put it differently, the truth is neither this nor that but "an affair between the two affairs." The paramount importance of this truth calls for some further explanation.

In logic, the Principle of Contradiction states that contradictory statements cannot both at the same time be true. Hence, it is impossible to predicate of the same thing, at the same time, and in the same sense, the absence and the presence of the same quality. While this principle is definitely true, it does not alter the fact that in man's quest for the truth, his "researches of the mind" have led him to antithetical conclusions on a single issue. In such questions as the permanence or impermanence of the human soul, the predestination or freedom of the human will, the created or uncreated nature of Holy Writ, and others, human inquiry that sought rational and conceptual resolutions has been forced to accept one of the "antithetical" propositions at the expense of denying the other.

Modern digressions and debates on the validity of Dialetheism aside, the resolution to this paradox is found in the metaphysical and mystical doctrines of religion.[8] The mystical approach, outwardly and simply, is to repeat the paradox and to deny, implicitly, the absolute truth to either side. In so doing, it encourages man to go beyond the dualisms of discursive rational thought and to arrive at a unitive understanding—by way of a direct knowledge or "tasting"—of the fundamental matters of being. Moreover, it attempts to overcome the dichotomy implicit in the knower-known paradigm and to achieve a vision of the unity that comprehends and composes all reality. Hence, the supra-rational mystical resolution of this paradox is best accomplished by the perfect man who transcends the realm of multiplicity until he is united with his Maker in such a fashion that he becomes God's eye, face, and hand on earth, and in short, His vicegerent *(khalīfah)* and highest manifestation.

The metaphysical approach to the resolution begins by affirming that the Absolute Truth is God Himself—Who, in essence, is unknowable.[9] It

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[8] In Islamic mystical writings, mention is often made of the "doctrine" of *huwa-lā huwa*, popularized and given formal exposition by Ibn ʿArabī. Similar ideas are expressed by the Jainist principle of *Anekantavada.* Traditional opposition to this idea on the part of religious authorities is mostly due to its misuse at the hands of pseudo-mystics and antinomian charlatans in religious attire—who were the relativist pluralists of their time.

[9] "Absolute truth is the lot of no one; that is to say, there is no person or group that has understood all of the truths of the world. This is because an individual or a group is limited and finite, and no limited or finite being can comprehend the essence/crux *(kunh)* of the

goes on to postulate that this profound truth, where God is the ultimate Mystery, must also "spill over" to the level of worldly truths and must somehow be reflected on the factual plane—especially when the factual event concerns the Word of God, such as Jesus or the Qur'ān. In the case of the latter Word of God, the "contradictory" statements made by traditional authorities speak to this air of mystery: e.g., it was revealed in one night and it was revealed gradually; it is created and it is uncreated. A similar "ambiguity" is found when it comes to the theomorphic nature of man—created from the Spirit of God—and his enactment of will in the world of manifestation. This is none other than the famous freewill-predestination issue, which is beyond the rational pale of human inquiry and whose resolution is alluded to by the ambiguous and somewhat mysterious statement that it is neither one nor the other; rather, it is "an affair between the two affairs." What this implies is that the limits of human reason, as well as the necessity of belief in the unseen, demand that we allow for certain factual details to remain beyond our discursive reach, and, by first suspending logical judgement, try to achieve an inner supra-rational understanding of any factual paradox or irresolvable dichotomy. Imam Khumaynī spoke of this when he said:

> The creed of the middle position *(amr bayn al-amrayn)* is one which is affirmed by the way of the people of gnosis as well as by transcendental philosophy … That which is the soundest of views and most secure from controversy and more in consonance with the religion of *tawḥīd* is the creed of the illustrious gnostics and the people of the heart. However, this creed, on every topic pertaining to the Divine teachings, stands in the category of "simple and impossible" *(sahl wa mumtaniʿ)* whose understanding is not possible through discursive proofs and arguments and is unattainable without complete piety of the heart as well as Divine succour.[10]

Piety of the heart gives us the humility to know that we do not know—that our knowledge is limited.[11] This fundamental limitation means that

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Unlimited. Hence, no one, by himself understands all the realities of the world—and consequently does not perceive Allah as-He-is". *Dīn Shināsī*, p. 218.

[10] Sayyid Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *Forty ḥadīth*, ḥadīth 39.

[11] The limitation of knowledge is very different from the relativity of knowledge or the relativity of truth that pervades all types of scepticism. The difference between the relativity of knowledge and the relativity of truth lies in the fact that the former accepts, in principle, the actual existence of a concrete reality—which is the object of knowledge—as well as the truth or falsity of propositions in reference to actuality, but then posits an inescapable uncertainty

there will always be differences and that when we attempt to make a judgement, we will always tend to fall on one side or the other of an irresolvable dichotomy. God says in His book:

قُلِ ٱللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ عَٰلِمَ ٱلْغَيْبِ وَٱلشَّهَٰدَةِ أَنتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِى مَا كَانُوا۟ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ

Say, 'O God! Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, *You will judge* between Your servants concerning that about which they used to differ.' (39:46)

The tone and gist of this verse and other similar verses is that differences are a part of this earthly reality and that some of them will only be fully resolved in the afterlife where the divine perspective that comprehends all perspectives and the total truth that comprehends all partial truths will become manifest.

This can be considered a sort of relativism—not in its meaning of a relativity of truth or knowledge but rather of a "limitation of truth"—and it does help in "removing" apparent contradictions among religions—not by resolving such contradictions but by deferring the resolution to a "later" time or a higher plane. Hence, by trying to distance ourselves from logically irresolvable dichotomies and keeping them in a shroud of mystery we are not claiming that they are not understandable at all on earth, but rather, that they seem to sometimes involve contradictions that must be accepted and must be put on the top shelf for a full resolution "later".

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or scepticism with regards to it or them. In the relativity of truth, however, actuality and reality—or the truth and falsity of propositions—are two mental constructs or two mentally posited notions which have their locus in the minds and understandings of men and which, in the case where there is a change of mind, are themselves changed. So while the existence of an absolute truth is agreed to, it is claimed that men do not have access to it in any authentic or integral fashion and, hence, it is never really known. In the case of religious pluralism, this relativity of knowledge is used by John Hick to argue for the relativity of all religions. It is claimed by Hick that the Real cannot be known in itself and when any religion claims that the Real has revealed itself, then such claims are false. The third type of "relativity", the 'limitation of knowledge', denies the first two forms, for it is asserted in the first place that there is an absolute and objectively existing reality, and in the second place, that man has access to this reality and he can partake of it with certainty. The "relativity" comes in admitting that the reality is absolute, and as such, it is infinite and that man can only take and comprehend a finite amount of it. Hence, the limited awareness of man with respect to the absolute Truth is true and certain within the confines and delimitations of his knowledge.

Having stated the metaphysical approaches and mystical tendencies towards the problem of the irresolvable dichotomies such as the inclusivist-exclusivist debate in religion, it would help to shed further light upon the resolution that has been termed as the "middle position". It is first important to note that the middle position is not the middle of two things so as to be a third point between two points. Neither is it the third of three positions; on the contrary, it is the third of two things because it is not on their plane—it transcends and comprehends them. The comprehensive distinction of this level with respect to levels lower than it implies the higher level's presence in the lower levels. This cannot be taken to mean, however, that realities of the higher level are brought down to the level of the lower so as to be counted as one of the existents of that lower level. It is for this same reason that God, Who encompasses and is infinitely near all things, can never be said to be on a par with them,[12] nor can He ever be enumerated along with them. The Qur'ān echoes this truth by, on the one hand, emphasizing God's omnipresence and immanence, while on the other, refuting the idea that God is rank and file with other things and that He subsists alongside the things that have effused from Himself. (cf. Qur'ān 57:4, 5:73, 58:7).

If God is the proverbial "fifth element" that transcends the manifested order by quality and not quantity, then His knowledge, which is equivalent to His being, must be the same. His absolute and all-embracing knowledge comprehends all partial knowledges and cognitive constructs. Any human knowledge that tends towards the divine must also have this characteristic of transcending apparently disparate and opposing perspectives in a grander perspective that comprehends the lower ones. To those humans who are situated on any of the lower perspectives, the higher one can seem nothing but perplexing.[13] Hence, it is praiseworthy to ask God for this type of perplexity that leads to greater and higher knowledge.[14] This supra-perspective acknowledges and comprehends the lower while not being tied and forced to accept any of its antithetical options. Hence, the "affair be-

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[12] In the first khuṭbah of the Nahj al-Balāgha, Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) speaks of the enigmatic reality of the Real in this way: "He is with all things without being associated with them, [He] is other than all things without being apart from them" (maʿa kulli shay'in lā bimuqāranatin wa ghayru kulli shay'in lā bimuzāyalatin).

[13] Imam Bāqir (ʿa) said: 'Allah' is that Worshiped entity by whom creatures are awestruck (aliha) in perceiving His 'whatness' and in comprehending His 'howness'—the Arabs say, aliha al-rajul (i.e. the man was awestruck) when he is perplexed about something and is not able to comprehend it in knowledge. (Biḥār al-anwār, vol. 3, p. 222)

[14] There is a famous saying that has been attributed to the Prophet (ṣ) in which he is reported to have said, "O Lord increase me in perplexity in Thee."

tween the two affairs," is the right answer to such irresolvable dichotomies. It is far from the disabling relativism that comes with the simple ignorance and confusion of scepticism; on the contrary, it is to have a sense of sacred ambiguity—the mystery in which and through which we seek proximity to God.

Perhaps the best word in English to describe this transcendent solution is "balance" rather than "middle". Balance is to the will what wisdom is to the intellect. Hence, wisdom—and the beauty that accompanies it—are the things that we require to overcome any undue stagnation in a lower knowledge and perspective. In the case of the inclusive-exclusive dichotomy, it is wisdom which tells us where to inclusively enter into dialogue with people of other faiths, and also where to exclusively try to propagate our faith as the truth that is better for the people of other faiths to accept.

Shah-Kazemi writes in his article:

> In the verse... 16:125, 'wisdom' (*ḥikma*) is given as the basis upon which dialogue should be conducted. The whole of the Qur'ān, read in depth and not just on the surface, gives us a divine source of wisdom; imbibing from this source empowers and calibrates our efforts to engage in meaningful dialogue and to establish authentic modes of tolerance; it thus provides us, in the words of Tim Winter, with a 'transcendently-ordained tolerance.'[15] Wisdom is a quality and not an order: it cannot be given as a blue-print, a set of rules and regulations; it calls for human effort, a readiness to learn, it needs to be cultivated, and it emerges as the fruit of reflection and action. As the words of verse 16:125 tell us, we need wisdom and beautiful exhortation, and we also need to know how to engage in dialogue on the basis of that which is *aḥsan* 'finest' 'most excellent', or 'most beautiful' in our own faith, if we are to authentically invite people to the path of the Lord....This creative juxtaposition between *daʿwa* and dialogue indicates implicitly that, rather than being seen as two contrasting or even antithetical modes of engaging with the Other, these two elements can in fact be synthesized by wisdom...

A lack of wisdom causes us to miss the balance and to fall and tend towards one side more than the other. This, in turn, spurns those of the opposite perspective to further fortify their particular position and become formidable adversaries. This phenomena is not limited to religious denominations and can be found across the board of human civilization and

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[15] Tim Winter, 'Islam and the Threat of Europe' in *World Faiths Encounter*, no.29, 2001, p.11.

experience[16]—the events and personalities of the recent elections in Iran being no exception.[17] Another example is the exoteric-esoteric dichotomy. When the higher wisdom and greater balance is lost sight of in this particular polarization, the two sides fall prey to an absolutisation of their partial perspectives. The resulting myopia makes them blind to the "third of the two" positions. It is not surprising that we should be witness to many groups in the modern world—modernity being, by definition, an imbalance—who have gravitated to one extreme or another. In this regard mention might be made of: pseudo-Sufis, pluralist-relativists, apolitical Islamologists, and the like on one side, and neo-Akhbaris, pietistic apologists, religious reformers, political activists, ... on the other.

The schools of thought or sects within a religion, the *madhāhib*, are like religions within religions. Hence, the same principles of inclusion-exclusion apply to them as they did to religions, but to a lesser degree and in a slightly different way. There is the need to be inclusive and stress unity, while at the same time there is the necessary tendency towards exclusiveness that guarantees the identity and integrity of the *madhhab* in question. It is wisdom that defines the limits and contours of where and how these two "opposing" tendencies should be applied. It is with this higher perspective of wisdom that some of the leading *'ulamā'* of our time like Imam Khumaynī and others provided us with standards by which to successfully accomplish this subtle balancing act. As Mansoor Limba reminds us in his article in this issue, among the bold steps taken by Imam Khumaynī was "the declaration of Rabī' al-Awwal 12-17 as 'International Islamic Unity Week' and the opening of 'the Forum for the Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought' (*Dar al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmī*) [as well as] ... the consecration of the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramaḍān as 'International Quds Day'." Other such scholars and leaders include Imam Mūsā Ṣadr and 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn. In his article about Sharaf al-Dīn in this issue of the journal, Muḥammad Isḥāq Dhākirī—who himself holds the

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[16] The pendulum of public opinion, political leanings, and cultural trends on the social level, as well as the pendulum of mood-swings, fluctuating convictions, and erratic moral behaviour on the level of the individual also illustrate the inability of the vast majority of us to overcome the false dichotomy in question and to move towards the supra-formal "third" perspective that comprehends the lower two.

[17] The two tendencies in question here are represented by the following truths: 1) Absolute rule, governance, and dominion is with God, as He is omnipotent and the destiny of the creatures is ultimately in His hands—human vagaries amounting to nothing in comparison to His will; 2) Man is the vicegerent of God on earth, having been given the divinely ordained freedom to choose truth over falsehood, goodness over evil, and beauty over ugliness—such a sacred choice being paramount to His wish.

"sanctioned" exclusivist tendencies spoken of earlier and such as aim at protecting the integrity of a particular *madhhab*—quotes the ʿAllāmah as saying:

> The time has now come when we must together find out how to save the Muslims from division. In my opinion, this will not be achieved by the Shias renouncing their school of thought and following the path of the majority; nor will it be achieved by the Ahl al-Sunnah renouncing their school of thought.[18]

Hence, it is important for the *madhāhib* to maintain their integrity by holding on to what has been authoritatively passed on to them through their respective traditions, but at the same time, the demands of unity and inclusion into the single Ummah of Islam require that they do not involve themselves in sectarian strife and subjective animosity. Wisdom demands that true intellectuality and objectivity come into play—an objectivity that allows for transcendence towards the "third of the two" and an intellectuality that knows that it does not know all. For it is only an intellect that is existentially present to the sacred perplexity *(taḥayyur)* at play in the realm of manifestation that can remain eternally wondrous and perpetually in awe of its Creator. Ulimately, it is only a person possessing such an intellect that can be a real Muslim, a true slave of God, and a bona fide *ʿabd Allāh.*

Shawwāl 1430/ October 2009

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[18] This echoes the famous statement of Imam Khumaynī (*r*) in which he said that, "those who wish to make Shias into Sunnis, or Sunnis into Shias, are neither." It is also the standing policy of the present leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Khamenei who said, "I do not mean to say that Shias should convert to Sunni Islam or Sunnis should convert to Shia Islam. I do not intend to say that all religions should be amalgamated into one religion. Rather, what I intend to say is that Shias and Sunnis should not make intellectual efforts **only** to lend credence to their own beliefs." (http://english.khamenei.ir//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=868&Itemid=12)

Civilizational Dialogue and Mysticism:
The Holy Qur'ān and the Metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī[*]

Reza Shah-Kazemi

Abstract:

This incisive article begins by noting the universality that subsists in the esoteric core of all religions, but which is especially emphasised even in the exoteric aspects of Islam—the ultimate religion and final "summing up". The paper makes the claim that the extent to which the religions of the Other are given recognition in the Qur'ān renders this scripture unique among the great revelations of the world. It continues by showing that this "inclusiveness" of Islam does not preclude exclusive claims that engender a religious identity for Muslims and that allow for normativity as well as *da'wa*. This Islamic juxtaposition between *da'wa* and dialogue indicates implicitly that, rather than being seen as two contrasting or even antithetical modes of engaging with the Other, these two elements can in fact be synthesized by wisdom. A dialogue based on wisdom would also be a form of dialogue which contrasts quite sharply with a relativistic pluralism which, by reducing all religious beliefs to a presumptuous lowest common denominator, ends up by undermining the belief in the normativity of religion. The kind of *da'wa*-as-dialogue that is proposed in this article charts a middle path, avoiding two extremes: a fundamentalist type of *da'wa* which alienates the Other on account of its blatant exclusivity, and a pluralistic mode of dialogue which corrodes the Self on account of its thinly veiled assault on normativity.

Keywords: Civilizational dialogue, Islamic mysticism, Qur'ānic universality, Ibn al-ʿArabī, interfaith dialogue, Transcendent Unity of Religions, religious pluralism.

'CIVILIZED DIALOGUE' AND THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

The notion of 'civilizational dialogue' has been proposed in recent years as an antidote to the poison disseminated by the sensational prophecy of

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'the clash of civilizations' made by Samuel Huntington. What is meant by a dialogue between civilizations is of course simply 'civilized dialogue', that is, a mode of dialogue between individuals of different cultures and religions which seeks to accept the Other within a civilized framework; a mode of dialogue which respects diversity and difference, and upholds the rights of all individuals and groups to express their beliefs and to practise their faith without hindrance. In the Holy Qur'ān one finds a clear enunciation of the manner in which civilized dialogue should take place in a context of religious diversity; it does so in several verses, some of the most important of which we shall cite here as the essential background against which one should view the metaphysical perspectives on the Other opened up by Ibn al-ʿArabī, verses to which we will return in the course of presenting these perspectives:

لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ ٱللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِى مَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمْ ۖ فَٱسْتَبِقُواْ ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ ۚ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

For each of you We have established a Law and a Path. Had God willed, He could have made you one community. But that He might try you by that which He hath given you [He hath made you as you are]. So vie with one another in good works. Unto God ye will all return, and He will inform you of that wherein ye differed. (5:48)

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ

O mankind, truly We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. (49:13)

وَمِنْ ءَايَتِهِۦ خَلْقُ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱخْتِلَٰفُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ
وَأَلْوَٰنِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّلْعَٰلِمِينَ

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and
the differences of your languages and colours. Indeed, herein are
signs for those who know. (30:22)

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَٱلَّذِينَ هَادُوا۟ وَٱلنَّصَٰرَىٰ وَٱلصَّٰبِـِٔينَ مَنْ
ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Truly those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians, and the
Sabeans—whoever believeth in God and the Last Day and per-
formeth virtuous deeds—surely their reward is with their Lord,
and no fear shall come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (2:62)

قُولُوٓا۟ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسْمَٰعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِىَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَآ أُوتِىَ
ٱلنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ

Say: We believe in God, and that which was revealed unto Abra-
ham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that
which was given unto Moses and Jesus and the prophets from
their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and
unto Him we have submitted. (2:136)

وَلَا تُجَـٰدِلُوٓا۟ أَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَـٰبِ إِلَّا بِٱلَّتِى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ

ظَلَمُوا۟ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَقُولُوٓا۟ ءَامَنَّا بِٱلَّذِىٓ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ

وَإِلَـٰهُنَا وَإِلَـٰهُكُمْ وَٰحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ

And do not hold discourse with the People of the Book except in
that which is finest, save with those who do wrong. And say: We
believe in that which hath been revealed to us and revealed to you.
Our God and your God is one, and unto Him we surrender.
(29:46)

ٱدْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْحِكْمَةِ وَٱلْمَوْعِظَةِ ٱلْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَـٰدِلْهُم بِٱلَّتِى

هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation,
and hold discourse with them [the People of the Book] in the fin-
est manner. (16:125)

It is on the basis of such verses as these that Martin Lings asserted that,
whereas the universality proper to all true religions can be found within
each religion's mystical dimension, or esoteric essence, one of the distinc-
tive features of Islam is the fact that universality is indelibly inscribed
within its founding revelation—as well as within its esoteric essence. 'All
mysticisms are equally universal … in that they all lead to the One Truth.
But one feature of the originality of Islam, and therefore of Sufism, is what
might be called a secondary universality, which is to be explained above all
by the fact that as the last Revelation of this cycle of time it is necessarily
something of a summing up.'[1]

The extent to which the religions of the Other are given recognition,
and indeed reverence, in the Qur'ān does indeed render this scripture
unique among the great revelations of the world. It is thus a rich source for
reflection upon the most appropriate way to address the various issues per-
taining to dialogue with the religious Other. The Qur'ānic message on reli-

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[1] M. Lings, *What is Sufism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp.22-23. For further dis-
cussion of this theme, see our *The Other in the Light of the One—The Universality of the Qur'an
and Interfaith Dialogue* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2006).

gious diversity is of particular relevance at a time when various paradigms of 'pluralism' are being formulated and presented as a counter-weight to the 'clash of civilizations' scenario. In the last of the verses cited above, 16:125, 'wisdom' (*ḥikma*) is given as the basis upon which dialogue should be conducted. The whole of the Qurʾān, read in depth and not just on the surface, gives us a divine source of wisdom; imbibing from this source empowers and calibrates our efforts to engage in meaningful dialogue and to establish authentic modes of tolerance; it thus provides us, in the words of Tim Winter, with a 'transcendently-ordained tolerance.'[2] Wisdom is a quality and not an order: it cannot be given as a blue-print, a set of rules and regulations; it calls for human effort, a readiness to learn, it needs to be cultivated, and it emerges as the fruit of reflection and action. As the words of verse 16:125 tell us, we need wisdom and beautiful exhortation, and we also need to know how to engage in dialogue on the basis of that which is *aḥsan* 'finest' 'most excellent', or 'most beautiful' in our own faith, if we are to authentically invite people to the path of the Lord. In other words, we are being encouraged to use wisdom, rather than any pre-determined set of instructions, in order to discern the most appropriate manner of inviting people to the 'way of thy Lord', thus, how best to engage in *da'wa*. But we also need wisdom in order to discern that which is 'most excellent' in the faith of our interlocutors in dialogue. This creative juxtaposition between *da'wa* and dialogue indicates implicitly that, rather than being seen as two contrasting or even antithetical modes of engaging with the Other, these two elements can in fact be synthesized by wisdom: if one's dialogue with the Other flows from the wellsprings of the wisdom of one's tradition, and if one makes an effort to understand the wisdom—that which is 'most excellent'—in the beliefs of the Other, then this kind of dialogue will constitute, in and of itself, a 'most beautiful' form of *da'wa*. For one will be making an effort to allow the wisdom of one's tradition to speak for itself; to 'bear witness' to one's faith will here imply bearing witness to the wisdom conveyed by one's faith-tradition, that very wisdom which, due to its universality and lack of prejudice, allows or compels us to recognize, affirm and engage with the wisdom contained within and expressed by other faith-traditions. For, as the Prophet said, 'Wisdom is the lost camel (*ḍālla*) of the believer: he has a right to it wherever he may find it'.[3]

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[2] Tim Winter, 'Islam and the Threat of Europe' in *World Faiths Encounter*, no.29, 2001, p.11.
[3] This saying complements other well-known sayings of the Prophet concerning the need to search for knowledge from the cradle to the grave, even if the knowledge be in China, etc. See al-Ghazzālī's collection of such sayings, together with Qurʾānic verses and sayings of the sages, in his *Kitāb al-ʿilm,* the first book of his monumental *Iḥyā ʿulūm al-dīn* ('Enlivening of

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If wisdom is the lost property of the believer, this means that wherever wisdom is to be found, in whatever form, in whatever religion, philosophy, spirituality or literature—that wisdom is one's own. It is thus an inestimable tool in the forging of an authentic civilization. One has to be prepared to recognize wisdom, as surely as one would recognize one's own camel, after searching for it. This translates into the attitude: whatever is wise is, by that very fact, part of my faith as a 'believer': my belief in God as the source of all wisdom allows or compels me to recognize as 'mine' whatever wisdom there is in the entirety of time and space, in all religions and cultures. This does not mean that one appropriates to one's own self—whether individual or social or religious—the wisdom of the Other; rather, it means that one recognizes the wisdom of the Other as being an expression of the wisdom of God, the one and only source of wisdom, however it be expressed. How, then, is it 'mine'? Insofar as one's identity is defined by one's relationship with God as the source of all truth, beauty and wisdom, one's 'self' will be, in that very measure, inextricably bound up with the wisdom one perceives, however alien be the context or culture in which it is expressed. On the specifically Islamic level, such an approach produces this attitude: that which is wise is—by its essence if not its form—'Islamic'. It 'belongs' to us, and we identify with it. This contrasts with the prejudice: only that which is Islamic—in its form—is wise.

One should note that the universal vision of wisdom was at its strongest when Islamic civilization was at its most authentic and confident—witness the extraordinary assimilation and transformation of the various ancient forms of wisdom in the early 'Abbāsid period; this was an exemplification of the calibrated appropriation and creative application of wisdom—from the intellectual legacy of the Greeks, and the Persians, Indians and Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Assyrians, etc.—on a grand, civilizational scale, transforming and enriching Muslim philosophy, science, and culture.[4] By contrast, it is the exclusivist, prejudiced approach to wisdom that prevails today, when Islamic 'civilization' can hardly be said to exist anywhere. It would also appear to be the case that when Islamic civilization existed, *da'wa* was not invested with the emotional intensity which it has acquired in our times. Modernism—with its highly developed tools of propaganda, its tendencies of ideologization, bureaucratization, and uniformalization—has influenced Muslim thought and behaviour and made Muslim

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the sciences of religion') translated by N.A. Faris as *The Book of Knowledge* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1966).

[4] See the masterful work by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987, 'Introduction', pp.21-40.

da'wa much more like Christian missionary movements; in traditional Islam, the *da'wa* that existed was far more low-key, personal and took the form of preaching through personal example—it is not accidental, that, as Thomas Arnold's masterly study reveals, the main 'missionaries' of traditional Islam were mystics and merchants.[5] The emotional intensity with which *da'wa* is invested in our times would appear to be, on the one hand, a function of the very weakness of Islamic culture, a defensive reflex used to disguise one's 'civilizational' deficiencies; and on the other, it is a kind of inverted image of the missionary Christian movements to which the Muslim world has been subjected in the past few centuries, a mimetic response to one's erstwhile colonizers.

One cannot deny, however, that *da'wa* has always played a role in Muslim culture, and that it has a role to play today. To ignore *da'wa*, within a Muslim context, is to render questionable one's credentials as a 'valid interlocutor' on behalf of Islam. But one ought to be aware of the kind of *da'wa* that is appropriate in our times, and to seek to learn from the most subtle and refined spirituality of the Islamic tradition in order to make wisdom the basis of one's *da'wa*. The kind of *da'wa* being proposed here is one which seeks to be true to the wisdom which flows from the Qur'anic message of religious diversity, a message read in depth, according to Sufi hermeneutics, and in particular the metaphysics of Ibn al-'Arabī.[6] This would be a form of *da'wa* which contrasts sharply with the kind of triumphalist propaganda with which we are all too familiar in our times: a disdainful and arrogant call, issuing from harshly exclusivist attitudes which manifest the claim that 'my' religion is alone right and all others are wrong. A dialogue based on wisdom would also be a form of dialogue which contrasts quite sharply with a relativistic pluralism which, by reducing all religious beliefs to a presumptuous lowest common denominator, ends up by undermining one's belief in the normativity of one's religion—a belief which is so central to the upholding of one's faith with integrity. The kind of *da'wa*-as-dialogue being proposed here charts a middle path, avoiding two extremes which are in fact closer to each other than is immediately obvious: a fundamentalist type of *da'wa* which alienates the Other on account of its blatant exclusivity, and a pluralistic mode of dialogue which corrodes the

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[5] See Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (London: Luzac, 1935).
[6] See for a more extended discussion of Ibn al-'Arabī's principles of exegesis, in the context of Sufi and postmodern hermeneutics, *The Other in the Light of the One*, chapter 1, 'The Hermenutics of Suspicion or of Sufism?', pp.1-73. See also our forthcoming paper, 'Beyond Polemics and Pluralism: The Universal Message of the Qur'ān', delivered at the conference: 'Al-Azhar and the West—Bridges of Dialogue', Cairo, 5 January, 2009.

Self on account of its thinly veiled assault on normativity. An effective, realistic, and practical mode of dialogue must do justice both to the Self which one ostensibly represents, and to the Other with whom one is in dialogue; there has to be room for the expression of one's belief in the normativity of one's tradition—the belief that one's religion is the best religion, failing which, one would not adhere to it. The right of the Other to bear witness to his faith should, likewise, be respected.

The question might then be asked: how can these competing truth-claims be reconciled with the needs of dialogue—will the result not simply be two mutually exclusive monologues engaging in an unseemly type of competitive religion rather than respecting each other in an enriching dialogue of comparative religion? There is an existential argument one can make, whatever be the faith adhered to, on behalf of this 'exclusivist' claim, and this argument is based on the fact that religion is not simply a conceptual schema, it is a transformative power. In the 'clash' between rival religions, one is not only confronted by competing, mutually exclusive truth-claims; one is also presented with alternative paths to realization of a Reality which radically transcends all conceptually posited truths. One's perception of the 'truths' which fashion and delineate one's path to Reality will be deepened, and the truth-claims will be correspondingly corroborated, in proportion to one's progress along that path: therefore the claim that one's religion is 'more true' than other religions is a claim about the transformative power which one has directly experienced, and it is this which bestows an existential certainty—rather than any kind of logical infallibility—about one's claim on behalf of the spiritual power of one's religion, a degree of certainty which is absent from a purely conceptual truth-claim one might make on behalf of the dogmas of one's religion. Religion is more about realization than conceptualization; or rather, it is about an initial set of concepts which call out for spiritual action,[7] and which find their consummation in spiritual realization.[8]

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[7] 'Knowledge calls out for action', says Imam 'Alī; 'if it is answered [it is of avail], otherwise it departs.' Cited in the compilation by 'Abd al-Wāḥid Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim* (given together with the Persian translation, under the title, *Guftār-i Amīr al-mu'minīn 'Alī*, by Sayyid Ḥusayn Shaykhul-Islāmī) (Qom: Intishārāt-i Anṣāriyān, 2000), vol.2, p.993, no.21.

[8] In the words of Frithjof Schuon: 'The true and complete understanding of an idea goes far beyond the first apprehension of the idea by the intelligence, although more often than not this apprehension is taken for understanding itself. While it is true that the immediate evidence conveyed to us by any particular idea is, on its own level, a real understanding, there can be no question of its embracing the whole extent of the idea since it is primarily the sign of an aptitude to understand that idea in its completeness. Any truth can in fact be under-

The Buddhist notion of doctrine—all doctrine—as an *upaya*, a 'saving strategy' is an example of a wise doctrine which we might use here to help explain this point. This notion means, essentially, that all doctrines are veils which transmit some aspects of the truth while obscuring others: the communicable aspect of the truth in question is transmitted, but at the price of obscuring its incommunicable dimension, if it be taken too seriously, that is: if the communicable aspect of the truth be taken as the whole truth. The key spiritual function of doctrine is to point to a reality beyond itself, and is likened, within Buddhism, to a finger pointing at the moon: one is urged to look at the moon indicated by the finger, and not focus exclusively on the finger.[9] This reduction of the spiritual end to the conceptual means is what fanatical dogmatism does; by contrast, a more supple approach to dogma results in seeing it as a means to an end: the dogma as theory leads to spiritual praxis, and moral transformation, thanks to which the 'eye of the heart' is opened up, enabling it to 'see' that Reality to which the dogma bears witness, but which it cannot encompass or exhaust.

In regard to the function of language in the search for truth, Rumi makes this point, which resonates with the idea of an *upaya*, and which highlights the need for spiritual action as an accompaniment to doctrinal learning:

> 'Someone asked: Then what is the use of expressions and words?
> The Master [i.e. Rūmī] answered: The use of words is that they set you searching and excite you, not that the object of the quest should be attained through words. If that were the case, there would be no need for so much striving and self-naughting. Words are as when you see afar off something moving; you run in the wake of it in order to see it, it is not the case that you see it through its movement. Human speech too is inwardly the same; it excites you to seek the meaning, even though you do not see it in reality.'

Rumi then reinforces the point, stressing the incommensurability between the kind of learning that comes through reading, on the one hand, and the understanding that arises from the spiritual discipline of self-transcendence, on the other:

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stood at different levels and according to different "conceptual dimensions", that is to say according to an indefinite number of modalities which correspond to all the possible aspects, likewise indefinite in number, of the truth in question. This way of regarding ideas accordingly leads to the question of spiritual realization, the doctrinal expressions of which clearly illustrate the "dimensional indefinity" of theoretical conceptions.' *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Tr. Peter Townsend) (London: Faber and Faber, 1953) p.17.
[9] Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grover Press, 1961) p. 19.

'Someone was saying: I have studied so many sciences and mastered so many ideas, yet it is still not known to me what that essence in man is that will remain forever, and I have not discovered it.
The Master answered: If that had been knowable by means of words only, you would not have needed to pass away from self and to suffer such pains. It is necessary to endure so much for yourself *not* to remain, so that you may know that thing which *will* remain.'[10]

Similarly, another great Persian poet ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d.1492), who masterfully synthesised the esoteric teachings of the school of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in his masterpiece, *Lawā'iḥ*, expresses succinctly the transcendence of this higher wisdom, in terms of which thought—all thought, including the mentally posited conceptions of the dogmas of religion—is not just surpassed, it is even rendered 'evil':

'O heart, how long searching for perfection in school?
How long perfecting the rules of philosophy and geometry?
Any thought other than God's remembrance is evil suggestion.'[11]

It is this perspective which enables one to reconcile competing truth claims within a unique Reality which transcends all such claims, that Reality to which the 'truths' bear witness, to which they lead, and from which they receive all their value. The following words of the Qur'ān bear witness to the unique Reality from which all religions derive: *Our God and your God is One* (29:46); as for leading back to the same Reality: *For each of you We have established a Law and a Path* (5:48).

If the paths revealed by God are different and divergent, then they cannot but be accompanied by divergent truth-claims, that is, claims pertaining to ways of conceiving and realizing the truth; but insofar as this truth is but the conceptual expression of an ultimate Reality, and insofar as this Reality is posited as the alpha and omega of all things, the divergent conceptual claims to truth converge on a unique Reality—that of God, the ultimate truth, the ultimate Reality—both truth and reality being in fact synthesised in the Arabic name of God, *al-Ḥaqq*, 'The Real/The True'. If the source and the summit of the divergent paths is a single, unique Reality, it is this oneness of the Real which must take ontological precedence over the competing 'epistemological' claims to truth. In other words, Being precedes thought; thought is consummated in Being.[12] The mutually exclusive truth

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[10] *The Discourses of Rūmī* (Fīhi mā fīhi) (tr. A.J. Arberry), (London: John Murray, 1961), p.202.
[11] This is from William Chittick's translation of the *Lawā'iḥ*, in *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light*, Sachiko Murata (Albany: SUNY, 2000), p.138.
[12] This is the very opposite of the Cartesian axiom: 'I think, therefore I am'. Here, thought trumps being, individual conceptualisation precedes universal reality. Subjectivism, indi-

claims, in their purely conceptual form, might be seen as so many unavoidable shadows cast by the divinely-willed diversity of religious paths; these diverse paths, in turn, can be envisaged as so many 'lights' emanating from the one and only Light, this unique Light being refracted into different colours by the prism of relativity, and these differently coloured lights then crystallising in the forms of the various religions, according to this symbolism.[13]

Red, blue and green lights remain lights even while of necessity excluding each other: no light can be identified with another, except insofar as each is identified with light as such, and not as such and such a light. Here, the Essence of the Real, or the Absolute, is represented by light as such, and the religions can be seen as colours adding to that light something of their own relativity, even while being the vehicles of that light. As will be seen below, this means of reconciling outwardly divergent religious forms within a unitive spiritual essence evokes Ibn al-'Arabī's image of the cup being coloured by the drink it contains. The water—standing here for the Absolute—within the cup—the particular religion—becomes 'coloured' by the colour of the cup; but this is so only extrinsically, and from the human point of view; for intrinsically, and from the divine point of view—*sub specie aeternitatis*—the water remains colourless.

Returning to the idea of *da'wa*-as-dialogue, in the Christian context, those most opposed to the reductionistic tendencies of the kind of pluralism associated with John Hick argue forcefully that a Christian has both the right and the duty to 'bear witness' to his faith: to some degree at least, and in some manner, implicit or explicit, it becomes one's duty to invite others to study and investigate the wisdom that is available within one's own faith. As mentioned above, this is a crucial prerequisite for anyone who wishes to engage in dialogue on behalf of a particular faith: to represent that faith must mean to 're-present' it, to present its wisdom, beauty—

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vidualism, rationalism—all are contained in this error, and reinforce its basic tendency, which is to reverse the traditional, normal subordination of human thought to divine Reality.

[13] Schuon refers to the distinction between metaphysics and ordinary religious knowledge in terms of uncoloured light, and particular colours: 'If an example may be drawn from the sensory sphere to illustrate the difference between metaphysical and religious knowledge, it may be said that the former, which can be called "esoteric" when it is manifested through a religious symbolism, is conscious of the colourless essence of light and of its character of pure luminosity; a given religious belief, on the other hand, will assert that light is red and not green, whereas another belief will assert the opposite; both will be right in so far as they distinguish light from darkness but not in so far as they identify it with a particular colour.' *Transcendent Unity*, p.10.

but also, its *normativity*, failing which one will not be seen as a 'valid inter-locutor' within the tradition one seeks to represent.

It might be objected here: it is impossible to meet every type of criterion which the different schools of thought within any given religious tradition may propose for one to be deemed a 'valid interlocutor' on behalf of that faith. Whilst this is true, it is nonetheless worth making the effort to reduce as far as possible the basis upon which one's credentials as a valid interlocutor would be rejected by one's co-religionists. And one of the main bases for this rejection is, without doubt, the perception that those engaged in dialogue are so intent on reaching out to the Other that they do not sufficiently respect the integrity of the Self—that is, they inadequately uphold the normativity of the tradition ostensibly being represented in dialogue. This is a factor which cannot be ignored if one is concerned with a dialogue that aims to be effective, not just in the debating halls of academia, but also in the wider world, wherein the overwhelming majority of believers within the various religions believe deeply in the normativity of their particular religion.

How, then, can the Muslim engaged in dialogue cultivate that wisdom which perceives the truth, the holiness, and the beauty that is contained within the religions of the Other, whilst simultaneously upholding the normativity of his faith, and the specificity of his identity?[14] The perception of the validity of other, alien forms of religious belief acquires a particular acuteness in the light of the following saying of the Prophet—which exists in slightly different variants, in the most canonical of *ḥadīth* collections—and which concerns the possibility of seeing God in the Hereafter. The Muslims are confronted by a theophany of their Lord, whom they do not recognize: 'I am your Lord', He says to them. 'We seek refuge in God from you,' they reply, 'we do not associate anything with our Lord'. Then God asks them: 'Is there any sign (*āya*) between you and Him by means of which you might recognize Him?' They reply in the affirmative, and then 'all is revealed', and they all try to prostrate to Him. Finally, as regards this part of the scene, 'He transforms Himself into the form in which they saw Him the first time,[15] and He says: "I am your Lord", and they reply: "You are our Lord!".'[16]

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[14] This is one of the central questions which we posed and tried to answer in *The Other in the Light of the One,* pp.117-139; 185-209; 234-266.

[15] The wording here is extremely important: *wa qad taḥawwala fī ṣūratihi allatī ra'ūhu fīhā awwal marra.*

[16] This version of the saying comes in the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Cairo: Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), chapter entitled *Maʿrifa tarīq al-ruʾyā* ('knowledge of the way of vision'), vol. 1, p. 94.

How, then, is one to recognize the divine 'face' in the traditions of the Other; how does one recognize this 'lost camel'—the wisdom contained within the religions of the Other? For this wisdom may well be expressed in forms of divine self-manifestation which are not only alien, but, in addition, so unlike one's own received wisdom that one takes refuge from them in one's own 'God'. If believers on the Day of Judgement are unable to recognize God in anything other than the forms of their own beliefs, through the blinkers of their own prejudices, how can believers, here and now, ensure that they do not fall into this same trap?

Evidently, prejudice is one of the main obstacles in the path of any dialogue which aims at discovering the wisdom of the Other; however, one of the principal problems arising out of the removal of prejudice towards the Other is the weakening of the identity of the Self.[17] How can we reach out to the Other in an unprejudiced manner, without this absence of prejudice diluting or subverting our own sense of identity? Or again: How can we be universalist in our spiritual vision, without sacrificing the specificity of our faith and praxis?

It is our contention here that in the Islamic tradition, the Sufi school of thought associated with Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, known in Sufism as 'the greatest shaykh' (al-Shaykh al-Akbar)[18] can be of considerable value in helping to cultivate the wisdom which synthesizes the two principles in question here: an unprejudiced, universalist, supra-confessional view of spirituality, on the one hand; and a normative approach to the specificity and particularity of one's own faith, praxis, and identity on the other. It is possible to arrive at an inclusive perspective, one which, however paradoxically, includes exclusivism; this is a perspective which transcends the false dichotomy, so often encountered in our times, between a fanatical exclusivism which disdains all but one's own faith, and a relativistic inclusivism which fatally undermines the integrity of one's own faith. Upholding the integrity of one's faith is difficult if not impossible without a definitive, clearly delineated identity, which in its very specificity and particularity cannot but exclude elements of the Other on the plane of religious form; by 'religious form' is meant not just legal and ritual forms but also concep-

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[17] Self is given in capitals only as a parallel to the use of the capital O for 'Other'; what is meant here is the empirical self, the individual as such, and its communitarian extension, and not the universal Selfhood of the Real (*nafs al-ḥaqq*, as Ibn al-ʿArabī calls it), at once transcendent and immanent.

[18] For the most comprehensive biography of this seminal figure, see Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (Tr. Peter Kingsley) (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993); for a concise overview of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 1988 repr), ch. 3, 'Ibn ʿArabī and the Sufis', pp. 83–121.

tual and doctrinal forms. However, all such forms are radically transcended, objectively, by the divine essence of the religions; and all the modes of identity commensurate with these forms are just as radically dissolved, subjectively, within the consciousness of one whose soul has been effaced within that essence. These are natural corollaries of Ibn al-ʿArabī's complex and challenging perspective on the dynamics of religious consciousness.

This metaphysical—or supra-confessional—perspective of Ibn al-ʿArabī should be seen as a kind of interpretive prolongation of the spiritual trajectories opened up by the Qurʾān, and not simply as the product of his own speculative genius, however undeniable that genius is. Within this perspective there is a clearly defined relationship between form and essence; as will be demonstrated below, his elaboration on this basic distinction flows from the clear distinction established in the Qurʾān between the essence of religion—which is unique—and its forms—which are diverse. Verses such as the following should be borne in mind:

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِۦ نُوحًا وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِۦٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَقِيمُواْ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُواْ فِيهِ

He hath ordained for you of the religion *(min al-dīn)* that which He commended unto Noah, and that which We reveal to thee [Muhammad], and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided therein ... (42:13)

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِىَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَٱلنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ

> Say: We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us, and
> that which is revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and
> Jacob and the tribes, and that which was given unto Moses and Je-
> sus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction be-
> tween any of them, and unto Him we have submitted. (3:84)

مَّا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِن قَبْلِكَ

> Naught is said unto thee [Muhammad] but what was said unto the
> Messengers before thee. (41:43)

It is that essential religion (*al-dīn*) which was conveyed to all the Mes-
sengers, whence the lack of differentiation between them on the highest
level: the Muslim is not permitted to make an essential distinction between
any of them: *we make no distinction between any of them* (3:84; 2:136; 2:285;
4:152)

Understanding this distinction between the essence of religion and its
forms is crucial for those engaged in dialogue; a correct understanding of
this fundamental distinction enables one to engage in dialogue with wis-
dom, and on the basis of a principled universality; this, in contrast to an
unprincipled or rootless syncretism, and in contrast to a well-meaning but
ultimately corrosive relativistic pluralism. Syncretistic universalism stems
from a sentimental and superficial assimilation of the sacred; it thus has no
intellectual or metaphysical principle which can discern authentic religion
from spurious cults, on the one hand, and, on the other, maintain a total
commitment to one's own religion whilst opening up to the religions of
the Other. In syncretism, indiscriminate openness to all sacred forms in
general—or what are deemed to be such—cannot but entail a disintegration
of the specific form of one's own religion. Principled universality, by con-
trast, leads to an intensification of commitment to one's own religion; the
sense of the sacred and the need to follow the path delineated by one's own
religion not only coexist, but each may be said to be a *sine qua non* for the
transformative power of other. For effective access to the sacred is granted,
not by an abstract, purely discursive conception of the sacred in general,
but by entering into the concrete, specific forms of the sacred which are
bestowed by the grace inherent within one's own sacred tradition. From
this spiritual process of plumbing the depths of the sacred emerges the
comprehension that there is no access to the essence of the sacred, above all
religious forms, except by means of those authentic formal manifestations
of the Essence: the divinely revealed religions. Such a perspective flows

naturally from reflection upon the meaning of the verses from the Qur'ān cited above, and in particular, 5:48: *For each of you We have established a Law and a Path. Had God willed, He could have made you one community. But that He might try you by that which He hath given you* [He hath made you as you are]. *So vie with one another in good works …*

This minimal definition of authenticity—'true' religion being that which is divinely revealed—derives from Ibn al-ʿArabī's criterion, which will be elaborated upon below. We are using this criterion to distinguish true from false religion, in the full knowledge that authenticity or orthodoxy as defined within each true religion will have its own distinctive and irreducible criteria. In this connection it is worth noting that there was never any central ecclesiastical authority in Islam, comparable to the Church in Christianity, charged with the duty of dogmatically imposing 'infallible' doctrine. According to a well-known saying in Islam: 'The divergences of the learned (*al-ʿulamā'*) are a mercy'.[19] This saying can be seen as manifesting the ecumenical spirit proper to Islam; orthodoxy qua doctrinal form has a wide compass, its essence being the attestation of the oneness of God and of Muḥammad as His messenger, these comprising the *shahādatayn*, or 'dual testimony'. Accordingly, in Islamic civilization, a wide variety of theological doctrine, philosophical speculation, mystical inspiration and metaphysical exposition was acceptable so long as the Sharīʿa, the Sacred Law, was upheld. We might speculate here that the principle of the saying quoted above can also, by transposition, be applied to the religions themselves: the divergences of the religions constitute a 'mercy'. This mercy is expressed in the divine will for religion to be characterised by a diversity of paths: *Had God willed, He could have made you one community.*

The capacity to recognise other religions as valid, without detriment to the commitment to one's own religion, evidently requires a certain spiritual suppleness; minimally, it requires a sense of the sacred and an inkling of the universality of revelation; at its most profound, it is the fruit of spiritual vision. With the help of Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine, itself evidently the fruit of just such vision,[20] we can arrive at a conception of a principled universality, that is, an awareness of the universality of religion which neither violates the principles of one's own religion, nor dilutes the content of one's own religious identity.

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[19] *Ikhtilāf al-ʿulamā' raḥma.* This is often cited as a ḥadīth, but is more authoritatively ascribed to al-Shāfiʿī.

[20] Ibn al-ʿArabī claims that everything he wrote was contained in his first vision of the 'glory of His Face'; all his discourse is 'only the differentiation of the all-inclusive reality which was contained in that look at the One Reality.' *Sufi Path*, op. cit., p.xiv.

UNIVERSALITY AND IDENTITY

The relationship between the perception of religious universality and the imperatives of one's identity is brought into sharp focus by Ibn al-ʿArabī in his account of his spiritual ascension (*miʿrāj*), an account describing one of the spiritual peaks of his inner life.[21] In this spiritual ascent—distinguished from that of the Prophet, which was both bodily and spiritual—he rises up to a spiritual degree which is revealed as his own deepest essence. But one can hardly speak of personal pronouns such as 'his' at this level of spiritual experience: whatever belongs to him, whatever pertains to 'his' identity, is dissolved in the very process of the ascent itself. At the climax of this ascent, he exclaims: 'Enough, enough! My bodily elements are filled up, and my place cannot contain me!', and then tells us: 'God removed from me my contingent dimension. Thus I attained in this nocturnal journey the inner realities of all the Names and I saw them returning to One Subject and One Entity: that Subject was what I witnessed and that Entity was my Being. For my voyage was only in myself and pointed to myself, and through this I came to know that I was a pure "servant" without a trace of lordship in me at all.'[22]

It is of note that immediately following this extraordinary revelation of the deepest reality of 'his' selfhood within the divine reality, Ibn al-ʿArabī should proclaim, not the secret of oneness with God, or his 'Lordship' in the manner of a Ḥallāj who ecstatically declared *anā al-ḥaqq* (I am the Truth), but the very opposite: he came to know through this journey that he was a pure servant (*ʿabd*), without any trace of lordship (*rubūbiyya*). The highest realization is accompanied by the deepest humility. Self-effacement, rather than self-glorification, is the fruit of this degree of spiritual station, the very opposite to what one might have imagined. It is the essence or *sirr*—'secret' or 'mystery'—of consciousness within the soul of the saint

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[21] The following pages contain reflections on material which can be found elaborated in greater detail in our *Paths to Transcendence—According to Shankara, Ibn ʿArabi and Meister Eckhart* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006), pp.69-129.

[22] James Morris, 'Ibn al-ʿArabi's Spiritual Ascension', in M. Chodkiewicz (ed.), *Les Illuminations de La Mecque/The Meccan Illuminations* (Paris: Sindbad, 1988), p.380. One is reminded by the words 'my place cannot contain me' of Rumi's lines: 'What is to be done, O Muslims? For I do not recognise myself? I am not Christian, nor Jew; not Zoroastrian, nor Muslim.' This is a succinct expression of the transcendence of all religious identity in the bosom of the unitive state, which is alluded to later in the poem:

'I have put duality aside ... One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.

He is the First, He is the Last, He is the Outward, He is the Inward'. [paraphrasing 57:2]. *Selected Poems from the Dīvān-i Shamsi Tabriz* (Ed. And Tr. R.A. Nicholson [translation modified]) (Cambridge: CUP, 1977), pp.125, 127.

that, alone, can grasp the truth that it is not conditioned by the soul. The consciousness *within* the soul knows that it is not *of* the soul—this being one of the reasons why this inmost degree of consciousness is referred to as a 'secret': its immanent, divine identity is veiled from the soul of which it is the conscious centre. Herein lies one of the meanings of the Sufi saying: the Sufi is in the world but not of it.

The particular dynamics of being within the ontology of Ibn al-ʿArabī helps us to understand why specificity and self-effacement should be the natural expressions of universality and self-realization; these dynamics also help us to see the intimate relationship between the deconstruction of identity and the perception of the universality of religion, as well as the necessity for the reconstruction or restitution of identity within a specific religious matrix. These 'religious' corollaries of Being will be explored later in this section. For the moment, attention is to be focused on the fact that at the very summit of this spiritual ascent to ultimate reality and self-realization, Ibn al-ʿArabī receives from that Reality the verse of the Qurʾān (cited above):

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَٰعِيلَ

وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ

وَٱلنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ

مُسْلِمُونَ

Say: We believe in God and that which is revealed unto us, and
that which is revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and
Jacob and the tribes, and that which was given unto Moses and Je-
sus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction be-
tween any of them, and unto Him we have submitted. (3:84)

He then adds these words: 'Henceforth I knew that I am the totality of those (prophets) who were mentioned to me (in this verse)'; and also: 'He gave me all the Signs in this Sign'.[23]

Since the word for 'sign' is the same as that for 'verse' (*āya*), this can also be taken to mean that all revealed verses are implicitly contained in this verse which establishes the universality and unity of the essence of the reli-

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[23] Quoted in J.W.Morris, 'Ibn al-ʿArabī's Ascension', p.379.

gious message, despite the outward differentiation of its formal expression. This last point is clearly implied in another account of a spiritual ascent, in which Ibn al-'Arabī encountered the Prophet amidst a group of other prophets and is asked by him: 'What was it that made you consider us as many?'

To which Ibn al-'Arabī replies: 'Precisely (the different scriptures and teachings) we took (from you)'.[24]

Heavily implied in the Prophet's rhetorical question is the intrinsic unity of all the revelations. This principle is expressed in the following verse of the Qur'ān (cited above), which Ibn al-'Arabī quotes and then comments upon:

$$\text{۞ شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِۦ نُوحًا وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ}$$

$$\text{وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِۦٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَا}$$

$$\text{تَتَفَرَّقُوا۟ فِيهِ}$$

He hath ordained for you of the religion that which He commended unto Noah, and that which We reveal to thee [Muhammad], and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided therein. (42:13)

Then he quotes from another verse, mentioning further prophets, and concluding: *Those are they whom God has guided, so follow their guidance.* (6:90) He comments as follows:

This is the path that brings together every prophet and messenger. It is the performance of religion, scattering not concerning it and coming together in it. It is that concerning which Bukhārī wrote a chapter entitled, "The chapter on what has come concerning the fact that the religions of the prophets is one". He brought the article which makes the word "religion" definite, because all religion comes from God, even if some of the rulings are diverse. Everyone is commanded to perform the religion and to come together in it ... As for the rulings which are diverse, that is because of the Law which God assigned to each one of the messengers. He said, *For each of you We have established a Law and a Path. Had God willed, He could have made you one*

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[24] Quoted in J.W. Morris, 'The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn al-'Arabī and the Mi'rāj', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol.108, 1988, p.75.

community. (5:48). If He had done that, your revealed Laws would not be diverse, just as they are not diverse in the fact that you have been commanded to come together and to perform them.[25]

One sees clearly that Ibn al-'Arabī is suggesting here a distinction between religion as such, on the one hand, and such and such a religion, on the other; it is religion as such that warrants the definite article (*al-dīn*). But such and such a religion, far from being marginalised in this perspective, is endowed with an imperatively binding nature by virtue of the absoluteness of its own essence, that is, by virtue of being not other than religion as such. For, on the one hand, religion as such, *al-dīn*, is the inner substance and inalienable reality of such and such a religion; and on the other, it is impossible to practise religion as such without adhering to such and such a religion. Apprehending the universal essence of religion, far from precluding particularity and exclusivity of formal adherence, in fact requires this adherence: to attain the essence one must grasp, in depth, the form by which the essence reveals itself. This is why, in the passage quoted above, Ibn al-'Arabī continues by stressing the specific path proper to the final Prophet. It is that path 'for which he was singled out to the exclusion of everyone else. It is the Koran, God's firm cord and all-comprehensive Law. This is indicated in His words, "This is My straight path, so follow it, and follow not diverse paths, lest they scatter you from its road" (6:153)'.[26]

This 'straight path' both excludes and includes all other paths: excludes by way of specific beliefs and practices, and includes by virtue of the single Essence to which the path leads, and from which it began. But one cannot reach the end of the path without traversing its specific trajectory, without keeping within its boundaries, and thus making sure that one does not stray into other paths: *And each one has a direction* (wijha) *toward which he turns. So vie with one another in good works ...'* (2:148). One is instructed to turn towards one's particular goal, in a particular direction, and this is despite the fact that the Qur'ān tells us that *Wherever ye turn, there is the Face of God* (2:115). The ubiquity of the divine Face, then, does not imply that, in one's formal worship, the direction in which one turns to pray is of no consequence. For the Qur'ān also says: *Turn your face toward the sacred mosque, and wherever you may be, turn your faces toward it* [when you pray]. (2:144)

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[25] Cited in William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge—Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: SUNY, 1989) p.303 (translation modified).
[26] Ibid.

For Ibn al-ʿArabī, such combinations of principal universality and practical specificity are paradoxical expressions of a principle that goes to the very heart of his ontology, his understanding of the nature of reality: for 'part of the perfection or completeness of Being is the existence of imperfection, or incompleteness within it (من كمـال الوجـود وجـود النقص فيـه)'— failing which Being would be incomplete by virtue of the absence of incompleteness within it.[27] This is an example of the bringing together of opposites (jamʿ bayn al-ḍiddayn) which is emphasised repeatedly in the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī, pertaining to the paradoxes required on the level of language, if one is to do justice to the complexities of existence. Just as completeness requires and is not contradicted by incompleteness, so the incomparability (tanzīh) of God requires and is not contradicted by comparability (tashbīh), universality requires and is not contradicted by particularity, inclusivity requires and is not contradicted by exclusivity, and nondelimitation (iṭlāq) requires and is not contradicted by delimitation (taqyīd).

Returning to the direction in which one must pray: on the one hand, the instruction to turn in a specific direction 'does not eliminate the property of God's Face being wherever you turn.' On the other, the fact that God is there wherever one turns nonetheless implies the bestowal of a specific 'felicity' (saʿāda) as the consequence of turning in a particular direction for prayer. 'Hence for you He combined delimitation and nondelimitation, just as for Himself He combined incomparability and similarity. He said; "Nothing is like Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (42:11).'[28]

Nothing is like Him: this denial of similarity, this expression of pure tanzīh or transcendence, is immediately followed by an apparent contradiction of this very incomparability, for 'He is the Hearing, the Seeing'. As human beings also hear and see, this statement inescapably entails establishing modes of similarity or comparability between man and God. Ibn al-ʿArabī, however, does not allow the mind to be restricted by this conceptual antimony, but rather takes advantage of the appearance of contradiction, using it as a platform from which to rise to an intuitive synthesis between these two opposing principles: the divine incomparability is perfect only when it is not conditioned by the very fact of being unconditioned by similarity, and vice versa. The divine nondelimitation is only properly grasped in the light of delimitation, and vice versa. This paradox is powerfully delivered in the following passage:

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[27] Ibid., p. 296.
[28] *Sufi Path*, op. cit., p.11.

> He is not declared incomparable in any manner that will remove Him from similarity, nor is He declared similar in any manner that would remove Him from incomparability. So do not declare Him nondelimited and thus delimited by being distinguished from de-limitation! For if He is distinguished then He is delimited by His nondelimitation. And if He is delimited by His nondelimitation, then He is not He.[29]

Without possessing or manifesting an aspect of finitude, God cannot be regarded as infinite; without assuming a mode of delimitation He cannot be nondelimited; without the relative, He cannot be Absolute. Without the innumerable manifestations of these apparent contradictions of His own uniqueness, without such multiplicity within unity, and unity within mul-tiplicity, 'He is not He'. The very infinitude of the inner richness of unicity overflows as the outward deployment of inexhaustible self-disclosures; this process is described as the *tajallī* or *ẓuhūr* (theophanic revela-tion/manifestation). It is a process wherein no repetition is possible (*lā tak-rār fī al-tajallī*); each phenomenon is unique in time, space and quality. In this complex and subtle conception of *wujūd*, there is no contradiction be-tween asserting the uniqueness of each phenomenon—each distinct locus for the manifestation of Being, each *maẓhar* for the *ẓuhūr* or *tajallī* of the one and only Reality—and the all-encompassing unity of being which tran-scends all phenomena. Multiplicity is comprised within unity, and unity is displayed by multiplicity.

This ontological perspective is to be applied on the plane of religion: there is no contradiction between asserting the uniqueness of a particular religion, on the one hand, and affirming the all-encompassing principle of religion which transcends the forms assumed by religion, on the other. The transcendence in question leaves intact the formal differences of the relig-ions; for, these differences, defining the uniqueness of each religion, are by that very token irreducible; the formal differences can only be transcended in spiritual realization of the Essence, or at least, an intuition of this Es-sence. They cannot be abolished on their own level in a pseudo-esoteric quest for the supra-formal essence. For these differences are divinely willed; religious diversity expresses a particular mode of divine wisdom, which man must grasp if he is to do justice both to the formless Essence of relig-ion, and the irreducible uniqueness of each religious form.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's conception of *al-dīn*, or religion as such, a religious es-sence that at once transcends and abides at the heart of all religions is in

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[29] Ibid., p.112.

complete accord with the Qur'ānic perspective on religious diversity; it helps one to see that an orientation towards this quintessential religion does not in the least imply a blurring of the boundaries between religions on the plane of their formal diversity. For one does not so much conceptually posit as spiritually intuit this essence of religion—in other words, one sees this 'heart' of religion with one's own 'heart', rather than one's mind:

> My *heart* has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,
> And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba and the tables of the Torah and the book of the Koran.
> I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith. (emphasis added)[30]

The defining spirit of principled universality thus pertains to inner vision and does not translate into any modification of one's outer practice. It is on the basis of this religion of love, perceived by spiritual intuition, not formulated by rational speculation, that Ibn al-ʿArabī can issue the following warning to narrow-minded exclusivists:

> Beware of being bound up by a particular creed and rejecting others as unbelief! If you do that you will fail to obtain a great benefit. Nay, you will fail to obtain the true knowledge of the reality. Try to make yourself a Prime Matter for all forms of religious belief. God is greater and wider than to be confined to one particular creed to the exclusion of others. For He says: 'To whichever direction you turn, there surely is the Face of God' (2:115).[31]

One should note that this counsel resonates with a Qur'ānic warning to the same effect. This verse comes just before 2:115, quoted in the previous citation from Ibn al-ʿArabī. Here, the attitude of religious exclusivism is censured, and the Muslim is told to transcend the level of inter-confessional polemics and focus on the essential pre-requisites of salvation: not belonging to such and such a religion, but submitting to God through one's religion, and manifesting the sincerity of that submission through virtue:

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[30] *The Tarjumān al-Ashwāq—A Collection of Mystical Odes* (tr. R.A. Nicholson) (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), p.52.
[31] Cited by Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism—A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts,* Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 1983), p.254. With modifications, see note 15 above.

وَقَالُوا۟ لَن يَدْخُلَ ٱلْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَرَىٰ ۗ تِلْكَ

أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا۟ بُرْهَـٰنَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَـٰدِقِينَ بَلَىٰ مَنْ

أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُۥ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُۥٓ أَجْرُهُۥ عِندَ رَبِّهِۦ وَلَا خَوْفٌ

عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

And they say: None entereth Paradise unless he be a Jew or a
Christian. These are their own desires. Say: Bring your proof if ye
are truthful. Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to God
while being virtuous, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall
be no fear upon them, neither shall they grieve.'(2:111-112)

The Qur'ān excludes this kind of chauvinistic exclusivism by virtue of
an implicit, and occasionally explicit, inclusivism; but it also includes its
own mode of exclusivism, both implicitly and explicitly, in affirming the
need to follow the particular religion of Islam. The Akbarī principle of
paradoxical synthesis of two apparently contradictory principles can clearly
be seen at this level of revelation, and is indeed the ultimate source of Ibn
al-'Arabī's elaborate metaphysics. In keeping with the spirit of this meta-
physical perspective, one must assert: it is only on the basis of the vision of
the religion of love that one can be 'liberated' from the limitations of one's
own faith, for then, the escape is upwards, towards the essence of one's
own, and every, faith; any attempt to loosen the bonds of one's own belief
system, in the absence of this upwardly and inwardly essentialising move-
ment of consciousness, is tantamount to simply dissolving the roots of
one's religious identity, and leaving nothing in its place on the level where
one cannot do without a sense of identity, that is, the human personality.
The consciousness which is alone capable of transcending the formal limi-
tations of religion is supra-personal: it has nothing to do with the empirical
ego.

In passing, one might note that it is this dissolution which postmodern
deconstruction engenders, deliberately or otherwise; one aspires to be liber-
ated from the 'constructions' of belief, language, history, tradition, etc. by
systematic demolition of these elements. But, in stark contrast to the spiri-
tual 'deconstruction' of an Ibn al-'Arabī, there is no reconstruction of

thought, belief and identity on a higher plane of being.[32] Here it would be appropriate to return to the spiritual ascent, or *mi'rāj* of Ibn al-'Arabī mentioned earlier. It is important to note that in the course of this ascent, he undergoes a process of dissolution by means of which he is divested of various aspects of his being, such that he becomes aware that 'his' consciousness is no longer 'his', and the Real is realized as the essence of all consciousness and being. The degrees leading up to this unitive state are given in a description of the 'journey' of the saints to God, within God. In this journey the composite nature of the saint is 'dissolved', first through being shown by God the different elements of which his nature is composed, and the respective domains to which they belong; he then abandons each element to its appropriate domain:

> [T]he form of his leaving it behind is that God sends a barrier between that person and that part of himself he left behind in that sort of world, so that he is not aware of it. But he still has the awareness of what remains with him, until eventually he remains with the divine Mystery (*sirr*), which is the "specific aspect" extending from God to him. So when he alone remains, then God removes from him the barrier of the veil and he remains with God, just as everything else in him remained with (the world) corresponding to it.[33]

The constitutive elements of human nature are 'dissolved' (or deconstructed) through being absorbed by those dimensions of cosmic existence to which they belong. Consciousness becomes rarified, purified and disentangled from matter and its subtle prolongations. As seen above, the 'culminating revelation' coming just before the experience of extinctive union, was given in relation to the essence of all religions. Just as this realization of the essence of all religions does not entail any diminution of adherence to the form of one's own religion, likewise, as regards consciousness as such, the realization of the essence of the Real in no way entails any diminution of one's slavehood before the Real: 'The slave remains always the slave', according to a saying often repeated in Ibn al-Arabī's works. The ego remains always the ego, and this level of personal specificity cannot but entail what Ibn al-'Arabī refers to as *'ubūdiyya*, slavehood.

In other words, in this process of spiritual ascent there is both *taḥlīl* and *tarkīb*, dissolution and reconstitution, dissolution of all elements pertaining to the ego, and then reconstitution of this same ego, but on a higher

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[32] Some have tried to see similarities between this type of spiritual self-denouement and postmodern deconstructionism. See our *The Other in the Light of the One*, pp.23-58, for a presentation of the irreconcilable differences between the two approaches to reality.

[33] James W. Morris, 'Ibn al-'Arabi's Spiritual Ascension', p.362.

plane: that of a conscious realization of one's actual nothingness. The higher the plane reached by essentialized consciousness, the deeper one's awareness of one's slavehood. In contrast to deconstruction, this dismantling of specificity and identity in the movement towards universality and transcendent Selfhood is accompanied by a return to specific identity, which is now vibrant with the spirit of the ultimate Self: the individual sees the Face of God everywhere, because of the very completeness of his self-effacement; and, on the plane of religion, the specific form of his religion resonates with the universality proper to its essence. One grasps religion as such within such and such a religion; the absolute, nondelimited essence of religion is revealed by and within the relative, delimited religion, just as the Self of the Real (*nafs al-Ḥaqq*) subsists as the ultimate reality within the soul of the individual, who now comes to understand that he is both 'He' and 'not He'. Each religion is both a form, outwardly, and the Essence, inwardly; just as man is 'the transient, the eternal'.[34]

The religion of love, or the religion of the 'heart', thus re-affirms and does not undermine one's particular religion, or any other revealed religion; rather, this conception of 'the religion' or religion as such presupposes formal religious diversity, regarding it not as a regrettable differentiation but a divinely willed necessity. The infinite forms of existence are integrated, 'made one', according to the unitive principle of *tawḥīd*, in the very bosom, and not despite, this infinite unfolding of Being; we observe an analogous synthesis between multiplicity and unity on the level of religious phenomena: the dazzling diversity of religious forms manifest the principle of inexhaustible infinitude, just as the degree proper to 'the religion', or religion as such, is the expression, in religious mode, of the principle of absolute oneness. This synthesis between infinity and oneness on the religious plane implies, then, both diversity of revealed forms, and the uniqueness of each specific revealed form. Each revealed religion is totally unique—totally 'itself'—while at the same time being an expression of a single, all-encompassing principle, that of Revelation, a principle within which all religions are integrated, or 'made one', in the rigorously metaphysical sense of *tawḥīd*.

To conclude: It is clear that for Ibn al-ʿArabī the unity of religions lies in the unity of Revelation, and that this position is rooted in the message of the Qurʾān:

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[34] This is from Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, translated by R. Austin as *Bezels of Wisdom* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) p.51.

قُولُوٓاْ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسْمَٰعِيلَ

وَإِسْحَٰقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَٱلْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَآ أُوتِيَ

ٱلنَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ

Say: We believe in God, and that which was revealed unto Abra-
ham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that
which was given unto Moses and Jesus and the prophets from
their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and
unto Him we have submitted. (2:136)

The following verse might well be read as an allusion to the mystery of
this unity of the celestial cause and the diversity of terrestrial effects:

وَفِي ٱلْأَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجَٰوِرَٰتٌ وَجَنَّٰتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَٰبٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ

صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَىٰ بِمَآءٍ وَٰحِدٍ وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ

بَعْضٍ فِي ٱلْأُكُلِ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَأَيَٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And in the earth are neighbouring tracts, and gardens of vines,
and fields sown, and palms in pairs, and palms single, watered
with one water. And we have made some of them to excel others
in fruit. Surely herein are signs for a people who understand.
(13:4)

The 'water' of Revelation is simultaneously one in its substance and
multiple in its forms. In terms of the image of the water and the cup,
briefly alluded to above: the cup might be seen to symbolize the form taken
by Revelation, while water stands for the Essence of Revelation. Water, in
itself, is undifferentiated and unique, whilst undergoing an apparent
change of form and colour by virtue of the accidental shape and colour of
the receptacles into which it is poured. The receptacles, the forms of Revela-
tion, are fashioned according to the specificities of the human communi-
ties to which the specific revealed message is addressed: *And We never sent a
messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make the message clear
for them* (14:4). Just as human communities differ, so must the 'language' of
the 'message' sent to them: the cups cannot but differ. However, the one

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who knows 'water' as it is in itself, that is, essence of that which is revealed, and not just its forms, will recognize this 'water' in receptacles other than his own, and will be able to judge all such receptacles according to their content, rather than be misled into judging the content according to the accidental properties of the container.

To accept God fully, therefore, means to accept His presence and reality in all forms of His Self-disclosure, all forms of revelation, all beliefs stemming from those revelations; while to limit Him to one's own particular form of belief is tantamount to denying Him: 'He who delimits Him denies Him in other than his own delimitation ... But he who frees Him from every delimitation never denies Him. On the contrary, he acknowledges Him in every form within which He undergoes self- transmutation ...'[35]

Nonetheless, the ordinary believer who may thus 'deny' God by adhering exclusively to his own belief is not punished because of this implicit denial: since God is Himself 'the root of every diversity in beliefs', it follows that 'everyone will end up with mercy'.[36] Also, in terms of the water/cup image: the water in the cup, however delimited it may be by the container, remains water nonetheless, hence the ordinary believer benefits from his possession of the truth; even if this truth be limited by the particularities of his own conception, it adequately conveys the nature of That which is conceived, but which cannot be attained by concepts alone. Thus one returns to the principle that all 'religions' are true by virtue of the absoluteness of their content, while each is relative due to the particular nature of its form.

Each particular religion vehicles the Absolute, even while being distinct from It: the absoluteness of a religion resides in its supra-formal, transcendent essence, while, in its formal aspect, the same religion is necessarily relative; and this amounts to saying, on the one hand, that no one religion can lay claim, on the level of form, to absolute truth, to the exclusion of other religions, and on the other hand, that each religion is true by virtue of the absoluteness of its origin and of its essence. One continues to conform to the dictates of one's own religion, and does so, moreover, with a totality that is commensurate with the absoluteness inherent in the religion;[37] and at the same time one is aware of the presence of the Absolute in all those

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[35] The reference here is to God's capacity to transform Himself in keeping with the 'signs' by which the believers can recognise Him, as expressed in the ḥadīth cited earlier in this article, and which Ibn al-ʿArabi cites several times in his works. *Sufi Path*, pp.339–340.

[36] *Sufi Path*, p.338.

[37] And, as seen earlier, one can conform to one's religion in the sincere belief that it is the *best* religion, without this detracting from the universality of one's perspective.

religions that have issued from a Divine Revelation, this awareness being the concomitant of one's recognition of the formal and thus relative aspect of one's own religion; and this recognition, in turn, arises in proportion to one's ability to plumb the metaphysical implications of the first testimony of Islam, 'There is no god but God': only the Absolute is absolute.

This kind of approach to the question of religious diversity and interfaith dialogue ensures that the formal integrity and distinctness of each faith will be respected, and at the same time establishes the proper level at which we can say that all religions are one. It is not on the level of forms that they are one; rather, they are one in God as their source, and they are as one in respect of the substance of their imperative to man: namely to submit to the Divinely Revealed Law and Way. Principles such as these, expounded with subtlety and depth in the metaphysical perspective of Ibn al-'Arabī, can help greatly in avoiding both the pitfalls of bridge-building between faiths and cultures, on the one hand, and the dangers of religious nationalism, on the other: that is, it can help to prevent a fragmentary sense of the sacred from arbitrarily or indiscriminately assimilating 'religious' forms out of sentimental desire; and, inversely, it can help prevent an over-zealous sense of orthodoxy from summarily anathematising alien religious forms out of dogmatic rigidity. Such a perspective shows that there is no incompatibility between fidelity to one's particular faith and a universal sense of the sacred.

The Voice of Unity:
Unity of the Islamic Community[*]

Muḥammad Wāʿiẓ-Zādeh Khurāsānī
Translated by Hamid Waqar

Abstract:

The subject of unity is quite extensive and includes many facets such as the religious basis for unity, the concept of brotherhood in Islam, the root of differences, the history of the *madhāhib* (schools of jurisprudence and thought), internal and external factors in the development of the *madhāhib*, and pioneers of the Islamic unity movement. As the first of a series of talks discussing these different facets, the present article investigates the concept of 'ummah' in Islam and its religious foundations. Its alludes to the different forms of unity found within the Qurʿān as well as its necessary conditions—ones which include affirming the essentials of the faith and acknowledging common responsibilities emerging from it.

Keywords: Islamic unity, ummah, Islamic brotherhood, *madhāhib*, Unity week, Friday prayers.

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful
Allah states:

$$\text{وَٱعْتَصِمُوا۟ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا۟}$$

Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord, and do not be divided.
(3:103)

To begin, I would like to congratulate my respected audience, the Walī al-Faqīh, the Muslims as a whole, and the Shias on the blessed birthday of the Noble Messenger of Islam—the Prophet and saviour of humanity, Muhammad ibn ʿAbdullah (ṣ)—and on the blessed birthday of the founder of

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[*] This is the first of a series of talks delivered in 1991 by Muḥammad Wāʿiẓ-Zādeh Khurāsānī, the then secretary-general of the 'Majmaʿ Jahānī Taqrīb Madhāhib Islāmī', on the topic of unity. They were presented over the duration of a several weeks prior to the commencement of the Friday prayers in Tehran. The remaining talks will be printed in subsequent issues of the English Taqrīb journal, *insha-Allah*.

the [Shia] *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence), Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (ʿa), which is connected to the birthday of the Noble Messenger.

It is an amazing coincidence that the Unity Week was inspired by the birthday of the Messenger of Allah. There are two narrations regarding his date of birth provided by the Sunnis and the Shias—the 12th and the 17th of Rabīʿ al-Awwal. The days in between these days have been named Unity Week, which began yesterday.

The coincidence that I mentioned is as follows: just as the Noble Messenger of Islam was the Messenger of unity whose birthday has become the scale of unity (*waḥdah*) in the Islamic community, so too the birthday of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), who brought the leaders together, has become the scale of proximity (*taqrīb*) amongst the schools of thought. The explanation of this is that the four Imams of the Sunni schools of thought intellectually benefited from Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) either directly or through a middleman.

Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) was a mufti who was alive during the same period as Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) and he took pride in being the Imam's student. Imam Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), the founder of the Māliki sect, was an official student of Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa). He narrated traditions directly from the Imam in the oldest Islamic jurisprudential book that exists today, *Mūtāʾ*, and which is the foundation of the Māliki sect. Imam Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819) was a student of Imam Mālik and transmitted traditions from Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) through him and others as well. These traditions exist in the *Musnad* of Shāfiʿī. Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the founder of the Ḥanbali sect, was a student of Imam Shāfiʿī. When Shāfiʿī wanted to migrate from Baghdad to Egypt (which is where he passed away), he said: "I have not left anyone in Baghdad more knowledgeable in jurisprudence than Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal."

Therefore, the root of the four *madhāhib* is Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) and he is the means of proximity amongst the schools of thought. I am not saying the 'unity' of the schools of thought; rather I am saying the 'proximity' amongst the schools of thought. Later, I will expound on this.

I thank the Office of Friday Prayers for giving me the opportunity to speak about Islamic unity and the proximity of the schools of thought on the Friday Prayer platform. The issues that I want to discuss will probably take no more than five or six speeches. I will mention the subjects that, God-willing if I remain alive and Allah gives me the opportunity, I will speak about in these talk (naturally they will not be given consecutively as there will be a definite gap in between them). I am doing this [i.e., listing the topics of discussion] so that the respected listeners will be aware of the organizational format of the speeches.

LIST OF TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

The main title given to these speeches is Islamic unity and proximity between the schools of thought. The difference between these two terms will become clear throughout the speeches.

The first speech, which I am starting today, God-willing, is entitled: "The unity of the Islamic community." The second speech will be titled: "Islamic brotherhood." These two are different and one must contemplate over them and reach their depths.

The third speech will be about differences—where the differences in religion came from, the reasons behind them, and how many differences we have. Some of the differences must be accepted and some of them are forbidden—i.e., they must be rejected. The Qur'ān forbade differences in general; it forbade differences which cannot be accepted and which cause divisions and disputes.

After that we will come to the fourth title in the series: "The origination of the *madhāhib* in Islam and the reasons behind their differences." It is clear that there were no *madhāhib* during the lifetime of the Noble Messenger. When did they start and why? Were the reasons behind their disputes purely political? Other than politics was the main reason behind their differences *ijtihād* (interpretive reasoning)? *Ijtihād* causes differences that we are forced to accept—differences that Islam itself has accepted. This root of having differences is preliminary to knowledge and understanding just as some say that doubt is a preliminary to knowledge. If doubt is a preliminary to knowledge this would be very good. However, the doubt that occurs after knowledge is obtained is objectionable. The Qur'ān has also rebuked this [latter] cause for differences.

The fifth title will be: "The progression of the Islamic schools of theology and jurisprudence." What stages did the *madhāhib* that exist today go through? What paths did they take in theology and jurisprudence? What ups and downs did they experience?

The sixth title will be: "The role politics played in the growth of Islamic schools of thought." There are schools of thought that were not born from politics, which is the case for most of the famous *madhāhib*, though politics played a role in their growth or in their losing influence. Sometimes, it even played a role in their disappearance Islamic history. We will not understand the reason behind the question of Islamic unity and the proximity between the Islamic *madhāhib* until we solve this issue, until we discover the root of this issue, and until we reach the depths of it. We will not understand how

to approach this issue, which is accepted by researchers of the various schools of thought, until we come to these realities.

The seventh title that came to my mind is another issue which is necessary to talk about here. Just as politics—i.e., internal Muslim politics—has played a role in the growth, downfall, and sometimes disappearance of Islamic schools of thought throughout history, it cannot be denied that the People of the Book (mainly Jews and Christians) have played a negative role through foreign occupation and Christian missionary activities in creating and spreading differences. A researcher wrote a book called *al-Tabshīr wa al-istiʿmār* which mentions the efforts of the Christian missionaries in creating differences amongst Muslims.

Christian missionaries were sent from America and Europe to Islamic countries. To use their own words, their purpose was "to give the glad tidings of the coming of Christ." Outwardly, as the Persian saying goes, they arrived as a 'pigeon of peace"[1]; however, the reality was that it was an effort to create differences and weaken Islam. Muslims must be aware of this issue.

The eighth speech will be about the efforts that peace-activists in the Islamic world and the leaders of the Islamic *madhāhib* have carried out throughout history, particularly in this century, to promote Islamic unity. If we were able to extensively review this issue, we would see what great personalities can be found amongst the Islamic *madhāhib* with remarkable intentions. They tried to leave these divisions and return to unity and compassion.

THE PIONEERS OF UNITY AND PROXIMITY

The International Conference of Islamic Unity will start once again in Tehran on Sunday. This conference took place today in Zahidan, Kurdistan, and Gorgan.

This year the topic of the Conference of Islamic Unity is 'The Pioneers of Unity and Proximity.' The participants of the conference are searching for people who worked towards laying the foundation for unity in the Islamic community and for bringing the schools of thought together throughout history, but particularly in this century. Islamic scholars from various countries and various schools of thought as well as a number of Iranian Sunni and Shia scholars will participate in this conference. In addition to the efforts of peace-activists, there are two other subjects that I must address.

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[1] Literal translation of a Farsi proverb that means peace. [Tr.]

The first one is to introduce 'The Foundation for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought' (Dār al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah) which was established about forty years ago in Cairo by great scholars such as Ayatullah Burūjardī, Shaykh Muḥammad Shaltūt, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Majīd Salīm, Imam Kāshif al-Ghiṭaʾ, and others. It has been active for many years. If I wanted to speak extensively about this organization it would take a whole speech to do so, forcing me to make the ninth speech: "The Foundation for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought."

The second subject, which would be the tenth speech, would be a discussion about The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought (Majmaʿ al-Taqrīb Bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah). This organization was established two and a half years ago in Iran at the order of the Supreme Leader. The subtopics would include a description of the organization, the duties of the organization, its responsibilities, and its future programs.

I will try to cover these ten subjects, God-willing, over five or six speeches, perhaps more, in order to give you—those who are attending the prayer—more awareness of these topics.

THE FIRST DISCUSSION—UNITY OF THE MUSLIM UMMAH:

One of the essentials of Islam is that Muslims are one nation. This is found in two phrases in the Qurʾān:

$$\text{إِنَّ هَـٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً وَأَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱعْبُدُونِ}$$

Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your
Lord. So worship Me. (21:92)

$$\text{وَإِنَّ هَـٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً وَأَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱتَّقُونِ}$$

Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your
Lord, so be wary of Me. (23:52)

The ummah that is mentioned is a single Islamic community. The Prophet constantly spoke of the community by using phrases such as: "my ummah," "whoever does such as such is not part of my ummah," and "a condition to be part of my ummah is such and such." In short, this matter is one of the necessities of Islam—Islam came to build a community, to establish a community. A community is a congregation who follows one leader. A group of people who do not follow one line are not called a community.

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The Qur'ān has separated communities due to religious lines and practices. Each one of them has been considered responsible for their own actions:

$$تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۖ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُم مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ$$

$$عَمَّا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ$$

That was a nation that has passed: for it there will be what it has earned, and for you there will be what you have earned, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do. (2:134)

Six definitions have been given for the word 'ummah' mentioned in the Qur'ān. One of these definitions is "general congregation." Another is "leader" as is mentioned in the verse:

$$إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا$$

Indeed Abraham was a nation (or leader) obedient to Allah. (16:120)

The third meaning of the term is "perseverance in religion." Yet other meanings are "religion", "time", and finally the one that is being discussed about now.

After mentioning the definitions of the term 'ummah', Shaykh Ṭūsī writes in *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [2], "Ummah means the followers of one religion such as, for instance, the ummah of Moses, the ummah of Jesus, and the ummah of Muhammad." In the same place he states: "*millah*, *niḥlah*, and *diyānah* have the same meaning" Moreover, one of the meanings of *millah* is "a trodden path"; therefore, the *millah* of Abraham means an evident and trodden path that Abraham opened for his followers and mankind, which is the religion of Abraham. According to this, the terms 'ummah' and '*millah*' have the same meaning; they originate from the same place. Moreover, the terms *ummah* and *imām* are taken from the same root definitive.

Hence, the congregation and the group which, in the name of Islam, follow one imam (*imām* in its literal definition, meaning 'leader')—who is none other than Noble Messenger of Islam—is called the Islamic ummah.

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[2] *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, v.1, p.477.

The ummah of Moses was one ummah; the followers of Jesus were one ummah. Other nations that had a prophet were also one ummah.

White Muslims, black Muslims, red Muslims, yellow Muslims, Eastern Muslims, Western Muslims, Muslims speaking any language, Muslims of any tribe or nationality are all one ummah—a single Muslim community.

CATEGORIES OF UNITY IN THE QUR'ĀN

Before I speak about the single Muslim community, I will state that the Qur'ān mentions three types of unity as an introduction:

1. Unity of humanity:

$$\text{يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ}$$

$$\text{لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ}$$

O' mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female,
and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves
with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah
is the most Godwary among you. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-
aware. (49:13)

The purpose of this verse is to bring the differences of tribes, nationalities, and nations into the proper perspective. Most of the differences in the world and most of the wars and travesties that have and are occurring have tribal and nationalistic roots—this tribe against that tribe, this country against that country, this nation against that nation. Islam acknowledges and accepts that humanity has various branches and tribes.

The Arabic term *shu'ūb* is the plural form of *sha'b* which means "nation". We say *millat-e Īrān* (the Iranian nation) while Arabs say *al-sha'b al-'arabī* (the Arab nation). Allah has made it so. Likewise, the tribes are smaller circles of *sha'b*. We[3] are one nation consisting of people who speak Persian and people who do not speak Persian. The people who reside in Iran are one nation. The people of Egypt are one nation. The people of China are one nation. But, within these nations there are various tribes.

Allah also created the tribes. Why did Allah create these nations and these tribes? Was the reason of creating these nations and tribes so that people could misuse the differences not only now but throughout time?

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[3] When he states 'we' here, he means Iranians. [Tr.]

Absolutely not. The Qur'ān states, "We … made you nations and tribes that *you may identify yourselves with one another"* and that you may love one another.

None of you have rejected nor will you reject the existence of others. This nation should not try to exterminate other nations for everyone is a descendent of Adam: "Mankind resembles its father Adam and its mother Eve."[4]

We are all the descendents of Adam. The differences in nationality and tribes must not be taken as a tool used to try and obtain superiority. The differences should never be used as a source of pride or command of one tribe over another or of one nation over another. One of the commentators of the Qur'ān said: "*that you may identify yourselves* not that you may reject each other." This means that one should not use these differences to negate another nation, to officially deny the existence of another nation, or to deprive another nation of their rights. Rather, "that you may identify yourselves" is a prelude to loving one another. It is said that the term *insān* (mankind) is derived from the root *uns* (intimacy). Man is an existence who is connected with others, who loves others; he not an existence who negates and rejects others. Therefore, the verse mentions the unity of humanity. It states that the nationalistic and tribal differences that exist were created by Allah but the purpose of these differences is not to negate and reject each other nor is it to kill one another; rather, it is "that you may identify yourselves with one another."

No nation is superior to another in terms of nationalistic qualities or creation. Do some nations have any merits over other nations? Yes and although they do not have essential merits over other nations, there is one merit which can be obtained. Coincidentally, the purpose of this merit is to prevent people from being boastful about one's nationality. The Qur'ān states:

$$ \text{وَجَعَلْنَٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓا۟ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ} $$

$$ \text{أَتْقَىٰكُمْ} $$

… and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is *the most Godwary among you.* (49:13)

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[4] This is a line of poetry attributed to the Commander of the Faithful 'Alī ('a).

The one who is closer to Allah is the most Godwary or pious one. The scale of comparing the superiority of one nation over another, of one tribe over another, of one individual over another is piety. What is piety? It is when man is able to control his carnal desires—when he is able to control himself and not haphazardly consider himself superior to others.

Therefore, the criteria which is used as a merit and is also a merit with Allah is piety: "Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you." Allah created everyone equally, but the person who moves farther along the path of piety has moved closer in proximity to Allah. Allah gives more value to such a person. Piety, as we know, prevents man from oppressing people who are even lower than him and prevents man from taking pride in oneself over such people.

In addition to this verse there are other verses which will not be mentioned because I do not want to extend this discussion. These verses mention the scale of unity in humanity which is limiting the differences of nations and tribes and accepting their meanings on the one hand while using piety to be the criterion for merit on the other.

Some other verses mention knowledge and piety together; for instance:

$$يَرْفَعِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنكُمْ وَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلْعِلْمَ دَرَجَٰتٍ$$

Allah will raise those of you who have faith and those who have
been given knowledge in rank. (58:11)

Here, faith is used in place of piety and mentioned along with knowledge. This form of unity is the unity of humanity.

2. Unity of monotheistic religions:

Another form of unity that the Qur'ān mentions is a unity of religious people. People who believe in a monotheistic religion; a religion which has roots in revelation are included in this unity. There are many verses of this nature. I will read one verse and allude to the concepts of other verses of the Qur'ān. There are verses that state that the truth is Islam:

$$إِنَّ ٱلدِّينَ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْإِسْلَٰمُ$$

Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam. (3:19)

Or:

وَمَن يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ ٱلْإِسْلَٰمِ دِينًا فَلَن يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ

Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be
accepted from him. (3:85)

These verses have been explained in two different ways which do not contradict each other.

One is that in this instance, Islam means the religion which we follow called 'Islam'. One of the merits of our religion is that Allah named it. Other religions are recognized by their relationship with their prophet or the nationality of their followers. Christianity is the religion of Christ. Judaism is named such because of its relationship with the Jewish nation, meaning the religion of the Jews. Jews are followers of Moses. But, Islam has its own name. Muslims are not called Muhammadans, meaning those who follow Muhammad. Rather, Islam has given itself a name—'Islam'. People who follow this religion are called Muslims.

This is a common explanation, but there is evidence and surrounding circumstances to suggest that Islam, in such verses, means the reality of Islam which is the reality of all religions. The Commander of the Faithful (‘a) said: "I will give a genealogy of Islam which has not been mentioned by anyone else: *islām* is surrender; surrender is certainty; certainty is confirmation; confirmation is confession; confession is being obliged; and being obliged is action."[5] Surrendering to Allah means that one worships Allah and no other. It means that one obeys Allah and does not sin. This is a summary of all divinely inspired religions. The Qur'ān states:

قُلْ يَٰأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ تَعَالَوْاْ إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا

نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِۦ شَيْئًا

Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us
and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will
not ascribe any partner to Him (3:64)

Therefore, in this verse there is a form of unity amongst the divinely inspired religions; the boundary between divinely-inspired monotheistic religions and polytheistic religions is demarcated. The followers of divine prophets are the same in being servants of Allah and in worshiping Him.

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[5] *Nahj al-Balāghah*, sayings 125.

وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ حُنَفَآءَ

Yet they were not commanded except to worship Allah, dedicat-
ing their faith to Him as men of pure faith (98:5)

Prophet Noah states:

وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ

I have been commanded to be of those who submit [to Allah].
(10:72)

Prophet Abraham said:

فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُم مُّسْلِمُونَ

so never die except as *muslim*s. (2:132)

Being a *muslim*, *islām* and surrendering, is the reality of all divinely in-
spired religions:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَٰكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. Rather he was a *ḥanīf*,
a *muslim*. (3:67)

Ḥanīf means a monotheist and *muslim* means one submitting to Allah.

Therefore, the reality of the true religion which was revealed to all of the
prophets is one thing: surrendering to Allah, believing in the oneness of
Allah, worshiping Allah, and being sincere to Allah—different phrases
which definitely relate to piety. A person will not be sincere or monotheis-
tic and will not surrender himself to Allah if he is not pious. In any case,
this type of unity is the unity of religions—the unity of divinely inspired
religions. This is the boundary between us on the one hand and idol-
worship and polytheism on the other. The Qur'ān never tells us to come to
a common understanding with the polytheists. The reason is because we do
not have anything in common with them. They worship idols and we wor-
ship Allah.

But, the term 'the People of the Scripture,' which is a term usually de-
noting the Jews and the Christians, is literally a term that can be applied to
all religions that have their roots in revelation. This is one form of unity
between all religions that is mentioned in the Qur'ān. It states that the

same thing that was revealed to Noah, Abraham, and Jacob was revealed to
the Prophet:

$$إِنَّآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ كَمَآ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ$$

$$وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ$$

We have indeed revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the
prophets after him, and [as] We revealed to Abraham and Ish-
mael. (4:163)

$$شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ ٱلدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِۦ نُوحًا وَٱلَّذِىٓ أَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا$$

$$وَصَّيْنَا بِهِۦٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰٓ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا۟ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا۟$$

$$فِيهِ$$

He has prescribed for you the religion which He had enjoined
upon Noah and which We have [also] revealed to you, and which
We had enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus, declaring,
'Maintain the religion, and do not be divided in it.' (42:13)

$$نَعْبُدُ إِلَٰهَكَ وَإِلَٰهَ ءَابَآئِكَ إِبْرَٰهِـۧمَ وَإِسْمَـٰعِيلَ وَإِسْحَٰقَ إِلَٰهًا$$

$$وَٰحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُۥ مُسْلِمُونَ$$

We will worship your God, and the God of your fathers, Abra-
ham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the One God, and to Him do we submit.
(2:133)

There are numerous other verses as well. I do not want to recite all of the
verses which would take up too much time. So, the second form of unity is
unity amongst divinely-inspired religions.

Here, a point must be clarified. The unity of religions is mentioned
sometimes in some Freemason groups in Europe and other places. But, the
unity of religions that they mention includes all religions including poly-
theism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. They mean all 'godly' people even if
their religion is polluted with polytheism—i.e., even if the foundation of

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their religion is polytheistic. What I mean by a unity of religions is a unity of divinely-inspired religions, not all religions. I had to say this so that people would not misuse the term unity of religions and say that all religions have commonalities. They do not. There are some religions whose reality is polytheism and do not have any commonalities with monotheistic religions.

Another point is that the essence of Islam and other divinely inspired religions is the same. Their essence is surrendering to Allah. But, they have different laws:

$$لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً$$

We had appointed a code [of law] and a path, and had Allah
wished He would have made you one community. (5:48)

Each one of your religions has a code and a path. If Allah wanted He would have appointed all of you as one community which means that all of you would have one code and one religion.

The code is a compilation of laws. You pray in a certain way and they pray in another way. The laws regarding marriage are one way for you and another way for them. There are different laws. But, the reality of divinely inspired religions is one—submission to Allah.

3. Unity of the Islamic community:

The third form of unity is the unity of the Islamic community which is the subject of our discussion. The Qur'ān states:

$$إِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً$$

Indeed this community of yours is one community (21:92)

According to the flow of the Qur'ān, this verse has been explained in two different ways. Some have said that the verse addresses the followers of all prophets because other prophets were mentioned before this verse in the Qur'ān. Then the following verse is mentioned:

$$إِنَّ هَٰذِهِۦٓ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً وَأَنَاْ رَبُّكُمْ فَٱعْبُدُونِ$$

> Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your
> Lord. So worship Me. (21:92)

After this verse, the discussion is about differences. It states that the differences amongst you are:

$$بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ$$

> ... out of envy among themselves. (2:213)

They disputed amongst themselves out of oppression and envy before an oppressor existed. If we explain the verse in this way, the verse would be about the unity of religions because it would state that the worshipers of Allah—i.e., the followers of the prophets that were mentioned—are all one nation. One nation here would mean that all of them worship Allah.

$$إِنَّ هَـٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ$$

> Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your
> Lord. So worship Me. (21:92)

We stated that the scale of unity amongst the divinely inspired religions is monotheistic worship. The end of the verse confers this meaning as well.

However, some other commentators of the Qur'ān state that Muslims are addressed in this verse after other prophets were mentioned. Since others were mentioned before, it now addresses Muslims—you are one nation:

$$إِنَّ هَـٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ$$

> Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your
> Lord. So worship Me. (21:92)

In another verse the phrase "so be pious" is mentioned. Therefore, the meaning and the criteria of our nation being a single nation is obtained. We are the Islamic nation because we are monotheistic, we worship Allah, we have one prophet, and we have one code of law; therefore, we Muslims are all members of one nation.

There are many phrases used in regards to Islamic unity. There is another term out there called 'Islamic brotherhood'. God-willing, I will spend one complete speech on the subject of Islamic brotherhood and the meaning of brotherhood.

I will state here in general that Islamic unity or the unity of Muslims refers more to the political and social dimensions whereas Islamic brotherhood refers more to the dimension of compassion. It states that you must be compassionate as a brother. I mentioned the verse that the respected reciter of the Qur'ān recited at the beginning of my speech:

$$وَٱعْتَصِمُوا۟ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا۟$$

Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord, and do not be divided.
(3:103)

You were enemies to one another. Allah brought your hearts together and you became brothers. Brotherhood is a closeness of the hearts—it is compassion. Brotherhood is about Islamic compassion. Muslims are partners and one community when it comes to general issues, laws, and destinies in addition to the political and social arena in a difficult political world. One must be compassionate on a brotherly level as well.

The Qur'ān has spoken extensively on this issue. The verses are so beautifully stated that man sees how the Qur'ān speaks about the causes of Islamic unity and the causes of the success of Muslims. It did not leave anything out. But, Muslims do not pay attention to it. We have distanced ourselves from the Qur'ān. We read the Qur'ān, even have it explained to us, but I have not seen someone differentiate between Islamic unity and Islamic brotherhood. I have also not seen someone differentiate between the unity of Muslims and the proximity of schools of thought. Islamic unity is one matter and the proximity of the schools of thought is another matter. Of course, they are related to one another. The proximity of the schools of thought is a preliminary to unity amongst Muslims. These are issues that, if God-willing, I want to discuss with you gradually throughout my speeches.

Therefore, Muslims are one community and this is one of the necessities of religion. One community means that they must protect the unity that they have with each other. How is unity protected? The Qur'ān states:

$$وَٱعْتَصِمُوا۟ بِحَبْلِ ٱللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا۟$$

Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord. (3:103)

Unity is not that all Muslims stand in one line. Rather, everyone must cling to one place—i.e., one cord must be grabbed. That cord is the cord of Allah. But, what is the cord? There are many explanations for this. Some say it is the Qur'ān, others say it is religion, others say it is Islam, and yet

others say it comprises religious laws. Some traditions narrated from Shia sources state that it [i.e., the cord] refers to *wilāyah*. This is acceptable as well since the essence of Islam is *wilāyah*. The reality is that all Muslims must cling to one principle and that principle is taken from the principles of monotheism, prophethood, and the hereafter ('all that the Qur'ān has come with and all that the Prophet has come with').

This general principle is common; it is a theological commonality. Islamic unity has two foundations: one, theological and the other, practical.

What is meant by the common general principles are the definite principles of Islam which are accepted by all Muslims. They have been established beyond a reasonable doubt by the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions. Every Muslim must necessarily accept them such as, for instance, that everyone must be a monotheist, that the Prophet is truly a prophet, that the hereafter is real, and that Muslims must pray, must fast, must give charity, must perform *ḥajj*, and must enjoin the good and forbid the evil. These are the pillars of Islam—in other words, the very same roots and branches of religion that we have been taught about. It was taught to us that there are three pillars of Islam: belief in the oneness of Allah, belief in prophethood, and belief in the hereafter. As for the other issues in which there are differences of opinion between the schools of thought, they are principles [not of Islam but] of the various schools of thought. Each school of thought has its own principles.

The Shias have five principles. In addition to the three pillars that are common between all Muslims, we add divine justice and *imāmah* (leadership). Mutazilites have five pillars in addition to the common pillars: belief in one Allah (meaning a negation of accidental characteristics), divine justice, divine promises (meaning that Allah must act in accordance to His promises), the station between two stations (meaning that a Muslim who commits a greater sin is neither a disbeliever nor a believer), and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. Other schools of thoughts have their own principles. I will inform you about them later on, God-willing, while we are discussing the various Islamic *madhāhib*.

THE PILLARS OF ISLAMIC UNITY

1. Clinging to the definite principles of Islam:

Therefore, the first condition of unity is clinging on to principles. Principles has been termed as Allah's cord and explained as clinging on to the Qur'ān. This means that one should hold on to what is mentioned in the

Qur'ān. If it is explained as clinging on to religion it would mean that one should hold on to the principles of religion and the definite commonalities between the *madhāhib*. Otherwise, religion branches out (and must branch out) when it falls into the hands of religious authorities (*mujtahidīn*) even if they are of one school of thought. There are differences, but the differences are in the laws of a *madhhab*, not in the religion itself. It is correct for religion to permit religious authorities to derive religious laws in these issues and accept their differences. A religious authority who derives the actual divine law receives two rewards and the religious authority who makes a mistake receives one reward.

This is the first pillar—clinging on to the common definite principles. The Prophet of the Muslims is the Prophet of Islam. All Muslims are monotheists. All Muslims pray. The direction of prayer for all Muslims is the same. Look at all of the Islamic countries and all of the Islamic *madhāhib*—do you find a direction of prayer other than the Kaʿbah? There is no other direction. All Muslims believe that the ordainments issued in the Qur'ān must be followed. Everyone generally believes in the system of politics, economics, law, and punishment. Of course, when one enters the arena of jurisprudence, there are various branches and divergences that can be found due to the opinions of jurists in various schools of jurisprudence.

This is one principle: clinging on to the cord of Allah—i.e., religion in the sense of the definite, the clear and decisive rulings, the certainties, and the issues that are accepted by all.

2. Common responsibilities:

There is another pillar which is the acceptance of common responsibilities. Muslims who are one community and who have one religion must accept common responsibilities. I will relate to you two traditions which we placed in a statement about events that occurred in Eastern Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on behalf of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought.

The Prophet said: "The person who wakes up not giving importance to the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim."[6] What else should the Prophet say? We wake up and think about our studies; a businessman wakes up and thinks about his business; another person wakes up thinking about politics. The one thing that does not enter his mind and will not enter his mind for a few days, maybe for a week, perhaps even for a month, is that he has a responsibility towards the Islamic community. The Qur'ān and Islam state

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[6] *Kāfī*, Kitāb al-īmān wa al-kufr, Bāb 70, ḥadīth 1 and 5

that the Muslims who are in the east have a responsibility towards the Muslims who are in the west. It does not matter what *madhhab* they follow. If they are Muslims and accept the principles of Islam—i.e., they are monotheists, they are Muslims, they have the same Prophet, the same prayer, and the same direction of prayer—we have a responsibility towards them. The condition for accepting responsibility is the need to put effort [in fulfilling it]. Everyone must pay attention and follow what happens and ask themselves what duty they have in relationship to what is happening. The above mentioned *ḥadīth* was one tradition.

The other tradition, which brings the discussion a little closer to its desired results, is the famous tradition narrated from the Noble Messenger: "I hear a man calling out 'O Muslims!' The one who does not respond to him is not a Muslim."[7] Are you such a Muslim who will respond to another Muslim when he calls out for help? Could the Prophet have been any more clear or more decisive?

The issue of Islamic unity, which we said was holding on to the divine cord and accepting common responsibilities, is more necessary than these obligations. In the same way as it is obligatory to pray, unity in the way that we mentioned—political unity, social unity, importance to the affairs of Muslims, acceptance of responsibility towards Islam and the Qur'ān—is also obligatory. Just as it is obligatory on you to pray, to fast, to perform the *ḥajj*, and to eat, it is obligatory upon you to give importance to the affairs of Muslims so that Islam does not wither and die out and so that Muslims are not tortured. Between you and Allah, have we performed this duty? Have Muslims stood up to perform this duty? Rare people are found in every society who give importance to the Islamic world. Others either do not listen or even ridicule these people. In fact, regarding the issue of Palestine—which the late Imam[8] clearly said was at the head of Islamic issues—I have heard with my own ears: "Arabs and Jews are fighting. What does it have to do with us?" It is not an issue of Arabs and Jews—it is an Islamic issue. They have occupied the Muslims' first direction of prayer. The distance between it and the second direction of prayer (the Ka'bah) is around three hundred kilometres, or maybe more—I do not exactly know. Looking at the power that they have and the government that they placed over the region we see that both of them are servants of America. Such is the condition of Muslims. Why should we not think about it? It would have been

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[7] *Kāfī*, Kitāb al-īmān wa al-kufr, Bāb 70, ḥadīth 5.
[8] I.e., Imam Khomeini. [Tr.]

great if they put this as part of our beliefs during our childhood. It would have been great if they made us understand this.

When they told us about the issue of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil and when we accepted our responsibility [to engage in it], we were on the lookout to search for mistakes—individual or social mistakes to prevent. We enjoined good when we did not see the good. Now, come along and call for unity. Today, we see that the borders of the Islamic world are being attacked by the enemies. There is definitely a single plan and it is my belief that this plan comes either from Israel or from America. They are trying to snip the outskirts of the Islamic world and if that does not work they are trying to instigate infighting between Muslims.

Before continuing on this very topic, I would like to mention a relevant point here. If Muslims wish to fulfil this common responsibility—which, as mentioned earlier, is itself a necessity similar to practically holding firm to the Islamic principles—the conditions are as follows:

First: They must be Muslims and, in the least, must know these general principles and act in accordance to them.

Second: They must be aware of the conditions of other Muslims.

Last year some people from Albania came (during the days of *ḥajj*) to the delegation of the Supreme Leader and said that the communist-struck Albanians have been freed after 70 years. The Albanian youth only understand that they are Muslim. Their love for Islam is blossoming, but they do not know anything about Islam. This is distressing. Most of them have not been circumcised. The concepts of permissible and forbidden have yet to enter their minds; they do not know what permissible means or what forbidden means. This is distressing. We do not know them. The secretary-general of the Bosnian and Herzegovina political party who was also the vice-president of Bosnia asked one of their scholars (who spoke Arabic well) to come to their aid (this was before the war began). He said, "one day, you will hear that genocide was committed against us. In World War II, when the world was in shambles, various sects of Christianity—some Catholic and some Orthodox—joined forces with the Serbs and the Croats to commit genocide against us and no Muslim knew about it."

What do you know about the Muslims in Somalia? Do people other than those who have been educated, who have gone to high school, and who have studied geography know where Somalia is? Somalia is in the African Horn. A few months ago I was in Africa. It was said that there were two large tribes or two political parties fighting each other. They did not leave anything in their paths and they were both Muslim. They destroyed all the

buildings, factories, and farmlands. As a result they are facing a drought and we do not know anything about this (America later intervened).

There are two conditions for acting in accordance to this responsibility: first one must generally know about Islam. One must be able to tell who a Muslim is or who isn't. Second, one must be aware of the condition of Muslims. Once, an official of a media outlet asked me, "What kind of article should I write about Islam?" I replied, "Introduce the Islamic world."

I will mention one issue and end my speech. A few years ago, a scholar in Egypt by the name of Muḥammad Shākir wrote small books in Arabic about Islamic countries. Information about each country was printed in the form of a small booklet. I bought these books from Egypt. One of the books was about Tanzania. Tanzania had an Islamic government and the people of Tanzania were Muslim and some were Shia. Then a revolution took place and a Christian became the president—an Islamic country took on the form of Christianity. Muslims did not become aware of this. This is the issue. In order to act in accordance to this common responsibility, one must be aware of the conditions and the general state of Muslims. This is where the actions of the media, speakers, radio, television, and reporters on the one hand and the Ministry of Culture and the Foreign Ministry on the other hand become important. They have a role to play. They must obtain correct information from correct sources about the conditions of Muslims who have been scattered throughout the world and then make it available for other Muslims. When Muslims have been made aware [about the situation of other Muslims] they will give it more importance. They will consider themselves responsible and will not sleep at nights.

Last week Shaykh Falsafī, may Allah protect him, said: "I cannot sleep at nights because of the conditions of Bosnia and Herzegovina." That is the truth. That is the issue at hand. That is what the Prophet meant when he said: "The person who wakes up not giving importance to the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim." Should a Muslim sleep when he hears that his brothers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are being slaughtered? Everything must be given. What is property? What is life? What is honour? Everything must be given so that Muslims can be saved from such conditions.

O Allah, wake the Muslims up from this sleep of ignorance. Make them aware of their social responsibilities. Make them aware of the unfortunate conditions of the Islamic world. Make them firm in the world of brotherhood and Islamic unity. O Allah, raise the late Imam, who was the founder of Islamic unity in this age, with the Noble Messenger (ṣ)—the Messenger of Unity—and with the purified Imams (ʿa) and grant us a blessed ending.

The Social Dimensions of Wilāyah[*]

Mohammad Ali Shomali

Abstract:

The concept of *wilāyah* plays an important role within Shia doctrine. While much focus has been placed on its vertical dimension—i.e., the connection between the *walī* and those who fall under his *wilāyah*—the horizontal dimension is often neglected or misunderstood. This speech by Muḥammad ʿAlī Shumālī given on the death anniversary of Imam Khumaynī (*r*) analyzes the horizontal and so-cial/communal dimensions of *wilāyah* as understood through some of the common *ziyārāt* and *duʿā*s as taught by the Ahl al-Bayt (*ʿa*). Though unity between the Shias is emphasized, a more essential form of unity between all those who are working for Imam al-Mahdi—regardless of their doctrinal school of thought—has been touched upon.

Keywords: *wilāyah*, Imam al-Mahdi, community and society, *duʿā*, *ziyārah*, Imam Khumaynī, unity

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. First of all, I of-fer my condolences to our beloved Imam Mahdi for the demise of one of his devotees [i.e., Ayatullah Bahjat (*r*)], and one of the most successful and most sincere deputies of our beloved Imam. May Allah *subḥānahu wa taʿālā* enable us to say and listen to the things that may be beneficial *insha-Allah* (God-willing) for ourselves and for the future of the Shia community worldwide.

One of the things that we—the *ṭalabah* (students of the Islamic semi-nary)—should think about, and actually do think about when we come to Qom or any other seminary is this: why is it that some people come with the same beginnings but end up very differently? Every year, we count per-haps hundreds of thousands of people who come here, and over the years we have had some forty- or fifty-thousand people in the seminary. When they first enter, they are not much different from each other, but when they graduate or when they pass away, you see amongst them the likes of Imam

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[*] The following is a transcript of a lecture delivered by the respected scholar on June 4, 2009 on the occasion of the death anniversary of Imam Khumaynī in Qom, Iran.

Khumaynī, Ayatullah Bahjat, and the Supreme Leader; then there are people who are second or third [after them]; and finally, among them, regrettably, there are people you wish had never entered the *ḥawzah* (Islamic seminary). So why is this the case? Is it that these people really are different from the beginning or is it that they just end up with different results? One of the factors, which I believe to be the main one, is this: When people enter, their aims are generally fair. I'm not saying all, but most people enter with sincerity. (The late Ayatullah Shahīd Quddūsī used to say that we, who are responsible for training the *ṭalabah*, should do our best so that the level of their sincerity when they enter the *ḥawzah* remains intact [throughout their stay]. We do not need to make them more sincere—only that their sincerity and purity of intention remains intact.) So, these students enter with sincerity. But, depending on the direction that they take in their academic life, in their *tablīgh* life, and in their personal life, they end up on paths towards different directions. And this direction is very much based on the vision that they have on what a proper *ṭālib al-dīn* (seminary student), a proper Muslim scholar, and a proper Muslim leader has to do. So I think one of the main things, though not the only one, that made Imam Khumaynī distinct and different from many other people was that from the beginning, he had a special orientation in his life. He knew what he is going to do. In fact, once, the Supreme Leader, Ayatullah Khamenei, mentioned a very good point: it was not necessary for Imam Khumaynī to know all the details of what he was going to do or what is going to happen for the revolution right from the beginning. But when you have *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and when you do your best to please Allah (*swt*) in a wise and educated way, then step by step, your way and path becomes clear. So, I am not claiming that right from the beginning of his entry into the *ḥawzah* Imam Khumaynī had the idea of establishing an Islamic government in Iran and an Islamic awakening. But what I am saying is that he definitely had some type of understanding of Islam which was there, and over time, grew ...

From the beginning, Imam Khumaynī knew that Islam—and in particular, the school of the Ahl al–Bayt—is not based on one's individual relation with the masters or with the *awliyā* that Allah has provided us with. Many people think [along the following lines]: "okay, I've come to the *ḥawzah* and *insha-Allah* I want to become close to Imam-e Zamān (the Imam of the Age) as much as possible; I want to devote myself to Imam-e Zamān; I want to work for Imam-e Zamān. What happens to the rest of the people and what happens to the community is a secondary issue, if at all; it is mostly a matter of working hard to make myself closer to Imam-e Zamān. And if I

can achieve to become very close to the Imam—especially if I can see him or have some correspondence with him—then that is the end [or goal] of my life and that is the ultimate achievement."

However, I think there is another understanding of what we need to do: we want to make a community around Imam-e Zamān, and not just a personal relation between me and the Imam, which would be totally different from your experience and the experience of any other person. We want to establish a community which is built around the idea of *wilāyah* that is embodied in Imam-e Zamān; but this *wilāyah* penetrates into all the cells and organs of the body—a body composed of the community of the faithful.

So, *insha-Allah* with the time that we have, I'd like to share some of the points that you may already know [regarding this concept of *wilāyah*] ... through passages that we have always been reciting and perhaps reflecting on, but maybe not with this kind of understanding. For example, we have many profound ideas in *Ziyārat-e ʿĀshūrā* which are really formative for the mind and a vision for whoever believes in such *ziyārāt* and such teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt. Some of the things that I have found in *Ziyārat-e ʿĀshūrā*, I have hardly found in any other place (perhaps they are there but they did not come to my mind). Very profound ideas for the first time drew my attention to *Ziyārat-e ʿĀshūrā*. For example, in *Ziyārat-e ʿĀshūrā*, there are two places in which we address Imam Ḥusayn (ʿa) by saying:

$$\text{اِنّي سِلْمٌ لِمَنْ سالَمَكُمْ وَ حَرْبٌ لِمَنْ حارَبَكُمْ}$$

I am at peace with *whoever* is at peace with you; I am at war with *whoever* is at war with you

[Based on this statement] to be at peace with Imam Ḥusayn is not something important. Unfortunately many of us are only at peace with Imam Ḥusayn and not at peace with his Shias. This is why we easily ruin each other, attack each other, and damage the reputation of each other. Why? Because I think I love Imam Ḥusayn even though I do not consider as important my relation with the Shias of Imam Ḥusayn—i.e., the followers of Ḥusayn. But here [in *Ziyārat-e ʿĀshūrā*] we say *Innī silmun li man sālamakum* ("I am at peace with *whoever* is at peace with you") and not just *silmun lak* ("I am at peace with you") or *silmun lakum* ("I am peace with you all"). We say, "I am at peace with *whoever* is at peace with you." Are we really at peace with each other? Is our society and community the type in which we feel safe from the attacks from each other and from ourselves? No.

Moreover, the second time [in the *ziyārah*] when this phrase is repeated, it has an addition:

اِنّي سِلمٌ لِمَنْ سالَمَكُمْ وَ حَربٌ لِمَنْ حارَبَكُمْ وولّي لِمَن والاكُمْ وَ عَدُوٌّ لِمَنْ عاداكُمْ

I am at peace with whoever is at peace with you; I am at war with
whoever is at war with you; I am a *walī* for whoever befriends you;
and I am an enemy for whoever is hostile towards you.

Not only am I at peace with whoever is at peace with you; not only am I at war with whoever is at war with you; rather I feel a deep sense of *wilāyah* between me and whoever has your *wilāyah*. Not only am I your *walī*—though of course, *anā walīyun lakum* ("I am a *walī* for you") as we have in many *aḥādīth* or *duʿā*s—but I feel a deep sense of *wilāyah* between me and whoever has your *wilāyah*.

So *wilāyah* is not only between me and Imam-e Zamān; there must be *wilāyah* between me and you—i.e., you are my *walī* and I am your *walī*.

وَٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَٱلْمُؤْمِنَـٰتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ

But the faithful, men and women, are *awliyā'* of one another ...
(9:71)

We must have this comprehensive and far-reaching notion of *wilāyah*. With any person who has this understanding of Islam and who has this faith in the Ahl al-Bayt, I must feel that he is my *walī*. One of the requirements of being a *walī* is that you must love that person. How can you be a *walī* of a person without loving him? And the second condition is that there must be a sense of obedience. There must be a right for obedience. This is why Ayatullah Muṭahhari says—in commenting on the aforementioned *āyah*—that Allah has given some type of authority to each *mu'min* (believer) over another *mu'min*. This is why Allah says [in continuation of the same verse]:

يَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمُنكَرِ

... they bid what is right and forbid what is wrong ... (9:71)

Why can you direct me, guide me, and indeed ask me to do something which is good? It is because you have this right of obedience [over me]. I cannot say, "it is none of your business", because it is Allah Who has given this *wilāyah* to you. But this [*wilāyah*] is mutual. I have this *wilāyah* [over

you] as well. I must love you and obey you, and you must love me and obey me—all for the betterment of the community. This is the meaning of *walīyun liman wālākum wa 'aduwwun li man 'ādākum*.

In another place in *Ziyārat-e 'Āshūrā*, we say:

<div dir="rtl">

اَتَقَرَّبُ اِلَىَ اللهِ ثمَّ اِلَي رَسُولِهِ ثمَّ اِلَي اَمِيرِ الْمؤمِنينَ ثمَّ اِلي فاطِمَةَ ثمَّ الي الْحَسَن وَ

الحسينِ بِمُوالاتِكُم وَ الْبَرائةِ مِنْ اَعدائِكُمْ

</div>

> I seek closeness to Allah, then to His Prophet, then to the Leader of believers, then to Faṭimah, then to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn through your *wilāyah* and through disassociating (myself) from your enemies.

Then in the subsequent text, or passage, we say:

<div dir="rtl">

اَتَقَرَبُ اِلَي اللهِ ثمَّ اِلَيكُمْ بِموالاتِكُمْ وَ مُوالاةِ وَلِيكُمْ وَ بِالبَرائةِ مِنْ اَعدائِكُمْ

</div>

> I seek closeness to Allah and then to you through your *wilāyah* and the *wilāyah* of your friends and through disassociating (myself) from your enemies.

This is very important because here something extra is added. I am saying that I seek closeness to you by having your *wilāyah*, by disassociating myself from your enemies, and also by having the *wilāyah* of your friends—*muwālāti walīyukum*. Moreover, this *walī* is not the Imam because the Imam is already addressed through the [previous] phrase of *bi muwālāti-kum*.

So whoever wants to get close to the Ahl al-Bayt and whoever wants to get close to the Prophet (ṣ) and to Lady Faṭimah ('a), it is not just a matter of visiting their shrines, reciting their *ziyārāt,* and doing something for them; on the contrary, you must show this [desire] by showing how much you love their followers. If you love a father or mother you must love their children; you must respect their children. I cannot, for example, beat someone's child and then claim that I love them. How can you love someone and beat his child, or ignore his child?

In another place within *Ziyārat-e 'Āshūrā* we say:

<div dir="rtl">

فَاسُئلُ اللهَ اَلذِي اَكرَمَني بِمَعرِفَتِكُمْ وَ مَعرِفَةِ اَوليائِكُمْ وَرَزَقني اَلبَرائةَ مِن

اَعدائِكُمْ اَنْ يَجعَلني مَعَكُمْ في الدُّنيا وَ الاخِرةِ

</div>

> So I ask Allah—the One Who has honoured me through knowing you and knowing your *awliyā'* and Who has provided me with [the gift] of disassociation from your enemies—to place me with you in this world and in the hereafter...

70

"Knowing your *awliyā*'"—if I have time I will talk about this concept of *walī*. This *walī* is not just a friend; the *walī* is not just a lover; this *walī* is the one who is in the same camp as you just as the *ʿaduww* is in the opposite camp.

In the above phrase, there are four requests that are made. Before I mention those four, we have to remember that whenever you ask Allah (*swt*) for something, and then you mention one of his blessings at the beginning or one of his qualities at the end, there must be a relation. If I say "O Allah, Who is Merciful," and then ask something [from Him], there must be a relation between what I ask and the Mercy of Allah. I cannot ask, "O Allah, Who is Merciful, please kill so and so." This does not make sense. Or for example, "Oh Allah, Who is *razzāq* (the Sustainer), please destroy so and so." There is no relation [between the two].

In this phrase, before the request we make, we are describing Allah as such:

اَلذي اَكرَمَني بِمَعرِفَتِكُمْ وَ مَعرِفَةِ اَوليائِكُمْ وَرَزَقني اَلبرائَةَ مِن اَعدائِكُمْ

... the One Who has honoured me through knowing you and knowing your *awliyā'* and Who has provided me with [the gift] of disassociation from your enemies ...

So you realize that this is the key for what you are going to ask since it comes just before your request. So what do we ask? First:

اَنْ يَجعَلني مَعَكُمْ في الدُّنيا وَ الاخرةِ

... to place me with you in this world and in the hereafter...

I want to be with you in the *dunyā* (this world) and in the hereafter. What does it mean to be with them in the *dunyā* and the hereafter? Does it mean to physically be with them in the *dunyā*? If that is the case, then people of our age are deprived of this *tawfīq* (or opportunity) and this privilege of being with them physically. But I think even in the time of the Ahl al-Bayt it was not necessary for every Shia to go and live in Madinah so as to be with Imam Ṣādiq (*ʿa*) or to go and live in Kūfā so as to be with Imam ʿAlī (*ʿa*). To 'be with you' is different from physical union. To 'be with you' means "to be in your camp." It means to be known as someone who is your follower and who is working for your cause.

And I also want to be with you [O Imam] in the *ākhirah*. We have many *aḥādīth* (traditions) which are very beautiful, which say that on the Day of Judgment, when Allah (*swt*) calls every nation to come, wait, and stand in queue behind their leader, then *insha-Allah* you the Shia—the followers of

the Ahl al–Bayt—will come and be with us [i.e., the Ahl al-Bayt] and we will be taken together to heaven. For example, Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa), in a ḥadīth which is mentioned by Allamah Ṭabaṭabāʾī in al-Mīzān, commenting on the verse:

$$\text{يَوْمَ نَدْعُواْ كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَـٰمِهِمْ}$$

The day We shall summon every group of people with their
imam... (17:71)

narrates the following (which is also mentioned in Tafsīr-e Namūneh and in many other places):

<div dir="rtl">

ألا تحمدون الله إذا كان يوم القيامة فدعا كل قوم إلى من يتولونه و دعانا إلى

رسول الله ص و فزعتم إلينا فإلى أين ترون نذهب بكم إلى الجنة و رب الكعبة

قالها ثلاثا

</div>

Do you not praise Allah that when the Day of Resurrection comes
Allah will call every group towards those who have their wilāyah.
And He will call us towards the Messenger (ṣ) of Allah. Then you will
seek asylum with us. Then where do you think we will take you? To-
wards heaven and the Lord of the Kaʿbah.

The Imam repeated this three times. Insha-Allah if you manage [to be with them then you will be taken to heaven], but this is the challenge. It is not a matter of claiming something; rather if you manage to be with them in that particular moment then you will be taken to heaven. In another ḥadīth, Imam Ṣādiq (ʿa) said:

<div dir="rtl">

إذا كان يوم القيمة قال اللّه: أليس عدل من ربكم أن تولّوا كلّ قوم من تولّوا؟

قالوا: بلى، قال: فيقول تميّزوا فيتميزون

</div>

When the Day of Resurrection comes, Allah will say: 'Does not Al-
lah's justice necessitate that every group be with those they have fol-
lowed?' They will say: 'Yes.' They will be told: 'Distinguish your-
selves!' So they will distinguish themselves.

So on the Day of Judgement, Allah (swt) tells the people: tamayyazū—"distinguish yourselves." In a school, for example, before the kids go to the classrooms, they are playing all over the yard. But then the head-teacher or the principal says, "everyone stand in queue!" So the first year-, second year-, third year-students all stand in queue, and one by one they go to their

classrooms. On the Day of Judgment, it is not a matter of age, classrooms, ethnicity, etc. People will automatically be distinguished based on their faith, their practices, and their qualities. There is no need for anyone to come and say, "this person must go to this group and that person must go to another group." Allah says *tamayyazū*. He just says to stand in your own place, your due place—*fa yatamayyazūn* ("they will distinguish themselves"). And we have lots of *aḥādīth* about this.

So to 'be with them' in the *dunyā*—to be in their camp in this *dunyā*—and to 'be with them' in the *ākhirah* is what we always have to ask from Allah (*swt*). But what is the key? It is *maʿrifatakum* (knowledge of them). We must, first of all, know the Ahl al-Bayt. It is impossible to live like the Ahl al-Bayt and be resurrected in their group without knowing them properly. And to know the Ahl al-Bayt is not just their historical, biographical information. Many of us know the Ahl al-Bayt as people who lived in history and have nothing to do with our lives. Even Imam-e Zamān—most of us have knowledge of him as a historical matter. Many of the things that we know about Imam-e Zamān were known to the people who lived one thousand years ago. Today, we still benefit from the books written about Imam-e Zamān by Shaykh Sadūq or Shaykh Ṭūsī. But is this really the meaning of knowing the Imam of our age? Or [is it more likely that] when I say I must know the Imam of my age, it means that I must know my Imam, I must know my age, and I must know what my Imam is trying to achieve in this age? Is this the meaning of "Imam-e Zamān" (the Imam of the Age)? What is the main concern of my Imam-e Zamān at this particular time? What are the concerns of my Imam-e Zamān in this community, in this city, and in this school? I must have enough of an understanding of my Imam's wills that I can work for him. It is not enough that I just read a book that was written a thousand years ago—that is part of it, no one can deny that. But you must know enough about Imam-e Zamān and you must think enough about Imam-e Zamān so as to understand what you are supposed to do in this particular age and in this particular setting for the Imam. This, of course, is something for which we need the guidance of the *ʿulamāʾ* (scholars), for which we need the guidance of the *marāji'* (religious authorities), for which we need the guidance of the *walī-ye faqīh* (i.e., the Supreme Leader). It is not something where every person says, "Yes! I had a dream that Imam-e Zamān wants this," or as we say in the English context, "I had a call from God." This is not working. Everything must be rational—everything must have a clear methodology. In the end, there is no doubt that whoever is trying to be *with* the Ahl al-Bayt in the *ākhirah* must, from now, start working *for* the Ahl al-Bayt.

In *Du'ā Nudbah*, we find that it has different stages: first we start with a deep theological discussion about the way Allah (*swt*) has sent prophets on their missions; then we focus on the mission of Prophet Muhammad; then we move to the Ahl al-Bayt and what the people did with the Ahl al-Bayt; finally, we reach the point where we are ready to address Imam-e Zamān (*'atfs*). Even in that very emotional and personal part where we talk to Imam-e Zamān, we still find the social and collective nature of *wilāyah*. We say:

هَلْ مِنْ مُعِينٍ فَأُطِيلَ مَعَهُ الْعَوِيلَ وَالْبُكَاءَ

Is there any aid (or helper) with whom I can prolong my weeping and
crying?

If you want to cry, why do you need a helper? Many of us think that crying is something personal. Of course, it has to be somehow personal. But here, even for crying, they [i.e., the Ahl al-Bayt] ask you to search for the other people who are willing to cry with you—so that you can prolong your crying. This is very important: *fa uṭīla ma'ahu al-'awīla wa al-bukā'* ("so that I can prolong my weeping and crying with him"). If *I* cry alone, I will cry for maybe five minutes. If *you* cry alone, you [too] will cry for five minutes. But if we cry *together*, how much do we cry? Five plus five? No. I will cry longer and you will cry longer, so it will be ten plus ten. This is the blessing of working together: *fa uṭīla ma'ahu al-'awīla wa al-bukā'*. It is not just that I will cry with someone else; otherwise, the *du'ā* would have read, *Hal min mu'īnin fa abkī ma'ahu* ("Is there any helper so that I can cry with him?"). But it is not *abkī ma'ahu*; it is *uṭīla ma'ahu al-'awīla wa al-bukā'*. I would be able to prolong my crying.

هَلْ مِنْ جَزُوعٍ فَأُساعِدَ جَزَعَهُ إِذا خَلا

Is there anyone worried (for you and who is lamenting) so that I may
assist him in his worries when he is alone?

Idhā khalā—i.e., when he is in his private place and time. This shows that we must be so close to one other that we do not just meet in mosques or public spaces. The Shias must be so close to the point of *idhā khalā*—when they are alone and when there is no one else, it should not stop you to be with your brother or sister in faith.

What is interesting is that in the first sentence we say, *hal min mu'īnin* ("Is there any helper?"), but in the second sentence we say, *hal min jazū'in fa usā'ida jaza'ahu* ("Is there anyone worried so that I may assist him in his worries"). In this case, you offer help. In the first case you sought help,

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whereas in the second, you offer help. Hence, help must be mutual. In a *ḥadīth* it is recorded that someone said to Imam Bāqir ('a), "you have lots of supporters" [referring to the Shias] to which the Imam replied, "Do every one of you place your hand in the pocket of his brother and take from it to the extent that you require?" [i.e., such should be the qualities of a supporter of the Imam]. Unfortunately, when we talk to most people about *wilāyah* or quote the above *ḥadīth* for example, the people sadly say, "where are the people that I can put my hand in their pockets?" This is automatically what people say. They look for someone whose pockets they can put their hands in [but are not ready to give to others]. But this is not *wilāyah*. *Wilāyah* is that you are ready to open your own pocket and your own account for other *mu'minīn*. When we say to the *'ulamā'* please work together, they say: "okay, come and help me", instead of saying, "okay what can I do for you?" Of course, we have to be thankful because there are others who actually say, "I don't want to see you; please don't interfere." But if they are very good, they say, "okay, come and help me."

Interestingly, this *du'ā* tells us that the offer to help must be greater than the request for help. Why? Because the first time, it says, *hal min mu'īnin* ("Is there any helper?"); the second time, it says, *hal min jazū'in fa usā'ida jaza'ahu* ("Is there anyone worried that I may assist him in his worries"); then in the third instance, it says:

$$\text{هَلْ قَذِيَتْ عَيْنٌ فَسَاعَدَتْها عَيْني عَلَى الْقَذى}$$

Is there any eye which has been pricked with a thorn (from intense
weeping) that my thorn-pricked eye can assist his?

So, twice you offer help and only once do you ask for help. In a community which is based on *wilāyah* and which is based on the love of the Ahl al-Bayt, everyone is ready to work for the good of others and they are reluctant to ask others for help. This is a healthy community. A healthy community is a community in which everyone is ready to obey and offer help, but they try not to be a burden on the society. What is our society like? Is our society like this? Or is it that everyone wants to be, as much as they can, takers and not givers.

Du'ā 'Ahd, the *du'ā* which Imam Ṣādiq ('a) taught the Shias, is particularly important for our time I believe—the time of *ghaybah* (occultation)—and in particular, during a time when the Shia community is distributed worldwide. In such a *du'ā*, when we want to send our salutations to Imam Mahdi ('atfs), what do we say? What are we *supposed* to say? Should I say, "O Allah, please send my salutations to the Imam" or "O Allah, please send my

salutations, on behalf of myself, my parents, my children, and my family"
or "O Allah, please send salutations to Imam Mahdi on my behalf, on be-
half of my family, parents, cousins and uncles and finally, on behalf of the
mu'minīn (believers)"? No. Imam Ṣādiq says, first you must think about the
community:

اللّهُمَّ بَلِّغْ مَوْلانا اَلإمامَ الهادِيَ الْمَهْدِيَّ الْقائِمَ بِأَمْرِكَ صَلَواتُ اللّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلى

آبائِهِ الطّاهِرينَ عَنْ جَميعِ الْمُؤْمِنينَ وَالْمُؤْمِناتِ في مَشارِقِ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغارِبِها

سَهْلِها وَجَبَلِها وَبَرِّها وَبَحْرِها وَعَنّي وَعَنْ وَالِدَيَّ

O Allah send (blessings to) our master—the leader, the guide, the
guided, the one who will rise with Your command, blessings of Allah
be on him and his pure forefathers, *from all the believing men and be-
lieving women in the east's of the earth and it's west's, in its plains and its
mountains, its lands and its seas*, from me and my parents...

First of all on behalf of every *mu'min* man or woman *fī mashāriq al-
arḍihi wa maghāribiha* ("in the east's and the west's"). It is not only the
mu'minīn who live in my city; it is not only the *mu'minīn* who live in my
country or my continent—it is those who are in the East and the West.
How many people lived in the time of Imam Ṣādiq in the East who were
Shias? How many people lived in the time of Imam Ṣādiq in the known
West of that time who were Shia? This is why I said that the Imam is speak-
ing to *us* for we live in a time in which the community is distributed and
spread out worldwide—*fī mashāriq al-arḍihi wa maghāribiha*. This, by itself,
was enough to include every person. However, the Imam says, *sahlihā wa
jabalihā, barrihā wa baḥrihā* ("in its plains and its mountains, its lands and
its seas"). So even if there are a few Shias living, for example, on an island,
you have to remember them [and send blessings on their behalf]. If there
are some people travelling on a boat or in a plane, you have to remember
them before you remember yourself. Interestingly, you must start your day
with this remembrance. You start your day with the remembrance of the
Imam and the remembrance of all the people who love the Imam and who
work for the Imam. And it is only then that you say:

وَعَنّي وَعَنْ وَالِدَيَّ مِنَ الصَّلَواتِ زِنَةَ عَرْشِ اللّهِ وَمِدادَ كَلِماتِهِ وَما اَحْصاهُ عِلْمُهُ

وَأَحاطَ بِهِ كِتابُهُ

... *from me and my parents*—blessings, which are the weight of Allah's
throne, and ink of His words, and whatever His knowledge enume-
rates, and His book encompasses.

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There are many other things that one can mention. I think I should stop here and make just one or two points clear. I believe the message is clear enough and we do not need further evidence. Nevertheless, there is a great amount of evidence for this idea, beginning with the *ṣalāh*: for instance, why do we say *iyāka na'budu* ("it is only You that *we* worship") instead of *iyyāka a'budu* ("it is only You that *I* worship")? Why do we *not* say *ihdī ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* ("Guide *me* on the straight path")? And why do we end with *al-salāmu 'alayna* ("peace be on *us*") as opposed to *al-salāmu alayya* ("peace be on *me*")? What about the *ḥajj*? What about many other [communal] types of worship in Islam? I think it is quite clear and obvious: it is a message which was presented to us in the clearest manner, but unfortunately, we were not able to get this message. And even if we have understood it, we have not been able to implement it.

One important question should be addressed: is this understanding of *wilāyah* against Islamic unity? When we talk so much about remembering the Shias, loving the Shias, working for the betterment of the Shia community, does it mean that it is against the Sunnis? No. In fact, that is a wrong conclusion. I believe unity is something which exists at different levels and stages. If you want to have a unified community in one city, in which for example, there are a few thousand *mu'minīn*, how can you create a community which is very close, very intimate, and very friendly? Do you need to tell people, not to be close to their parents, their cousins, and their uncles so that they [i.e., the *mu'minīn* of the city] can all be together? No. Indeed, if you want to have unity in the city, you must start with having unity within families, followed by unity within extended families, and then in the streets of the city, and then in the whole city. And if we establish this in every city, then we will be in a position to have unity in the whole country, and if we have unity in the whole country, then we can have unity in the whole continent. The unity of the faithful is like this. You are in Qom, coming from different backgrounds. We have brothers from Pakistan, from India, from the UK, from the US, from Canada, and from other countries. You must be united, no doubt, but is it at the cost of your own smaller communities? Should Pakistanis, Indians, Americans, and Canadians not meet and have any close relations within their own respective communities so that the whole community [of *mu'minīn*] can be united? Or is it more likely that unity must start from these nuclei and these smaller points of meeting? I believe the best chance that we can ever have for Islamic unity is if the Shias are united themselves around wise leadership and not around those who are confused and want to make us fight against our brothers, just like we have their counterparts in the other party who want to turn Sunnis

against the Shia brothers. We do not like such people. If we are united in the way that the Ahl al-Bayt have taught us then we would be in a better position to be united with the rest of the Muslim community. And if all the Muslims are united, would it be against the Christians or Jews? Or [rather] would it be serving and helping to create a unity of all believers? At present, some people work for unity while others work for disunity. Some people try to bring people together while others try to divide and cause *fitnah*. This is not working and people are becoming confused. They wonder who is speaking for the Shias. Is it these people who are doing all this *la'n* (cursing) and these types of sins, or the people who are like Imam Khumaynī, the Supreme Leader, and the other great *'ulamā'* throughout the history of the Shias who have always called for unity. Since we are not united ourselves, people are confused: Who is a real Shia? Who is really expressing the Shia voice? So this unity and this *wilāyah* is not against anyone—it is for the betterment of all mankind. This is a very important concept.

Sometimes people think that people are either with us or against us—that they are either a *walī* or an *'aduww*—but this is not what we understand from our *aḥādīth*. We have many *aḥādīth*, for example, in the case of Imam 'Alī that people are divided into three categories, not two: those who followed him, those who opposed him, and those who are in neither of the above groups. For example, we have in a *ḥadīth* that the Imam is like a gate, and there are people who entered through this gate, people who exited from it, and finally, people who didn't have any experience with it—i.e., they did not have any relation with this gate. When the Prophet on the Day of Ghadīr said *allahumma wālī man wālāhu wa 'ādī man 'ādāhu* ("O Allah, befriend the one who befriends him [i.e., Imam 'Alī] and show enmity to the one who shows enmity to him"); he did not say, for example, *allahumma aḥibba man aḥabbahu wa abghiḍ man lā yuḥibbuhu* ("O Allah, love the one who loves him and hate the one who does not love him")—he did not say this. He said that those who have his *wilāyah*, who are with him, and who support him, You be supportive of them. Those who start hostility and enmity and war, You be against them. Then there are people who are in between the two. They do not necessarily follow the Imam nor are they necessarily at war with him. As for most of the Muslim community we have today, it is not that they are enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt. Perhaps, we do not have that many enemies of the Ahl al-Bayt today, but there are some extremists and radical people.

Nevertheless, it is not that we have this idea that either people are with us or they are our enemies. No. So, our own camp comprises of people who

have this understanding: First of all, they are the people who believe in the Ahl al-Bayt. Yet, in our camp it is possible for there to be people who work for the Ahl al-Bayt without knowing the Ahl al-Bayt. This is also something very important. You may have a non-Shia who works for the Ahl al-Bayt better than many Shias. Indeed, you have some Shias that work against the Ahl al-Bayt. You may even have non-Muslims who are working for Imam Mahdi—for the cause of Imam Mahdi, for justice, for many things—and they may not even know who Imam Mahdi is. So it is not that whoever is not a Shia is not in our camp. This camp has a hierarchy—there are different levels of closeness to the Ahl al-Bayt. Moreover, the opposite camp is not composed of everyone who is not in the first camp. The opposite camp comprises people who have deliberately decided to oppose the causes of the Ahl al-Bayt. In between the two, there are many people who are misguided and they wonder what to do. And it is our responsibility to open up our camp and to let these people come into our camp, or at least prevent them from going into the other camp. Unfortunately, sometimes we are so exclusive that we turn the people easily against us. This is not acceptable.

So we do not necessarily have this concept that people should either be in our camp or be our enemy. There are three possibilities and I think most of the people are not our enemies—I do not have this pessimism. I believe that the majority of the people of the world are not against us; it is just our failure to present our ideas and to convince them that what we have is for all mankind. I think in particular, in the case of Imam Mahdi, we must do the same thing: we must not present Imam Mahdi as a saviour for the Shias. Imam Mahdi is not a saviour for [just] the Shias. Imam Mahdi is a saviour for all mankind in whose time maybe the Shias suffer. You know, if you want to have a peaceful life, according to the *ḥadīth*, maybe the time of *ghaybah* is a much better period. In the time of Imam Mahdi, however, you must be ready to work hard; it is not that the Imam will come and we will go on holiday. Imam will come as a saviour for mankind. This is very important. And as we have in Duʿā Nudbah again:

$$ مَتَى تَرَانا وَنَرَاكَ وَقَدْ ... نَحُفُّ بِكَ وَاَنْتَ تَؤُمُّ الْمَلَأَ $$

When shall you see us and we see you ... and we are around you, and
you are leading the masses of people?

We say, "we are around you to support you and to be your shelter, but you are leading *mankind*." So the Imam is not the leader and saviour of only the Shias. The Imam is the saviour of *mankind*. This is the type of understand-

ing of Imam-e Zamān that we have to try to present and it is very important.

The other thing, which is my second and final point, is that Imam Khumaynī (*r*)—may Allah (*swt*) send His Mercy to Imam Khumaynī and all the great *ʿulamāʾ* who have passed away and make them happy and content at this moment—first started by educating, training, and purifying himself, and then training a group of devotees of students. He then initiated the Revolution and the Islamic Republic was established. We are [currently] trying to have an Islamic government. It is not the case that what we have today is complete and perfect; rather we are in the process [of getting there], but we think that *al-ḥamdu lillah* over the years we are getting closer *insha-Allah*.

The point, though, is that you do not necessarily need to have this [Islamic government] in every place. It is not the case that in every place if you want to follow Imam Khumaynī you must first have a revolution and then establish an Islamic government, etc. Some people are confused regarding this—not so many among the Shias but there are a few among the non-Shia Muslims. They say, 'we want to establish *khilāfah*.' Where? In a country in which two percent are Muslims they want to establish *khilāfah*. This does not make sense! If we want to follow Imam Khumaynī, it is not necessary that we call for a revolution and for establishing a new regime in every country. What is important is to establish this concept of *wilāyah*. And this is something not restricted by any boundaries nor is it against any law or political establishment. Moreover, it is much more influential than having a system or government which is just political, and lacking this spiritual aspect of *wilāyah*. In Iran *al-ḥamdu lillah*, we have an Islamic government and Republic under the leadership of the great leader. We have lots of *ʿulamāʾ*, lots of *mujtahidīn* (jurists), and lots of good people. Yet we still have not been able to achieve this aspect of spiritual *wilāyah*. So we need to work hard. But in other places you do not need to go all the way through [by establishing an Islamic republic] and then come to this [spiritual *wilāyah*]. You can start with it. I think every person—every one of us—is responsible for starting this type of implementation of *wilāyah*: to know all the people who are within the same camp; to know about their concerns, their talents, and their abilities; to have concern for them; and to always think about what we can do for the community. If we start with this, then we will be in a better position *insha-Allah* to prepare for the advent of Imam Mahdi (*ʿatfs*). I thank you very much for your attention and I pray that Allah (*swt*) *insha-Allah* gives you all a great reward for respecting such a great man as Imam Khumaynī. You spent your time and energy for organizing this fo-

rum and for attending it. May Allah and may the Lady Fāṭima, mother of Imam Khumaynī, reward you all for this great service *insha-Allah*.

International Quds Day:
Re-emergence of a Unifying Social Order for the Ummah[*]

Mansoor Limba

Abstract:

It has been a full thirty years since Imam Khumaynī first consecrated the last Friday of the month of Ramaḍān as "Quds Day" in a gesture of solidarity with the Palestinian people under the Zionist regime. Today, Quds Day has become an international phenomenon with marches and demonstrations held in many countries of the world. This paper begins by affirming the connection between the holy lands of Palestine and the advent of the Mahdi (ʿatfs) as found within the *hadīth* literature. It then examines Imam Khumaynī's concept of *intiẓār*—one characterized by a dynamic activism—and its role in the declaration of International Quds Day. Through the examination of internet sources, the paper surveys the present status of Quds Day, which seems to have gained momentum both qualitatively and quantitatively, overcoming ethnic and sectarian boundaries. The author concludes with an analysis of the role of IT in the acceptance of Quds Day as a bona fide holiday in the Muslim world.

Keywords: al-Mahdī, Qud's Day, Imam Khumaynī, Palestine, cyber-space, *intiẓār*, social order.

INTRODUCTION

The victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 not only marks the triumph of the Islamic movement in Iran, but also heralds the dawn of a new phase in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. Barely a half year after the establishment of the Islamic government, the great leader of the Islamic Revolution, founder of the Islamic Republic, and magnificent idol-breaker of the twentieth century, Imam Khumaynī (may his soul be sanctified),

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made the historic announcement consecrating the last Friday of the majestic month of fasting, Ramaḍān, as 'Quds[1] Day' to signify the global Muslims' gesture of solidarity and support for all the oppressed peoples of the world as epitomized by the Palestinian people under the Zionist regime.

In his first message on the occasion of the auspicious day, the Imam of the ummah reveals that Quds day is a global day; thus, a day not exclusively for Quds. For him, it is a day of confrontation for nations that have been under tyranny. Accordingly, it is a day when the oppressed should become equipped against the oppressors and "they should rub their noses in the dirt."[2]

AL-QUDS AND THE MAHDI'S ('ATFS)[3] ADVENT

The holy city of Quds or Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque or Bayt al-Muqaddas/Madqis feature prominently in the events before and after the reappearance of the Imam of the Age ('atfs). In the corpus of Islamic traditions (aḥādīth), Mecca is mentioned as the point of origin of his uprising and then Iraq—the city of Kufah in particular—as the military-political capital of his government. It is reported that the last Imam ('atfs) will march towards Sham (Syria) and liberate Bayt al-Muqaddas.

The Commander of the Faithful ('a) said: "…Then, with a thousand ships, ḥaḍrat al-Mahdi ('atfs) will leave the city of Qaṭiʿ for the holy city of Quds, and from Acre, Tyre, Gaza, and 'Asqalan[4] he will enter the land of Palestine. He will take out its wealth and booty. Thereafter, ḥaḍrat al-Mahdi ('atfs) will enter Quds al-Sharīf where he will dismount and stay until the coming out of al-Dajjāl (the Anti-Christ)."[5]

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[1] Quds is the Arabic word for Jerusalem and means 'the holy.' Jerusalem is revered as the third holiest city in Islam, after Mecca and Medina. *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini* (Tehran: International Affairs Department of the Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, Autumn 1999), ft. 2, p. ii. In this paper, wherever the term is spelled as "Qods" or "Ghods" in direct quotations and Internet addresses, I retained the alternative spellings.

[2] "Message of Imam Khomeini on the Occasion of the Day of Quds," The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution: The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution: Echo of Islam Magazine Special Issue, vol. 1, p. 202.

[3] The abbreviation, "'atfs" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, 'ajjalallahu ta'āla farajahu al-sharīf (may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent), which is invoked after mentioning the name of Imam al-Mahdī ('atfs).

[4] 'Asqalan: a city in Shām which is a dependency of Palestine and along the seashore. It is located between the cities of Gaza and Bayt al-Jabrayn. See *Muʿjam al-buldān*, vol. 3, p. 673.

[5] *ʿIqd al-Durar*, p. 201. Quoted in Najmuddīn Ṭabasī, *An Overview of the Mahdi's ('atfs) Government*, trans. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly, *forthcoming*).

In reply to a person who said, "I want to ask something from you, which has not been asked by anyone before me and will never be asked by anyone after me," Imam al-Ṣādiq (ʿa) said, "Perhaps, you want to ask about *ḥashr* and *nashr*." He said, "By the One Who appointed Muhammad as the giver of glad tidings and as the warner, yes." He (ʿa) said, "The *ḥashr* of all people is toward the Bayt al-Muqaddas (in Jerusalem) except that of a mausoleum in a mountainous land to be called 'Qom' and divine teachings will be part of their features." While half-standing, the man asked, "O son of the Messenger of Allah! Does it pertain to the people of Qom?" The Imam (ʿa) replied, "Yes, it pertains to them and anyone who shares their conviction and words."[6]

Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyyah said:

> An army will set out from Khurāsān that will wear black belts and white shirts. One of the army's vanguards will be the commander called Shuʿayb ibn Ṣāliḥ or Ṣāliḥ ibn Shuʿayb who is from the tribe of Banī Tamīm. They will defeat the soldiers of Sufyānī and drive them away; they will arrive in Bayt al-Muqaddas and pave the ground for the government of *ḥaḍrat* al-Mahdi.[7]

Kaʿb said, "A man from Banī Hāshim will reside in Bayt al-Muqaddas. The number of his security forces is twelve thousand." In another *ḥadīth* he said, "The number of his guards is thirty-six thousand, and twelve thousand will be stationed at the beginning of every highway leading toward Bayt al-Muqaddas."[8]

Regarding the conquest of Hind, Kaʿb said:

> The ruler in Bayt al-Muqaddas will dispatch an army to Hind and conquer it. Then that army will enter the territory of Hind and it will send the treasures there to the ruler of Bayt al-Muqaddas. He will also embellish it (Hind) and the kings of Hind will be brought to him as captives. The eastern and western lands will be opened for them and the forces will be present in Hind till the emergence of al-Dajjāl.[9]

Hudhayfah reported that the Prophet (ṣ) said: "Ṭāhir ibn Asmaʾ fought with the Children of Israel and took them in captivity, setting Bayt al-Muqaddas on fire while taking the amount of one thousand seven (or nine)

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[6] Ibid., p. 218. Quoted in Ṭabasi, op. cit.
[7] Ibn Ḥammad, *Fitan*, p. 84; *Ibn al-Munādī*, p. 47; Darmī, *Sunan*, p. 98; *ʿIqd al-Durar*, p. 126; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Fitan*, p. 49. Quoted in Ṭabasi, op. cit.
[8] Ibn Ḥammad, *Fitan*, p. 106; *ʿIqd al-Durar*, p. 143. Quoted in Ṭabasi, op. cit.
[9] *ʿIqd al-Durar*, pp. 97, 319; Ibn Ṭāwūs, *Malāḥim*, p. 81; Ḥanafī, *Burhān*, p. 88. Quoted in Ṭabasi, op. cit.

hundred ships of gold and jewellery from there to the city of Rome. *Ḥaḍrat* al-Mahdi (*'atfs*) will definitely take them out from that city and return them to Bayt al-Muqaddas."[10]

Ka'b said, "The days will not end until a man from the Quraysh will descend in Bayt al-Muqaddas ... and war will also cease to exist."[11]

THE FOUNDER OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN'S CONCEPTION OF 'WAITING' (INTIẒĀR)

The Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran's conception of 'waiting' (*intiẓār*) is characterized by activism and dynamism. In one of his speeches—barely a year prior to his demise—Imam Khumaynī (*r*)[12] mentioned the different conceptions of 'waiting' and indicated which of them is the correct one, refuting an objection against it:

> Some understand waiting for the advent in this way: that they would sit and supplicate in the mosque, at the *ḥusayniyyah*, and at home, and pray to God for the advent of the Imam of the Time (may God's peace be upon him). They are righteous people as they have such a belief. In fact, among them whom I used to know before was a very righteous man; he had bought a horse, he had a sword, and he was waiting for *ḥaḍrat ṣāḥib* (may God's peace be upon him). They used to perform their religious duties too—enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong; however, it was only that. Apart from this, they did not do any other things; they neither thought of doing such an important work.
>
> Another group was saying that waiting for the advent means that we should not be concerned with what is happening in the world, what is happening to the nations, and what is happening to our nation—we should not be concerned with these things. We are doing our duty. For preventing these affairs, His Holiness himself, God willing, will come and set them right; we have no other duty. This is our duty: to pray for him to come and not to mind whatever is happening in the world or in our own country. They constitute another group; they [too] were people who were righteous.

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[10] *'Iqd al-Durar*, 201; Shafi'ī, *Bayān*, p. 114; *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq*, vol. 13, p. 229. Quoted in Ṭabasi, op. cit.

[11] *'Iqd al-Durar*, p. 166. See 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 11, p. 401. Quoted in Ṭabasi, op. cit.

[12] The abbreviation, "*r*" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, *raḥmatullah 'alayhi*, *raḥmatullah 'alayha*, or *raḥmatullah 'alayhim* (may peace be upon him/her/them), which is mentioned after the names of pious people.

One group was saying, "Well, the world must be full of sin in order for His Holiness to come—hence, we should not forbid what is evil, nor should we enjoin what is good so that the people would do whatever they want; once sins become many, the advent would become near."

Another group was more extreme than this; they were saying, "Sins must be committed—people should be urged to commit sins so that the world would be filled with tyranny and oppression, and His Holiness (may God's peace be upon him) would come." This was another group, which was [most] misguided among the groups of course. They were narrow-minded individuals; they were misguided who committed those acts to attain the [perceived] objectives.

Yet another group was saying, "Any government that is established at the period of occultation is false [illegitimate] and is contrary to Islam." They were arrogant. Those who were not actors were arrogant on account of some fabricated traditions that state, "Any banner that is hoisted prior to the appearance of His Holiness is a false [illegitimate] one." They were imagining that any government [that is established] according to the manner of those [mentioned] traditions—that anyone hoisting the banner with the banner of al-Mahdi, in the name of "Mahdism" [—is false and illegitimate].

Now, let us assume that there is really such a tradition. Does it mean that we have no more duties [to perform]? That is, is it not against the expediency of Islam and against the Qur'ān that we have to indulge in sin in order for the Prophet to come and for *ḥaḍrat ṣāḥib* to come? What would *ḥaḍrat ṣāḥib* come for? It is to spread justice, to consolidate the government, and to eliminate corruption. It is contrary to the noble verses of the Qur'ān that we should refrain from forbidding what is evil; that we should refrain from enjoining what is good; that we should spread sins so that His Holiness would come. His Holiness would come for what? As His Holiness comes, he will do the same things. Now, what else is our duty? Does it mean that a person has no duty, or that his duty is to call on the people to indulge in corruption? According to the opinion of this assembly— some of whom are actors while others are ignorant—we have to sit [idly] and pray for Saddam. Whoever is cursing Saddam has done it contrary to the affair [of waiting for the advent] since His Holiness' coming will be delayed! And everybody should pray for Saddam so as to increase this corruption. We should pray for America, we should pray for the Soviet Union, we should pray for their puppets such as Saddam and the like—so that they would fill the world with tyranny and oppression and His Holiness would come?! After the coming of His Holiness, what would he do? His Holiness will come to eliminate tyranny and oppression—the same thing that we are doing—

and we pray that there should be tyranny and oppression?! His Holiness will eliminate the same things. In case we could—in case we have power—we must act and eliminate all the tyrannies and oppressions in the world. It is our religious duty, but we are incapable of doing so. What is [certain] is that His Holiness will fill the world with justice; it is not that you have to discard your duty; it is not that you have no more duty to perform.

We do have a duty. One who says that government is not necessary is implying that there should be chaos. If there is no government in a certain country for a year—if there is no system in a country—a great amount of corruption will fill that country in an unprecedented manner. One who says that there should be no government is implying that there should be chaos. Everybody should kill one another and everybody should oppress one another so that His Holiness would come. His Holiness would come for what? It is in order to eliminate it [corruption].

This is a clever man. If he is not a foolish person, is not spiteful, and has not done it for political motives to deceive us and not to mind them anymore and for them to come and do whatever they like, then he must be an extremely stupid person![13]

The Imam (r) also condemned the superpowers for promoting, or at least, tolerating a wrong conception of 'waiting' in this manner:

But the issue is that it has been politically motivated—in the same way as they had inculcated the following on the nations, on the Muslims, and on the other strata of the societies in the world: "Politics is none of your business; mind your own business, and entrust whatever is related to politics to the emperors." Well, they would like to ask God for the people to remain unaware and entrust politics to the government, to the oppressor, to America, to the Soviet Union, and the like, as well as their puppets—those who would take away everything we possess, those who would take away the possessions of Muslims, and those who would take away the possessions of the downtrodden—and then we have to sit down [idly] and say that there should be no government; this is a silly statement, but it has been politically motivated. These unwary individuals were deceiving in saying: "Do not mind politics. Government belongs to us. Go to your mosques; stand and perform prayer! What are you going to do with these (political) things?"

Those who were saying that any banner cannot be hoisted and government cannot be established imagined that any government can

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[13] *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Imām*, vol. 21, speech on April 3, 1988 [Farvardin 14, 1367 AHS / Shaʿbān 15, 1408 AH] on the different understandings of 'waiting' for the advent of Imam al-Mahdi (*ʿatfs*).

be established; (while the fact is that) it is repugnant to (the concept of) waiting for the advent. They do not understand what they are saying. They have been inculcated to make these statements. They do not know what they are uttering. To have no government means that all the people take the life of one another, kill one another, strike one another, eliminate one another, and act contrary to the text of the divine verses. Even if we assume that they have two hundred narrations [aḥādīth] on this subject, we will throw all of them against the wall because they are contradictory to the verses of the Qur'ān.[14] If there is a narration stating that we have to say that forbidding evil should not be done, it must be thrown against the wall. This kind of narration is impractical [as it is fabricated]. And these ignoramuses do not know what they are saying when they claim, "Any government is a [false and illegitimate] government"! In fact, I heard some of these people saying, "Well, with the existing condition that is in Iran now, we should no more engage in moral purification." These statements are wrong! It is no longer needed now. The teacher of ethics should definitely be in an environment where all the people are corrupt; where all the liquor houses are open, and I should say, where all centers of prostitution are open! If there is a decent place, moral purification is no more needed there. It cannot be; it is wrong! These [statements] are things which, if not only politically motivated, are silly ones. However, they know what they are saying. They want to sidetrack us.

Of course, filling the world with justice is something that we cannot do. If we can, we will do, but since we cannot do it then he (Imam al-Mahdi) has to come. Now, the world is full of oppression. If we could stop oppression, then we will do so; it is our duty. It is required by Islam and the Qur'ān. It has been our duty to act and do everything we can. But we could not do so. Since we could not do so, he has to come to do it. But we have to facilitate the work. Facilitating the work makes it become nearer. We will perform the work such that the world will be fitted for the coming of His Holiness (may God's peace be upon him). At any rate, these afflictions that have been experienced by Muslims and been exacerbated by foreign policies [of the arrogant powers] are all meant to plunder the Muslims and demolish their dignity; and they believed it so much [though it is false]. Now, perhaps, some also believe that there should be no government—that government should be [established] at the time of

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[14] This is in accordance with the criterion set by Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) who says to the effect that any saying (ḥadīth) attributed to him is to be assessed according to the Qur'ān; if it agrees with the Book of Allah, it is to be accepted and if not, it should "thrown against the wall," i.e. to be rejected as it is a fabricated one.

ḥaḍrat ṣāḥib, and any government not at the time of *ḥaḍrat ṣāḥib* is false—that is, there should be chaos and the people of the world should be at logger heads with one another so as for His Holiness to come and set it right! We will set it right so as for His Holiness to come.[15]

As a manifestation of this positive 'waiting' espoused by the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution in a macro-state level, he initiated many bold steps in paving the ground of the reappearance of the Imam of the Age (*'atfs*).

These bold steps include: (1) the introduction of the theory of 'guardianship of the jurist' (*wilāyat al-faqīh*), (2) the founding and heading the Islamic Republic as the Supreme Leader and 'jurist-guardian' (*walī al-faqīh*), (3) the declaration of Rabīʿ al-Awwal 12-17 as 'International Islamic Unity Week' and the opening of 'the Forum for the Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought' (*Dar al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmī*), (4) the revival of the Abrahamic Hajj and the rite of 'disavowal of the polytheists' (*barāʿah al-mushrikīn*), and (5) the consecration of the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramaḍān as 'International Quds Day'.

INTERNATIONAL QUDS DAY

To fully grasp the importance of the declaration of the last Friday of Ramaḍān as Quds Day, it is necessary to quote at full length the first message of the champion of the oppressed, which lays down the cornerstone of the Imam's conception of, and philosophy behind, the declaration; the subsequent messages are based on these declarations. Thereafter, we will analyze the implication of the key points of the statements towards the Palestinian Question.

The Declaration of International Quds Day

> In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful
> For many years I have been warning Muslims of the menace posed by the usurper Israel which has recently intensified her savage raids on our Palestinian brothers and sisters. Bent on the destruction of Palestinian freedom fighters, Israel has been ceaselessly bombing their houses and homes in Southern Lebanon.
> I call on the Muslims of the world, as well as on all Islamic governments, to join forces to cut down this usurper and its supporters. I invite Muslims all over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the

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[15] Ibid.

holy month of Ramaḍān—which is a 'day of fate' and which could also become the day on which the fate of the Palestinian people might be determined—as 'Quds Day' and to proclaim the international solidarity of Muslims in support of the legitimate rights of the Muslim people of Palestine.

I pray to the Almighty for the victory of the Muslims over the infidels.

May peace and mercy of God be upon you.

Ruhullah al-Musawī al-Khumaynī
Ramaḍān 1399 AH (August 7, 1979)

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Quds day is a global day. It is not a day exclusively for Quds. It is a day when the oppressed confront the oppressors. It is a day of confrontations for nations that have been under the tyranny of the American government and other oppressors. It is a day when the oppressed should become equipped against the oppressors and they should rub their noses in the dirt. It is a day when committed individuals are preferred over hypocrites. Dedicated people consider today as Quds day and act as they are obliged. The hypocrites—as well as those who are secretly acquainted with the superpowers and are friendly with Israel—are indifferent today or do not allow the nations to demonstrate on this day.

Quds day is a day when the fate of the oppressed nations must be determined. Oppressed nations should make their presence known to the oppressors, just like Iran rose up and defeated [their oppressors] and will [continue to] defeat. All nations should rise up and throw these germs of corruption in the garbage. Quds day is a day when these followers of Iran's past regime and these corrupt plot-making regimes and superpowers in other places, especially in Lebanon, should know their assignment. It is a day when we and they should exert our efforts to liberate Quds and save our Lebanese brothers.

It is a day when we have to rescue the oppressed from the claws of the oppressors. It is a day when the Islamic society should make its presence known to all superpowers and their pulp, whether in Iran or other places. It is a day when these intellectuals who have formed a relation with America or American agents should be warned—warned that if they don't quit this interfering, they will be suppressed...

Quds day is the day when superpowers should be warned that they must leave the oppressed alone and sit back and take their own place. Israel has become the enemy of humanity; on a daily basis, it starts a new uproar setting our brothers in Southern Lebanon on fire.

Israel should try to understand that its masters don't have any power any longer. They should choose isolation. They should cut their covetousness of Iran and take their hands off all Islamic countries.

Quds day is the day of announcing such an issue. It is the declaration that the satanic superpowers want to isolate the Islamic nations and impose themselves on the scene of action. Quds day is a day when their wishes should be chopped and they should be warned that those times are gone.

The day of Quds is the day of Islam. All Muslims must be warned and must understand how strong their spiritual and economic powers are. Muslims are one billion people, supported by God, Islam, and the power of faith. Why should they be afraid? ...

All the governments of the world must know that Islam is invincible. Islam and the Qur'ān will conquer the world. A true religion should be a divine religion. Islam is a divine religion and thus must be promoted throughout the whole world.

The Day of Quds is such a day and announces such a goal, announcing the progress of the Muslims all over the world. The Day of Quds is not only the Day of Palestine, but it is a day of Islam as well. It is the day of Islamic government. It is the day that the banner of Islam is to be flown in all countries and the Muslims must show the superpowers that they cannot influence Islamic countries any longer. They must realize that the day of Quds is Islam's and the Prophet's Day—the day that we must muster all our powers when all of the Muslims must come out of isolation and stand against the foreigners with all of their strength...

The Day of Quds is the day that we will realize which regime and persons are cooperating with international conspirators and thus are opposing Islam. Those who do not participate in these demonstrations are opposing Islam and thus are in agreement with Israel. Those who participate in the demonstrations on this day are responsible people and are in stride with Islam and thus oppose Israel.

The Day of Quds is a day to distinguish between truth and falsehood. I ask God Almighty to give victory to Islam over all of the other faiths and support the deprived in order to defeat the arrogant—"those who cause deprivation." I implore God to free our Muslim brothers in Palestine and South Lebanon and everywhere in the world from the oppressors, deprivers, and plunderers.

Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of God and the Imams of the Muslims.[16]

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[16] Ibid., pp. 202-205; *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini*, pp. 137-139; "Announcement of International Quds Day."

A close scrutiny of the foregoing message would bring to light the following points with paramount import to the Palestinian issue:

First of all, by stressing that "For many years I have been warning Muslims of the menace posed by the usurper Israel which has recently intensified her savage raids on our Palestinian brothers and sisters," Imam Khumaynī's concern to the issue is not a new one born out of the establishment of the Islamic Republic. It is not meant to be an empty rhetoric aimed at winning the heart of the Arabs or at least the Palestinians towards the Islamic political establishment in Tehran. Instead, it has been a priority agendum for him as a concerned Muslim worthy of the name long before the Islamic Revolution.[17]

Secondly, though "all Islamic governments" are mentioned, undoubtedly Imam Khumaynī's invitation to consecrate the last Friday of the fasting month is mainly addressed to the Muslim masses of the world as suggested by the remarkable repetitions "I have been warning Muslims," "I call on the Muslims of the world," and "I invite all Muslims all over the globe." It shows that he is pinning hope on the masses, and not their governments, as they have the power to mobilize once organized. Another reason behind his reliance on the people is indicated by his remarks,

> It is a day [Quds day] when committed individuals are preferred over hypocrites. Dedicated people consider today as Quds day and act as they are obliged. The hypocrites—as well as those who are secretly acquainted with the superpowers and are friendly with Israel—are indifferent today or do not allow the nations to demonstrate on this day.[18]

Quality as represented by "committed individuals" are favoured over quantity as represented particularly by "the hypocrites"—alluding to those in the high echelon of the governments in the Muslim world—who, according to the Imam, "are indifferent and do not allow the nations to demonstrate today."[19]

Thirdly, in this message, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution points to the true nature and scope of the Quds day as the day of all the oppressed and deprived people in confrontation with the world devourers

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[17] For Imam Khumaynī's speeches, messages, and interviews espousing his unflinching stance against the State of Israel in support of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, see *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Imām: An Anthology of Imam Khomeini's Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Decrees, Religious Permissions, and Letters* Vols. 1-5 (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1379 AHS).

[18] Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini, loc. cit.

[19] Ibid.

and oppressors: "Quds day is a global day. It is not a day exclusively for Quds. It is a day when the oppressed confront the oppressors." If it is named "Quds Day" it is only because the Palestinian question is a paradigmatic example of an oppressed nation under the yoke of a regional power fully backed by superpowers. Besides, in this clash between the oppressed and the oppressors, the modus operandi proposed by Ayatullah Khumaynī is for the oppressed unified front to exhibit their existence and resistance against the arrogant powers and their surrogate agents in a bid to demonstrate their power of unity, will, and dedication: "It is a day when the Islamic society should make its presence known to all superpowers and their pulp."[20]

Fourthly, by declaring that "The day of Quds is not only the day of Palestine, but it is the day of Islam," the Imam made clear the true essence and orientation of the Palestinian issue. If for the past three decades then the issue had been reckoned as confined within the bounds of Arabism—particularly during the apex of Nasserism in the Arab world—in this communiqué it is asserted that the matter is an Islamic one and therefore, it concerns all the Muslims of the world. And bearing in mind that it is an Islamic question involving the entire Muslim ummah, he reminds them of their spiritual and material strength as he admonishes: "All Muslims must be warned and understand how strong their spiritual and economic powers are. Muslims are one billion people, supported by God, Islam, and the power of faith. Why should they be afraid?"[21]

Lastly, taking into account the Islamic nature of the issue, which is supposed to have a place in the heart of every true believer, Imam Khumaynī views the International Quds Day as a distinguisher (*faruq*) and criterion (*furqān*) when he rightly argues:

> The Day of Quds is the day that we will realize which regime and persons are cooperating with international conspirators and thus are opposing Islam. Those who do not participate in these demonstrations are opposing Islam and thus are in agreement with Israel. Those who participate and have demonstrations on this day are responsible people who are in stride with Islam and thus oppose Israel.[22]

In summary, championing the legitimate cause of the Palestinians had been part of Imam Khumaynī's agenda long time before the formation of the Islamic political establishment in Iran. International Quds Day is the

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

day when the Muslim masses are called forth to go out and demonstrate their sense of solidarity and support to the Palestinian people. It is the day marking the conflict between the oppressed of the world and their oppressors. The Palestinian problem is an Islamic issue and is thus not only the business of the Arabs. Commemoration of Quds day, through participation in the demonstrations, delineates those clinging to Islam from those subservient to Israel.

Subsequent International Quds Day Messages:

The subsequent messages of Ayatullah Khumaynī repeated the same central themes and points. In his remarks dated August 6, 1979—i.e. a day prior to the formal announcement of the last Friday of Ramaḍān as International Quds Day—he called on all Muslims to keep Quds Day alive.[23]

In his remarks on August 18, 1979, Imam Khumaynī advanced the notion of Quds Day as a precursor to the International Party of the Oppressed (ḥizb-e mustaḍʿafīn-e jahānī).[24]

One year after the announcement of the last Friday of Ramaḍān as International Quds Day, in a speech delivered on August 6, 1980, the Founder of the Islamic Republic expressed his wish for the liberation of Quds where Muslims around the globe could pray there.[25]

In his remarks three days after delivering the abovementioned speech (August 9, 1980), Ayatullah Khumaynī stressed that if everyone shouted out on Quds Day, victory would be achieved. Elsewhere in his remarks, the Ayatullah also reiterated his wish for the prayer of unity to be held in Quds one day.[26]

During the second year of the consecration of the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month as International Quds Day, Imam Khumaynī suggested in a lengthy message (August 1, 1981) the use of machineguns relying on faith and the laying aside of political games in relation to the Palestinian Question. Elsewhere in the message, the Imam also advanced the notion of the Quds Day as the day of the deprived.[27]

In a message during the third anniversary of the declaration of International Quds Day (July 16, 1982), the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran highlighted the duty of nations on Quds Day.[28]

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[23] Ibid., pp. 140-141.
[24] Ibid., p. 140.
[25] Ibid., pp. 141-142.
[26] Ibid., pp. 142-143.
[27] Ibid., pp. 143-145.
[28] Ibid., p. 146.

In a speech delivered on the auspicious occasion of *ʿĪd al-fiṭr* (feast marking the end of the fasting month of Ramaḍān) on June 20, 1985 (Khordād 30, 1364 AHS), the Imam stated that the Quds Day rally rendered a blow to the superpowers.[29]

Even in his reply message to the *ʿĪd al-fiṭr* greeting telegram of Rashīd ibn Saʿīd al-Maktūm (Deputy Head of State and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates) on June 2, 1986 (Khordād 12, 1365 AHS/Ramaḍān 23, 1406 AH), the International Quds Day founder expressed hope "that at the threshold of the International Quds Day they (the people in UAE) would announce to the world their aversion and disgust of the crimes and acts of oppression of the world-devouring America and the usurper Israel."[30]

In his annual Ḥajj message on July 28, 1987 (Mordād 6, 1366 AHS/Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1, 1407 AH), Ayatullah Khumaynī also touched on why the designation of a single day as "Quds Day" has made heads of Muslim countries panic.[31]

In his speech on August 23, 1987 (Shahrīvar 1, 1366 AHS/Dhū al-Ḥijjah 27, 1407 AH) to high-ranking Iranian officials regarding the deplorable tragedy of the massacre of pilgrims in 1987, Imam Khumaynī noted that the issue of Quds which is important is separate from that of the control of the Two Holy Places in Ḥijāz.[32]

FROM STREET MARCHES TO CYBER-DEMONSTRATIONS

During the past twenty-eight years since the unprecedented sanctification of the last Friday of the majestic month of Ramaḍān as International Quds Day by the Imam of the ummah, what has been the response of the global Muslims to this call for demonstration of camaraderie with the Palestinian people? Has the Quds day mass rally been restricted to Iran only?

An examination of the news around the world on every last Friday of Ramaḍān shows that mass demonstrations in the different parts of the globe during the past two decades have gained momentum qualitatively and quantitatively. In major cities from Mindanao in the East to the United

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[29] *Ṣaḥīfeh-ye Imām*, vol. 19. The glorious presence of the Iranian people in Quds Day rallies was also mentioned by the Imam in his speech to a group of teachers of the Islamic seminary in Qom on June 30, 1985 (Tīr 9, 1364 AHS) and in another speech on June 9, 1986 (Khordād 19, 1365 AHS/Shawwal 1, 1406 AH) on the auspicious occasion of *ʿĪd al-fiṭr* to high-ranking Iranian officials and Muslim diplomats residing in Tehran. Ibid., vol. 20.

[30] Ibid., vol. 20.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

States in the West, from Scandinavia in the North to South Africa in the South, fasting demonstrators and marchers chant divergent slogans of sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians and condemnation of the crimes unabatedly perpetrated by the occupier regime in Tel Aviv.[33] Muslims and even non-Muslims including Jews, and Sunnis and Shias join together in observing this august occasion. In the end the participants usually release al-Quds Day resolutions and vows. Nevertheless, Quds Day rally is still banned in many cities in Muslim countries.

In 1999 the Morocco-based *Arabic News* reported that Islamic states should mark al-Quds day. It stressed that the commemoration of the day is "an opportunity for Muslims to renew their attachment to the third Islamic holy shrine and their refusal of the Zionist policy which seeks to obliterate the Arab and Islamic identity of the city."[34]

As posted in English-language news sites, International Quds Day is commemorated in the following countries: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Germany, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Occupied Palestine, Philippines, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Syria, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

As many Muslims rely on the internet—including websites and email—as a primary source of news, information and communication about Islam, there emerges a radical new concept called "e-jihad" described in its many forms including online activism such as coordinating peaceful protests. This activism, such as those relating to International Quds Day, poses as a dominant zone in the notion of "Cyber Islamic Environment."[35]

In the Internet messages or manifestos of invitation—including newsgroup—messages to observe the International Quds Day are posted. There are articles featuring Quds Day. Web pages including those in the personal sites focusing on Quds Day and related activities, such as the schedule of Quds Day rallies in the different countries and cities, can be found. Last but not least are the news stories of events related to the observance of Quds Day demonstrations in the different parts of the world as in the foregoing pages in the websites or Internet editions of mass media.

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[33] Murray Kahl, "One Picture is Worth a Thousand Lives," *Conference for Middle East Peace (CMEP)*, http://www.cmep.com/temple1.htm; http://www.eretzyisroel.org/~jkatz/tunnel.html, March 2, 1997. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[34] "Islamic States Mark al-Quds Day," *Arabic News Website*, http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/ Day/990518/1999051858.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[35] Gary R. Bunt, Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2003, pp. 4-19.

1. Messages/Statements

The following are examples of what is often posted in cyberspace: messages, statements, and addresses of Islamic groups and leaders of the Islamic movement on the International Quds Day. A good example is the messages of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatullah Sayyid ʿAlī Khamenei, in different languages accessible in the web site of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting[36], the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA)[37], and Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi of the Tehreek Nafaz-e Fiqh-e Jafariya, Pakistan.[38] Similarly, the addresses and speeches on Al-Quds Day of Muʿallim Ibrahīm al-Zakzakī of the Islamic movement of Nigeria,[39] Hizbullah Secretary General, Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallah[40] and a certain Dr. Obada Kayali at the Canberra Islamic Centre in Australia are accessible online.[41]

Described as Jews united against Zionism, the Neturei Karta International has issued statement on al-Quds Day on November 23, 2003.[42] The statement reads,

> As part of their expression of support for the Palestinian cause, representatives of Neturei Karta take part in protests, which draw attention to the Palestinian struggle, whenever they can. Therefore, on this

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[36] "The Message of Revolution Supreme Leader in Different Languages," *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) Website*, http://www.irib.com/worldservice/palestine/payam/jadval.htm.

[37] "The International Day of Quds," *Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) Website*, http://www.ahl-ul-bait.org/news/bayanieh/quds.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[38] "Agha Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi's Message on the Occasion of Al-Quds Day Himayat-e-Mazloomin," *Tehreek Nafaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafariya Pakistan Website*, http://tnfj.org.pk/sec/msg.htm#"AL-QUDS%20DAY%20HIMAYAT-E-MAZLOOMIN". Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[39] Muʿllim Ibrahīm al-Zakzakī, "*Yaum al-Quds*: The Day of the Oppressed," *Muslimedia International*, http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/features99/zak-quds.htm, January 22, 1999; *Islamic Human Rights Commission*, http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id-458.

[40] "Speech by Hizbullah Leader Shaykh Nasrallah on the Palestinian Struggle," *Muslimedia International*, http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/movement03/nasr-speech.htm, January 16-30, 2003; "The Speech of Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah on the Day of Quds," *Hizbullah*, http://www.hizbollah.tv/english/amin/k2002/k20021129.htm (November 11, 2004); "Hezbollah Secretary General Remarks on Al-Quds International Day," *Al-Majdūr*, http://majdur. htmlplanet.com/al-Masakin/Volume%202/nasrallah.21nov03.pdf, January 24, 2004 (Accessed: November 11, 2004).

[41] Dr. Obada Kayali, "Jerusalem Al-Quds Day Address," *Avigail Abarbanel*, http://avigail.customer. netscape.net.au/jerusalem.html, November 30, 2002. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[42] http://www.nkusa.org/activities/statements/23Nov03AlQuds.cfm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

al-Quds Day march, Neturei Karta would like to express its solidarity with the Palestinian People and explain the following points:

The ideology of Zionism is completely opposed to Judaism... Zionism in general and its conduct against the Palestinian People in particular is against the Torah, beliefs and the hopes of the Jewish people... The Jewish religious teaching is that the Jewish People have no right to rule in Palestine today... Exile means that Jews must be loyal subjects of the government of the countries in which they live and not attempt to attain political power over other peoples... According to the Torah and Jewish faith, the present Palestinian Arab claim to rule in Palestine is right and just...[43]

Dubbed "Our Mission on Quds Day," the Islamic Movement in Nigeria posted in its website Quds Day 1426 AH manifesto signed by a certain Malam Abdulhamid Bello. It calls on all Muslims "to wake up from their deep slumber and do what is incumbent upon them." It continues: "with faith in God, the Exalted, and relying on the power of Islam and the power of faith, they should rise up and foreshorten the hands of the criminals from their lands."[44]

Signed by a certain Muḥammad Mukhtār and dated Ramaḍān 28, 1427 AH (October 20, 2006), the Islamic Movement of Nigeria's International Quds Day Manifesto, whose copies were distributed to the marchers and spectators, declares thus: "Today the last Friday of Ramaḍān is yet another historic occasion in which we commemorate the International Quds Day as marked by Imam Khomeini (*ra*). The occasion [has been] conducted by Muslims in Nigeria under the leadership of Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky (*h*)."[45] It also stresses: "It is time to 'enough is enough'. We are the vicegerents of Allah in this world and as such it is incumbent on us to rise against oppression and suppression exemplified against the weak people of Palestine."[46]

2. Invitations

Along with messages of Islamic groups and their leaders, which usually contain the call for participation of the Quds Day demonstrations, there

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Malam Abdulhamid Bello, "International Quds Day Celebration 1427 AH," *Official Website of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria*, http://www.islamicmovement.org/quds1426.htm, October 28, 2005. Accessed: December 29, 2006.

[45] Muḥammad Mukhtār, "International Quds Day Celebration 1427 AH," *Official Website of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria*, http://www.islamicmovement.org/quds1427.htm, October 20, 2006. Accessed: December 29, 2006.

[46] Ibid.

are specific invitation campaigns for Quds Day participation in the Internet. For example, Yahoo! Newsgroups "4islam" and "islamiccommunitynet" posted Quds Day invitations in their Message Boards.[47]

In an invitation where the date, time, venue, organizers, and contact numbers are indicated, the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) called on all Muslims "to support what is set to be the biggest protest rally [in London] against Israeli atrocities" in 2000. As mentioned by IHRC Chairman, Massoud Shadjareh, the purpose of the rally is "to voice our solidarity with occupied Palestine; to raise awareness of the plight of the Palestinian victims of Israeli violence and apartheid."[48]

The *Innovative Minds* has posted the 2001 Quds Day Rally details for London, Toronto, Washington, and Berlin—including the date, time, meeting point, closest underground station, contact, and additional information.[49] The annual Iran's call to all Muslims and oppressed of the world for holding massive rallies on the Quds Day can be read online from even non-Iranian media outlets.[50]

"Rally for the Liberation of Palestine" flyers for 2005 and 2006 Quds Day in Houston, Texas sponsored by the Worldwide Movement for Justice and Peace (WMJP) can be downloaded at the Arab Voices Radio Talk Show site.[51]

An invitation letter for al-Quds Day Program on October 20, 2006 at Suliman Nana Center (Brixton) in Johannesburg, South Africa including the program of activities is posted at the *South African Muslims* site.[52]

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[47] "Subject: Observe Quds Day," *Yahoo Newsgroup 4islam Message Board*, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/4islam/message/43 (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "Al-Quds Day," *Yahoo Newsgroup islamiccommunitynet Message Board*, http://groups.yahoo. com/group/ islamiccommunitynet/message/5693 (Accessed: May 27, 2007).

[48] "Islamic Groups Unite against Israeli Apartheid," *Islamic Human Rights Commission*, http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=94, November 21, 2001. Accessed: December 29, 2006.

[49] http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday.html.

[50] "Khatami-Qods-Rallies," *President of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, http://president.ir/cronicnews/ 1379/7910/791001/ 791001.htm, November 24, 2002; "Khatami Urges Iranians, World Muslims to March for Palestinian," *Payvand*, http://www.payvand.com/news/01/dec/1025.html, December 7, 2001; "Iran's Call for Holding Massive Rally to Support Palestinians," *People's Daily*, http://fpeng. people-daily.com.cn/200112/14/eng20011214_86644.shtml, December 14, 2001; "President Calls for Massive Turnout in Int'l Quds Day," *President of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, http://president.ir /cronicnews/1381/8109/810903/810903.htm, November 24, 2002.

[51] "2006 Community Calendar," *Arab Voices Radio Talk Show*, http://www.arabvoices. net/calendar_2006.htm, 2006. Accessed: March 9, 2007.

[52] "Al-Quds Day – Johannesburg," *South African Muslims*, http://www.samuslims.com/ node/105, October 19, 2006. Accessed: January 6, 2007.

A blogger in the United Kingdom posted in his blog an invitation for the 2005 Quds Day March in London by indicating the venue, time, speakers, and contact email.[53]

The "al-Quds Day March: Make a Stand for Justice" flyer—an invitation for Quds Day march in London on October 22, 2006, in which the organizer, supporting organizations, and speakers are stated—is available online at the *Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* site.[54] In its pertinent invitation page, IHRC states that "This year's march will be held with a special focus on the rights of the Lebanese people who underwent brutal and inhumane treatment at the hands of the Israeli artillery." It also boasts of

> An unprecedented number of organizations taking part in the rally, namely: British Muslim Initiative, Crescent International, Friends of al-Aqsa, Ḥizb al-Tahrīr, Islamic Forum Europe, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Islamic Student Association UK, Islamic Centre of England, Innovative Minds, International Muslims Organization, Lebanese Communities, Muslim Association of Britain, Neturei Karta, Palestine Return Centre, Palestine Internationalist, Respect Party, Stop the War, and 1990 Trust.[55]

Invitation messages for the 2006 Quds Day rally[56] and seminar[57] in Washington, D.C. on October 20 and 21, 2006, respectively, are posted at the Yahoo-based Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice newsgroup.

There is also an invitation for "Global al-Quds Day Program" at Dearborn, Michigan posted at a Google.com-based newsgroup with an attached flyer and opens with the following lines: "Please forward this info to your

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[53] "Annual Al Quds Day March London, UK," *Jamal El-Shayyal's Blog*, http://www.officeronline.co.uk/blogs/jamal/271561.aspx, October 27, 2005. Accessed: March 11, 2007.

[54] "Al Quds Day March: Make a Stand for Justice," *Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*, http://www.ikhwanWeb.com/PrintMe.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Press=Show&Lang=E&ID=5504&PrintMe=y, October 17, 2006. Accessed: January 6, 2007. The flyer is also available at http://www.ihrc.org.uk/file/Qudsprint.pdf.

[55] "Press Release: Annual Al-Quds Day, London, UK, Sunday 22nd October," *Islamic Human Rights Commission*, http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=2200. Accessed: January 1, 2007.

[56] "Quds Day: A Day for the Oppressed (rally in DC this Friday)," *Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice*, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/us-va-nova-peace/message/3032, October 18, 2006. Accessed: March 12, 2007.

[57] "Al-Quds Day Seminar," *Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice*, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/us-va-nova-peace/message/3033, October 20, 2006. Accessed: March 12, 2007.

friends as a reminder. This is the least we should do to educate ourselves and to connect ourselves with the oppressed people under occupation."[58]

3. Feature articles

There are articles featuring Quds Day. See, for example: "Quds Day," *Islamic Digest Website*;[59] Iqbal Jassat, "Quds Day: New Efforts to Ensure Israel's Survival by Madiba Poses Further Challenges," *Media Review Net*;[60] "al-Quds Day: A Time to Remember Martyrs" by a certain Firoz Osman at the *Media Monitors* site.[61] The article begins:

> In mosques throughout the world, the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan has been devoted to highlight the problems facing the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom from Zionist occupation. Ever since the outbreak of the first *intifidah* (uprising) the spotlight in the Muslim world has been firmly focused on the valiant struggle being waged against the fourth most powerful country in the world—Israel.[62]

Elsewhere in the article, it states: "The achievement of the Palestinians in the fourth year of the *intifadah* is remarkable. Making Israel a battleground has instilled such fear that almost a million Israelis have fled to the USA, demolishing the myth that Israel is a safe-haven for Jews."[63]

A poem on al-Aqsa sent to the editor of a national daily in Sri Lanka by a certain Siddiq Ghouse describes the Quds Day as follows: "The last Friday of Ramadan Muslims the world over hold as al-Quds day, to awaken a billion souls' conscience to noble duty and struggle in Allah's way."[64] The World Service Section of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has posted the electronic version of a book on Imam Khumaynī's statements on Palestine,[65] a chapter of which focuses on the Imam's announcement of the holy day.[66]

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[58] "Global Al-Quds Day Program," *Shia Affairs Google News Group*, http://groups.google.nl/group/ShiaAffairs/browse_thread/thread/34591b707e93f7fa/0975f8755c7df1f0?lnk=raot, October 19, 2006. Accessed: May 27, 2007.

[59] http://www.islamicdigest.org/articles37.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[60] http://www.mediareviewnet.com/Articles/alquds.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[61] http://world.mediamonitors.net/content/viewfull/2291, November 19, 2003. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64]"Letters to the Editor," *The Sunday Times Website*, http://www.lacnet.org/suntimes/980125/let2.html. January 25, 1998. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[65] *Palestine from the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, Autumn 1999).

[66] http://www.irib.ir/worldservice/imam/palestin_E/10.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

In a recent article posted at a newly created site, the role of International Quds Day in "the awakening of the oppressed peoples in the world" is featured. The writer argues:

> One of the most effective moves of Imam Khomeini (r) in bringing Islam and people to the Palestinian cause was announcing the international day of Quds. Of course it must not be forgotten that 30 years before the victory of the Islamic revolution, Imam Khomeini put the Palestinian issue on his lists of tasks and expounded on and analyzed it on various occasions. A year did not pass after the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran that Imam Khomeini announced the day of Quds and invited the Muslims of the world and the Islamic nations to unity in order that they can come to the aid of the Palestinian people. In this manner the Palestinian issue was taken out of the dead end that it was in and has now become an international issue, especially in the Islamic world. It has become an issue of the whole Islamic world. The announcement of the international Quds day and the defeat of the enemy's front line in the occupied territories gave Islam strength, energy, and motivation to fight. The first steps of the *intifada* were made in this way. In the occupied lands groups of impulsive youth formed which did not depend on the famous political groups in any way. Slowly the chant of 'God is the greatest' was heard in protests and funerals and took over the Arabic and communist slogans of the past. Strong Islamic forces were formed amongst the new generation. [67]

He also argues, thus:

> [T]he Islamic resistance in southern Lebanon, made up of brave, pious, and intelligent individuals was formed. This resistance quickly was able to change into a dynamic sample, effective and comprehending world movement against the Zionist occupation. The continual military, security, ideological, and ethical victories of this resistance in south Lebanon and the base retreat of the occupiers from an important part of this country, and the 33 day resistance of Hizbollah in front of the fourth most advanced army of the world (and defeating them) has caused serious problems for the existence of Israel. [68]

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[67] M. Eqbal, "The International Day of Quds and the Awakening of the Oppressed People of the World," *Insight*, http://insightinfo.com/IslamicWorld/ItemList.asp?ItemID=508 &SubjectID=36&SubjectTitle=PalestineandtheIntifada&CategoryID=5&CategoryTitle=Islami c Resurgence Movements, undated. Accessed: December 28, 2006.
[68] Ibid.

4. Web sites and pages

Many sites have also focused on the importance of the annual Quds Day such as the following: "The Worldwide Day of Quds" at the Muslim Students' Association Website;[69] "The Day of Qods," Islamic Thought Foundation site;[70] and "Al-Qods Day: The Day of Islam" posted in a Geocities personal site seemingly owned by a Lebanese student.[71] The other pages of the site contain beautiful relevant portraits along with statements, mostly of Imam Khumaynī, such as the following:

> The world Qods day is the day for proclaiming commitment to accepting responsibilities for defending the honor and dignity of the Muslims. The Qods day is the day of unity among Muslims and their solidarity with the innocent Palestinian nation as well as the day of the awakening of the world people's conscience.[72]

> The initiation of the world Qods day is a framework for preservation of unity, solidarity, and active participation of Muslims for defending the Islamic holy lands and their non-submission to any form of force, insult or subservience.[73]

> The world Qods day has helped Muslims to further strengthen their ties with the Qods ideals so that the satanic designs of the Zionist entity would be rendered futile in creating a fissure in the strong tie that exists among Muslims.[74]

> The commemoration of the world Qods day is a means to demonstrate the Muslims' abhorrence of and anger at the Zionist usurpers who are occupying the holiest precincts of Islam.[75]

> Qods could not be freed through negotiations with the usurper Zionist regime and that jihad and struggle is the only way left open for freeing the holy city of Qods.[76]

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[69] http://www.msapsg.org/Quds/quds99/quds.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[70] http://www/e-resaneh.com/Ramezan/Maghalat/English/The%20Day%20of%20Qods. htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[71] http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/quods.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[72] Ibid.
[73] http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q11.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[74] http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q1.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[75] http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q7.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.
[76] http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1305/q8.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

Other articles are "Qods Day" in the site of a certain Jamia Uloom-e-Islami;[77] "Jordan-Imam Khomeini" available at the site of the Lebanese Islamic Resistance;[78] "al-Quds: the Focus of Muslims' Grief" at the Geocities-based *Ahlul-Bayt* Islamic Library;[79] and "Quds Day," *Innovative Minds Website*.[80] The *Innovative Minds* site is not only active in Quds Day activities but also in the Israel Boycott Campaign,[81] which resulted in the closing down of its original site[82] in what it describes as "Zionist terrorism in cyberspace."[83]

The Shaheed Foundation has made downloadable a series of free Al-Quds Day wallpapers on the wallpaper gallery of its site.[84] Another personal site allocated "Al-Quds Day or Jumat-ul-Wida (Last Friday of Ramadan)" page where four pictures of al-Aqsa Mosque are posted.[85] A seemingly Arab blog-owner posted brief information about Quds Day in his blog.[86]

In 2003, activists have reportedly launched on the 17th of Ramaḍān "Al-Quds International Day on the Internet" "to remind millions of Web visitors about the history and importance of the holy city for Muslims worldwide as well as the need to stand firmly against Israeli Judaization schemes." According to Mohamed al-Sayyed of the Hamasna Web site, co-organizer of the Day, "a cohort of leading Muslim figures and activist from Malaysia, Egypt, Palestine, Algeria, and Morocco" are supposed to contribute to the International Day which would be translated into three languages—English, French, and Spanish—extend for a week on the internet, and be circulated through thousands of e-groups in Europe, the United States, and the Arab world.[87]

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[77] http://www.geocities.com/jamia_uloomislami/Qodsday1.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[78] http://www.ocnsignal.com/moqawama.shtml. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[79] http://www.geocities.com/ahlulbayt14/quds-grief.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[80] http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[81] http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israel.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[82] http://www.inminds.com. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[83] http://www.inminds.co.uk/inminds-newsletter-08.txt. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[84] http://www.shaheedfoundation.org/wallpapergallery.asp. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[85] "Al-Quds Day or Jumat-ul-Wida (Last Friday of Ramadan)," *Holy Ramadan*, http://www.ezsoftech.com/ramadan/ ramadan21.asp, last updated September 23, 2006. Accessed: March 11, 2007.

[86] "International Day of Quds," *Owais*, http://paperpin27.tigblog.org/archive/ 10_2006, October 19, 2006. Accessed: March 12, 2007.

[87] Mohamad Gamal Arafa, "Third Al-Quds International Day Marked on Internet," *IslamOnline*, http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2005-10/20/article05.shtml, October 20, 2005. Accessed: January 6, 2007.

Recently, an Arabic website was entirely dedicated to International Quds Day where statements, messages, and speeches in Arabic of different political figures and activists from such countries as Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, and Sweden are posted.[88]

Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa's "Al-Quds Institution" declares in its newly opened web site, the revival of "the International Quds Day in various forms and in all countries" as one of its means to achieve its goals.[89]

5. News and audio/visuals

Last but not least are the news stories of events related to the observance of Quds Day demonstrations in the different parts of the world—as in the section, *Quds Day in the Real World: Street Marches*—on websites or Internet editions of mass media. Along with this news coverage of the street march rallies around the world are the relevant photos and audio-video clips of the rallies.

The *Innovative Minds* site has web pages that show photos with interesting captions as well as audio clips of the slogans chanted and *du'ā*s (supplications) recited on the 2000 and 2001 London Quds Day processions.[90] The al-Quds Day 2002 photo report is accessible at the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHCR) and the United Islamic Students Association of Europe sites.[91] This is while the photo account of the 2003 march from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square is featured in the sites of the anti-Zionist Jewish *Neturei Karta*[92] and *Kanoon Towhid*, a seemingly Iranian London-based Islamic Student Association.[93] *Islamicdigest.net* has so far two movie clips on Quds Day: "Quds Day Special"[94] and "Quds Day Demonstration (London) Promotion Movie."[95]

In Bahrain, an audio-visual coverage of the November 2002 (1423 AH) and 2004 (1425 AH) Quds Day marches and demonstrations with eight im-

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[88] *Yawm al-Quds al-'Alami 'ala Internet* [International Quds Day on the Internet], http://www.qudsday.com, 2006. Accessed: January 6, 2007.

[89] "About Al-Quds," Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa, http://www.mjc.org.za/aboutalquds.aspx, 2007. Accessed: May 27, 2007.

[90] http://www.inminds.co.uk/quds2000.html; http://www.inminds.co.uk/qudsday2001.html. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[91] http://www.ihrc.org.uk/section.php?section=3&page=7; http://www.uisaeurope.com/Qods/page_01.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[92] http://www.nkusa.org/activities/recent/london112303.cfm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[93] http://www.kanoontowhid.org/photoarchive/qudsday/quds%20day%20in%20london.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[94] http://www.islamicdigest.net/id5/article.php?sid=1125. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[95] http://www.islamicdigest.net/id5/article.php?sid=1130. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

ages and four video clips in the former year[96] and 45 images and a 25-minute video clip in the latter year[97] is available at *al-imam.net*. The Mirsta-based Zainabiya Islamic Center has displayed photos with captions of the Quds Day procession in Central Stockholm of the same year.[98]

A blog described as "al-Musawwir" allocated a page titled "Al Quds Day" that contains pictures of 2006 Quds Day rallies in Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran as well as a video clip of a Tehran rally.[99] In its invitation page for 2006 Quds Day march in London,[100] IHRC added a link to an audio advertisement in addition to the usual information such as date, time, venue, organizers, and speakers.[101]

In another blog, 67 pictures of Quds Day demonstrations on October 20, 2006 taken and captioned by international news agencies in countries like Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine are posted along with negative comments by the blog owner.[102]

In a photography site, eights pictures of the 2006 Quds Day event in Tehran are posted along with a short introduction of the annual event.[103]

In recognition of "Universal Quds Day," One Ummah Network presents a video presentation in mpeg1 format "in expression of our solidarity with the Palestinian people."[104]

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[96] "Quds Day (24 Ramadan 1423 AH/November 2002)," *Al-Imam.net*, http://www.al-imam.net/media/1423/qud.htm, November 2002. Accessed: March 11, 2007.

[97] "Quds Day 1425 AH/2004 (Bahrain)," *Al-Imam.net*, http://www.al-imam.net/media/1425/qud.htm, 2004. Accessed: March 11, 2007.

[98] http://www.zainabiya.net/mahe_ramadhan_1423_2002.htm. Accessed: November 11, 2004.

[99] "Al Quds Day," *al-Musawwir*, http://almusawwir.org/2006/10/21/al-quds-day, October 21, 2006. Accessed: January 6, 2007.

[100] "Alert: The Annual Al Quds Day March," *Islamic Human Rights Commission*, http://www.ihrc.org.uk/show.php?id=2154, October 9, 2006. Accessed: January 1, 2007.

[101] http://www.ihrc.org.uk/file/quds_advert2006.mp3.

[102] "Al-Quds Day = 'Blame da Joooos' Day."

[103] "Al Quds Day," *Nikos Chrisikakis Photography*, http://www.nikos-chrisikakis.net/new/reportage/alqudsday/index.htm, October 20, 2006. Accessed: March 12, 2007.

[104] "Universal Quds Day," *One Ummah Network*, http://www.oneummah.net/content/view/63, October 19, 2006. Accessed: May 31, 2007. The video is available for download at http://www.oneummah.net/media/UniversalDayofQuds.mpg and the English translation of the lyrics of its embedded music by Ahmed Bukhatir is available at http://www.shariahprogram.ca/nasheed-lyrics/qudsu-tunadeena-jerusalem-calling.shtml. Accessed: May 31, 2007.

THE CYBERPOWER OF INTERNATIONAL QUDS DAY

As a result of the interaction between the routine and knowledge under discussion for the past almost three decades, there emerged a social order: the inclusion of Quds Day in the calendar of Islamic holidays.

It is interesting to note the first 200 results of a Google search for "quds day", for instance, reveal that the acceptance of the resultant social order is not only confined to the Muslim circles; this is manifested by the non-Muslim religious, cultural, political, and business group and institution websites' inclusion of the Quds Day in the list of Islamic holidays.

Among these groups and institutions are the following: Inter-Religious Council of San Antonio; The Inspiration Station; America's Service Commissions; Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles (JGSLA); Faiths Religion Communities; Religious Tolerance; Calendar Math; Human Relations Commission of Tempe City; Weaving our Worlds (WOW); Metamorphosis; Immigration Minister of Australia; State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training); Migrant Information Center of Eastern Melbourne; The Bahai World; Knowledgeable Neighbors Embrace the World; Heart's Home; Dawodu.com (Nigeria); International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (Canada); Lutheran Campus Ministry Waterloo (Canada); Calendar Mine; Marktheday.com; Fort Campbell; Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA); WPSAPD Table Tennis (South Africa); Surrey RCMP (Canada); Web of Creation, Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE); Digi-Labs, Inc.; GoErie.com; DeskDemon.com; the Institute of Interfaith Dialog; United Steelworkers (USWA) (Canada); The Boy Scouts of America; Vancouver Island Spirit Network; Interfaith Calendar; The International Globe; The Temple of Universality; Issues Magazine; Chamber of Secrets; Fredskultur; The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship;[105] Leeds Primary Care Trust NHS; and GreatDreams.com, among others.[106]

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[105] "December Pilgrim 2003," *The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship*, http://www.nuuf.nl/archive/ 2003/decemberpilgrim2003.doc, 2003. Accessed: May 27, 2007.

[106] Of course, as a result of the Berlin-based campaign in 2005 to remove Quds Day in the online calendars of interfaith organizations and academic institutions in particular, some institutions removed it in their online calendars. See Toby Axelrod, "As Iran Calls to Destroy Israel, New Look at 'Holiday' with Same Goal," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, http://jta-vip.mediapolis.com/cgi-bin/iowa/news/article/ AsIrancallstodes.html, 2005. Accessed: March 13, 2007; "Israel News," *JewishTimes.com*, http://www.jewishtimes.com/scripts/ edition.pl?now=11/3/2005&SubSectionID=32&ID=5145, November 3, 2005 (Accessed: March 13, 2007). Some of the groups that maintain Quds Day as an Islamic holiday in their web sites are indicated in the succeeding footnotes as well as the following: "Religious Dates in 2005," *DeskDemon.com*, http://www.deskdemon.com/pages/uk/events/religiousdates2005, 2005

Quds Day as an Islamic holiday is also reflected in the websites of the following universities and educational centres: Harvard University; Monash University (Australia); University of New Orleans; University of Melbourne (Australia); Purdue University (West Lafayette, Indiana); Graduate Theological Union; Denison University; University of Connecticut; University of Wollongong (Australia); University of Sydney (Australia); University of Newcastle (Australia); St. Mary's International School (Japan); Franklin and Marshall College (Pennsylvania); *Scarlet Letter* of St. Lawrence University; the Center for Cultural Pluralism of the University of Vermont; Loughborough University (Leicestershire, UK); Cornell University.[107]

In a certain personal, Holiday Festival and GreatDreams.com websites, as well as in the Human Relations Commission of Tempe City and the Temple of Universality, it is acknowledged that Quds Day is "a recent addition to the [Islamic] calendar, in memory of Jerusalem."[108] In an interfaith calendar, Survivorship's November ritual dates, and the Minneapolis-based Spiritual Opportunities for Life's calendar for November, as well as in the

(Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Holidays around The World 2003," *issues-mag.com*, http://www.issues-mag.com/nov3/frameSetFile.php?filename=holidays2003.phtml&department=features, 2003 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "World Holidays 2004," *issues-mag.com*, http://www.issues-mag.com/nov4/frameSetFile.php?filename=holiday2004.phtml &department=features, 2004 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Chamber of Secrets – Calendar," *Chamber of Secrets*, http://www.cosforums.com/ calendar.php?c=1& do=displaymonth&month=11&year=2003, 2003 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Upcoming Holy Days," *GoErie.com*, http://www.goerie.com/churches/Upcoming_Holy_Days/ upcoming_holy_days.html, 2005 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "California Three Rs," *Schools of California Online Resources for Education* (SCORE), http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/score_lessons/3rs/bulletins/ 3RsBulletin_Nov_03.pdf, November 2003 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "News Brief from the Human Resources," *Leeds Primary Care Trust NHS*, http://www.leedspct.nhs.uk/.../00000000d87dd3213ab33ed 6e3872120/HR+-+Issue+1+ October+2004.pdf, October 2004 (Accessed: May 27, 2007).

[107] Some of the academic institutions that maintain Quds Day as an Islamic holiday in their web sites are indicated in the succeeding footnotes as well as the following: "Faith Calendar," *University of Wollongong*, http://www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/ 2005faith_cal.html, 2005 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "For Your Benefit (Official Information on Cornell's Benefits, Policies, and Work-Related Developments)," *Cornell University*, http://www.ohr.cornell. edu/commitment/publications/fyb/docs/ 2004/FYB_Fall_2004.pdf, Fall 2004 (Accessed: May 27, 2007).

[108] "Islamic Holidays," *Kess Couprie's Personal Website*, http://www.geocities. com/couprie/calmath/events/islamic (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "The Islamic Calendar," *Holiday Festival*, http://www.holidayfestival.com/Islam.html (November 11, 2004); "U.S. and Islamic Holidays 2002-2004," *GreatDreams.com*, www.greatdreams.com/holidays_ 2002_2004.htm, 2002-04 (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Calendar of Holidays," *Human Relations Commission of Tempe City*, http://www.tempe.gov/hrc/calendarofholidays.htm (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "November," *The Temple of Universality*, http://www.thetempleofuniversality.org/ calendar-november.html (Accessed: November 11, 2004).

ReligiousTolerance.org, Metamorphosis, Knowledgeable Neighbors Embrace the World, Heart's Home, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, the University of New Orleans, and Denison University websites, Quds Day is described as the "Islamic time of proclaiming solidarity in support of oppressed Muslim people."[109]

The Niue[110]-based *Fredskultur* gives the following description of Quds Day: "al-Quds Day (Jerusalem Day) is a day of support for the Palestinian people. It was initiated primarily to condemn Israel's occupation of Jerusalem and U.S. support for Israel."[111]

This is how Quds Day is described in November 2003 and November 2004 issues of Conscious Evolution web site's online newsletter dubbed "Metamorphosis: Changing Ourselves and the World Through Love": "The last Friday in Ramadan is an Islamic day of rallies in support of Muslim Palestinians and against oppression of Muslims anywhere."[112]

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[109] "Inter-Faith Calendar 2002," *Inter-Faith Calendar*, http://www.interfaithcalendar. org/calendardefinitions.htm, updated May 24, 2002 (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "November Ritual Dates," *Survivorship*, http://www.survivorship.org/ dates/rd_11_12.htm (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "Calendar for November," *Spiritual Opportunities for Life*, http://www.solfaith.org/ calendar/list.html#QudsDay (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "Events during 2002-November," *ReligiousTolerance.org*, http://www.religioustolerance.org/ top_mont_02_nov.htm (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Events during 2003-November," *ReligiousTolerance.org*, http://www.religioustolerance. org/top_mont_03_nov.htm (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Metamorphosis Calendar Page: Special Days and Aspects for November 2002," *Conscious Evolution*, http://consciousevolution.com/ metamorphosis/0211/calendar0211.htm (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Alphabetical List of Religious Observances," *Knowledgeable Neighbors Embrace the World*, http://www25.brinkster.com/kneworld/religious.html (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "November," *Heart's Home*, http://www.heart7.net/date/ november.htm (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "IAMAW Calendar," *International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers*, http://www.iamaw.ca/cgi-bin/calendar/calendar. pl?year=2003 &month=11 (Accessed: November 11, 2004); "Calendar of Religious Holy Days," *University of New Orleans*, http://web2.uno.edu/~cdac/defs.html (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Religious Life – Interfaith Calendar Definition of Terms," *Denison University*, http://www.denison.edu/rel_life/holidaydefinitions.html (Accessed: May 27, 2007).

[110] Situated 460 km (290 mi) east of Tonga, Niue is a self-governing island in free association with New Zealand, in the South Pacific Ocean.

[111] "Fredskultur," *Fredskultur.nu*, www.fredskultur.nu/asm/508.asp?cat=24, 2003-04. Accessed: May 27, 2007.

[112] "Metamorphosis Interactive Calendar, November 2003," *Conscious Evolution*, http://consciousevolution.com/metamorphosis/0311/calendar0311.htm (Accessed: May 27, 2007); "Metamorphosis Interactive Calendar, November 2004," *Conscious Evolution*, http://consciousevolution.com/metamorphosis/0411/calendar0411.htm (Accessed: May 27, 2007).

In the website of a Western-run school in Morocco, Quds Day is even considered as among the "important dates in Islamic history."[113] The International Globe describes Quds Day in this manner: "Quds Day is a day that all Muslims show their support for the oppressed Muslims of the world and, in particular, those in Palestine. Rallies are held in every capital of the world."[114] Calendar Mine has a relatively more elaborate description of Quds Day:

> Quds Day is observed on the last Friday in Ramadan. On this day, Muslims around the world pray for the city of Jerusalem, and demonstrate their support for the city's oppressed Muslims. Jerusalem, also known as al-Quds, is a holy city for Muslims, Jews, and Christians.[115]

Thus, the routine of demonstrations on every last Friday of Ramaḍān since its declaration as International Quds Day in August 1979 establishes the commonly and collectively held knowledge that the day is commemorated by Muslims through demonstrations throughout the world. This common, collective knowledge, in turn, 'normalizes' the persistency of the said routine of global demonstration on the particular date. This continuous interaction between the routine and the knowledge of the routine produces a social order as time passes—Quds Day as an Islamic holiday—a social order increasingly acknowledged by non-Muslim entities and institutions.

Diagrammatically, we have the following:
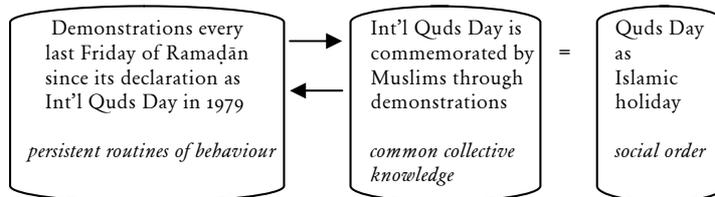
From the foregoing discussion, we can conclude that on one hand, the emergent social order—Quds Day as Islamic holiday—is an indication of globalization of its observance. On the other hand, the same social order

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[113] "Religion: Islam," *Scooter*, http://scooter.edu.ac.ma/ms/special/morocco_site/islam/islam_main.html (Accessed: November 11, 2004).

[114] "International Globe," UNB Saint John International, http://www.unbsj.ca/international/globe/Oct20.pdf (Accessed: November 11, 2004).

[115] "Islamic Holidays (Perpetual Multicultural Calendar Software)," *Calendar Mine*, http://www.calendarmine.com/ Holidays/IslamicHolidayDescriptions.asp (Accessed: May 27, 2007).

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can indirectly fortify the already ongoing globalization of support to Palestine taking into account the routine-knowledge interaction.

In other words, the produced social order (Quds day as Islamic holiday) can potentially pave the way for the appearance of a 'higher' social order—i.e. even further globalization of support to Palestine. This 'higher' social order may assume the form of boycott campaigns against "products and/or companies supporting Israel"[116] which is gaining momentum in some respects.[117] However, the fact that some of these products are openly patronized in the Islamic Republic of Iran[118] shows that the prospects of evolution and maturization of this higher social order at a global scale is still open to question in the near future at least.

Given this global trend, Quds Day is verily a day to be reckoned with. It is a legacy bequeathed to us twenty-eight years ago—a legacy which, if properly observed, can be enough of an arm to liberate *al-Quds al-Sharīf*. And to my understanding, its proper observance is to count every day as Quds Day.

CONCLUSION

The holy city of Quds or Jerusalem and the al-Aqṣā Mosque or Bayt al-Muqaddas/Maqdis feature prominently in the events before and after the reappearance of the Imam of the Age (*ʿatfs*). In the corpus of Islamic traditions, Mecca is mentioned as the point of origin of his uprising and then Iraq, the city of Kufah in particular, as the military-political capital of his government. It is reported that the last Imam (*ʿatfs*) will march toward Shām (Syria) and liberate Bayt al-Muqaddas.

The Founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran's conception of 'waiting' [*intiẓār*] is characterized by activism and dynamism. This understanding of positive waiting was elucidated by him in his speeches, messages, writings,

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[116] "Boycott Israel Campaign," *Innovative Minds*, http://www.inminds.com/boycott-israel.html, undated. Accessed: May 27, 2007.

[117] "Boycott Israel News," *Innovative Minds*, http://www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-faq.html, undated (Accessed: May 29, 2007); "Bahrain: Replacing American Coca Cola from Iranian Zamzam Cola," *Arabic News*, http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/020522/2002052216.html, May 22, 2002 (Accessed: May 29, 207); "Saudi Arabians Boycott Coca Cola and Pepsi for Iranian Zamzam," *Arabic News*, http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/020823/2002082302.html, August 23, 2002 (Accessed: May 29, 2007); David Pallister, "Arab Boycott of American Consumer Goods Spreads," *CommonDreams.org News Center*, http://www.commondreams.org/ headlines03/0108-01.htm, January 8, 2003 (Accessed: May 29, 2007).

[118] "Iran TV Urges Boycott of 'Zionist' Products," *Middle East Times*, http://www.metimes.com/print.php?StoryID=20060719-083019-1430r, July 19, 2006. Accessed: December 29, 2006.

and most importantly, in action. As a manifestation of this positive 'waiting' espoused by the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution in a macro-state level, he initiated many bold steps in paving the ground of the reappearance of the Imam of the Age (*'atfs*). Among these steps is the declaration of the last Friday of Ramaḍān as 'International Quds Day in which he urged all Muslims and oppressed peoples of the world to stage global marches and demonstrations for the liberation of al-Quds. Since this declaration, he touched on this issue in his subsequent speeches, messages, and even letters until his demise nine years after.

During the past twenty-eight years since the unprecedented sanctification of the last Friday of the majestic month of Ramaḍān as International Quds Day by the Imam of the ummah, what has been the response of the global Muslims to this call for demonstration of camaraderie with the Palestinian people? Has the Quds day mass rally been restricted to Iran only?

An examination of the news around the world on every last Friday of Ramaḍān shows that mass demonstrations in the different parts of the globe during the past two decades have gained momentum qualitatively and quantitatively. In major cities from Mindanao in the East to the United States in the West, from Scandinavia in the North to South Africa in the South, fasting demonstrators and marchers chant divergent slogans of sympathy to the plight of the Palestinians and condemnation of the crimes unabatedly perpetrated by the occupier regime in Tel Aviv.

On the Internet, messages or manifestos of invitation including newsgroup messages to observe the International Quds Day are posted. There are articles featuring Quds Day. Web pages—including those in the personal sites focusing on the Quds Day and related activities, such as schedules of Quds Day rallies in the different countries and cities—can be found. Last but not least, there are news stories of events related to the observance of Quds Day demonstrations in the different parts of the world as in the foregoing pages in the websites or Internet editions of mass media.

As a result of the interaction between the routine and knowledge under discussion for the past almost three decades, there emerged a social order—inclusion of the Quds Day in the calendar of Islamic holidays. The acceptance of the resultant social order is not only confined to the Muslim circles as evident by the non-Muslim religious, cultural, political, and business group and institution websites' inclusion of the Quds Day in the list of Islamic holidays. And the produced social order (Quds day as Islamic holiday) can potentially pave the way for the appearance of a 'higher' social order—i.e. even further globalization of support to Palestine. This 'higher' social order may assume the form of boycott campaigns against "products

and/or companies supporting Israel" which is gaining momentum in some respects.

Given this cyberpower of Quds Day that may even turn into a higher social order, the goal of the said declaration could play a pivotal role in the advent of al-Mahdi (*'atfs*) and his confrontation in the Holy City of Quds (Jerusalem) with the anti-Christ or al-Dajjāl—the epitome of falsehood, injustice, and oppression—as prophesied in the corpus of *ḥadīth* literature.

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Unity of the Islamic Schools of Thought According to Imam Mūsā Ṣadr[*]

ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Abādharī

Abstract:

Even at a young age, while still studying in the Islamic seminary in Qom, Imam Mūsā al-Ṣadr was concerned about the plight of the Muslim Ummah. As soon as he moved to Lebanon and became the religious leader for the Shia communities in the region, one of his first tasks was to establish strong relations with many of the prominent Sunni personalities within the country, including the then mufti of Lebanon, Shaykh Ḥasan Khālid. In a historical letter to the mufti, Imam al-Ṣadr laid out his vision of a unified ummah that was supplemented with various practical measures towards this goal. It was not long before he became a symbol of unity not only for the different groups within Islam, but also for the various Christian denominations in Lebanon. This article explores the thought and activities of Imam al-Ṣadr pertaining to the issue of unity and the important role he occupied as one of the leading figures within the Islamic unity movement.

Keywords: Imam Mūsā al-Ṣadr, Lebanon, unity, Shia-Sunni relations, Shia-Christian relations, unity of *fiqh*, leaders of Islamic unity movement.

BIOGRAPHY

Sayyid Mūsā al-Ṣadr was born on the 15th of May, 1928 in the holy city of Qom, Iran. After having completed his primary education, he moved to the capital city of Tehran where in 1956, he earned his degree in Islamic jurisprudence. Returning to Qom, he busied himself over the next few years with lecturing at the various religious centers in the city. He also launched the publication of the periodical entitled *Maktab-e Islām* (*The School of Islam*).

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[*] The biographical part of this article was taken from al-Manar Television. The remainder was adapted from the author's book, *Imām Mūsā Ṣadr: surūsh-e waḥdat,* Majmaʿ Jahānī-ye Taqrīb-e Madhāhib-e Islāmī, 2004.

In 1960, following the death of Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Ṣadr moved to Lebanon to hold the principal position of the Islamic Shiʿa religious leader in the southern city of Tyre. After witnessing the social and living conditions of the community, he became an advocate for the plight of the Shiʿa population in Lebanon. In 1969, the Grand Assembly of Shias in Lebanon was founded and al-Ṣadr was elected as its president for a duration of six years. It was during this time that he became known as "Imam Mūsā". When his term ended in 1975, he was re-elected for a further eighteen-year period (of which he was only able to serve three).

Imam Mūsā founded many social institutions, vocational schools, medical clinics, and literacy centers. His activities gained national interest when he warned of the dangers of Israeli aggression into Lebanon—particularly into its Shiʿa-dominated southern region. The Imam was careful, however, not to limit his struggle to a sectarian movement. In 1971, he established a committee that incorporated all the religious leaders in Southern Lebanon (including the Maronite Christians) in an attempt to coordinate their social and political activities in the region.

In 1974, al-Ṣadr organized a series of demonstrations to protest the government's negligence of the deteriorating conditions of the rural areas. This led to the founding of the *Harakat al-Maḥrumīn* (Movement of the Deprived), which adopted as their slogan: "Continuous struggle until there are no deprived people left in Lebanon." During the civil war, al-Ṣadr founded the *Afwāj al-Muqāwimat al-Lubnāniyyah* (Brigades of the Lebanese Resistance) or more popularly known by its acronym 'Amal', as the military wing of the *Harakat al-Maḥrumīn*. Initially it fought alongside the Lebanese National Movement and the Palestinian Resistance against the projects of partition and Palestinian settlements in Lebanon.

Among his contemporary religious and political leaders, al-Sadr stood out for his willingness to work with other groups, and in particular the Christians of Lebanon. He co-founded the Social Movement with the Catholic archbishop Grégoire Haddad in 1960, participated in the Islamic-Christian dialogue in 1962, and lectured in a Capuchin Christian church during the Easter fast of 1964. He was a prominent intellectual who had mastered many languages and played an all-important role in Lebanese political life. Towards the end of August 1978, he mysteriously disappeared during a visit to Libya.

THE ESSENCE OF UNITY

One of the deep hopes and inner yearnings of Imam Mūsā Ṣadr was for the Islamic ummah to become united in all corners of the world. From the onset of his youth while still occupied with his studies in the seminary in Qom, he used to reflect over this quite seriously. In various gatherings of the seminary he would bring up the topic, often in the presence of senior teachers. In 1947, while not having reached his twentieth birthday, when he was informed of ʿAllāmah Amīnī's arrival to Tehran from Najaf and the fact that he would be residing there for a few days, he took the opportunity to hurry to Tehran with a close friend in order to visit the ʿAllāmah. In the midst of discussing various scholarly matters with him, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr began to speak of unity between the Shias and the Sunnis, particularly in the face of a common enemy. In expounding on this topic, he defended his own positions for his teacher.[1] It is as if God had placed this yearning within his core being as a gift for the Islamic ummah.

Accordingly, years later, when Imam Mūsā Ṣadr entered Lebanon in 1959, as soon as the opportune moment presented itself in the very same year, he laid the foundations for friendship with the Ahl al-Sunnah scholars. As an example, one can mention the lasting relationship that he established with Muḥyi al-Dīn Ḥasan (the Mufti of the Ahl al-Sunnah in Lebanon). This relationship became so dear and cordial that people became used to seeing the two of them together on most auspicious occasions such as the Eid of Ghadīr, the nights of the month of Ramaḍān and the days leading up to ʿAshūrā. The two of them would ascend the pulpit[2] in a shared location such as the Qadīm Mosque or the Nādī of Imam Ṣādiq, and the people would listen to the talks of both a Shia and a Sunni. It was such that if someone from a different city entered the gathering and was not aware of the denominational backgrounds of these two speakers, they would not be able to distinguish which of the two was Shia and which Sunni.

Imam Mūsā Ṣadr used to say, "There is no inconsistency or difference between the Shia and the Sunni. They are both the followers of one united religion."[3] With this philosophy, he intensified his conciliatory activities in Lebanon. During his two-month visit to the countries of North Africa in the summer of 1963, in a historical and original initiative, he was able to

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[1] *Nāmeh Mufīd*, no. 16, p. 13 as narrated by Āyatullah Mūsawī Ardabīlī who was present in this gathering.

[2] *al-Imām al-Ṣadr wa al-ḥawār*, Markaz al-Imām al-Ṣadr li al-Baḥāth wa al-Darāsāt, Beirut, 1418 H., p. 29.

[3] Ibid.

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establish long-lasting and beneficial relationships between the different Islamic centres in Egypt, Western Africa, and the Gulf states and the Shia denominational centres in Lebanon.

A HISTORICAL LETTER

After the establishment of the 'Grand Assembly of the Shias of Lebanon,' the official inauguration day of this Assembly took place on Friday, May 23, 1969. After having welcomed and thanked the participants, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr sketched out, in a fervent speech, his program and overall plans for the Assembly. The ceremony was attended by many great academic, political, cultural, denominational, and religious personalities of Lebanon, including the then president, Mr. Charles Helou. Imam Mūsā Ṣadr laid particular emphasis on two areas of his program.

1. Fundamental measures in order to eliminate the divisions within the Muslims and an increase in the efforts to achieve at a thorough unification, and

2. Collaboration with all of the denominational groups of Lebanon and the attempt to preserve national unity.

In the first proclamation that was issued by the Grand Assembly after one week [of its inauguration], this program and course of action was once again stressed and publicized. It was published in most of the newspapers and distributed to all parts of Lebanon. Not sufficing himself to his speech and the issuance of this proclamation, however, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr immediately took practical steps towards this aim. In October of 1969, he wrote a historical and unparalleled letter to the then Mufti of Lebanon, Shaykh Ḥasan Khālid. In it, while outlining the precise and subtle points regarding unity between the schools of thought, he proposed practical and serious measures towards the advancement of this important and fateful issue. Here, we review the entire text of this letter:[4]

> In the Name of Allah, the all-Merciful, the all-Compassionate
> Dear Esteemed Brother, Shaykh Ḥasan Khālid, Respected Mufti of the Republic of Lebanon,
> Peace be upon you, and the mercy of God and his grace,
> With pure benedictions ... In these difficult days in which our ummah has been consumed with deep anxiety, is confronted with dangers that have surrounded its every part, and whose present and future finds itself before a storm, we sense—in a clear and increasing

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[4] The Arabic text of this letter has been published through the efforts of Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn in *Abjadiyyat al-ḥawār*, p. 159.

manner with the passing of each day—the pressing need of an all-embracing, penetrative unity—a unity that brings together the broken ranks of the Muslims as well as their scattered efforts in such a way that they can clearly see what is before them. Through it, they can regain trust in themselves in shaping their own future and history and in carrying out their own responsibilities. Speaking with one voice, bringing together resources, and developing [mutual] talents is not only the most noble of religious objectives and the order of our great Prophet (ṣ), but it is truly that which our very existence and honour depends on, as well as the existence of our future generations. Yes, it is certainly a question of life and death. However, this unity of voice must not become just an inflated slogan or a written catchword; rather, it must be a radiation of thought, a pulsation of the heart, a course of action to follow, and a step in shaping our future. This will not be possible except through extraordinary intellectual struggle, exceptional efforts from within, and sleepless nights in toil and trouble. It is only then that we will achieve unity, a true model that others can learn from.

My brother, let me share with you my humble experience. Before my visit to Dār al-Iftā' four months prior, I had stated that establishing a united voice between Muslims within their minds and hearts—or to be more precise, to deepen the unity of Muslims and to establish it on an enduring intellectual and cordial basis—can be achieved in two ways:

1. Amalgamating the *fiqh* (canonical law)

The Islamic fortress—in its foundations—is a single entity, and the Islamic ummah—in its beliefs, divine book, and origin and end—is also one; hence, this calls for unity even in its particulars. Establishing unity in these particulars—or rather bringing them together—is an idea which our upright predecessors and righteous scholars had also taken upon themselves. We see that Shaykh Abū Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṭūsī writes the book *Khilāf* a thousand years ago on the subject of comparative *fiqh*. ʿAllāmah Ḥillī (Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn Muṭahhar) followed in the footsteps of Ṭūsī by writing his book *al-Tadhkirah*.

Comparative *fiqh* is the very blessed seed that jurisprudential unity is tied to and which is completed with the unity of canonical law. In our times, the indefatigable and leading learned figures from the great Islamic scholars set up a centre in Egypt thirty years ago under the name 'Dār al-Taqrīb bayn al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah' (The House of Bringing Together the Islamic Schools of Thought). Among them were the great teacher, the late Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt and the head of the Religious Studies at Al-Azhar University, the late Muḥammad

Madanī. As for the great Islamic scholars from Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, one can name Sayyid ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, the late Ayatullah Sayyid Ḥusayn Burūjardī who was the grand *marjaʿ* of the Shias, the great ʿAllāmah Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Qummī who was the permanent secretary of Dār al-Taqrīb, and finally ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī in Qom. The Institute of Dār al-Taqrīb, in addition to its many activities, wanted to implement a plan which my late father, Imam Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn, initiated by writing *Liwāʾ al-ḥamd fī al-akhbār al-khāṣṣah wa al-ʿāmmah* (*The Standard of Praise in the Narrations of the Shia and the Sunni*), which was an effort towards the compilation of all the *aḥādīth* that the different Islamic schools of thought had narrated from the noble Prophet (ṣ) pertaining to all the doctrinal and jurisprudential fields. His aim was that it would act as the second source—after the noble Qurʾān—for the Muslims. In more precise terms, it is an endeavour to materialize the amalgamation of the pure Prophetic *sunnah* (way). On this level, some of these scholars as well as others have presented researched studies and works pertaining to *fiqh* and the Islamic schools of thought. Later, the time came to write an encyclopaedia of *fiqh*. The University of Damascus has begun the writing of *al-Mawsūʿah al-fiqhiyyah* (*Encyclopaedia of Jurisprudence*) while Al-Azhar University that of *al-Mawsūʿah ʿabd al-Nāṣir al-Islāmī* (*Islamic Encyclopaedia of ʿabd al-Nāṣir*). Also, the great teacher, Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Ḥakīm is in the process of compiling a valuable book on the complete principles of comparative *fiqh*. We are clearly witnessing the first fruits of these creative endeavours in the jurisprudential verdicts of the Islamic schools of thought—a sign which shows that we have been blessed with the help of God in taking steps towards bringing together the *fiqh*.

2. **Mutual Efforts**

This way is more appropriate in exceptional conditions, such as those which apply in Lebanon, and which gives expedited results. It involves the very mobilization of our common resources in order to accomplish various goals. It is a way that will bring about, on its own, the achievement of a flowing unity. The mutual efforts to join the two groups and comrades in one field will result in increased trust and confidence, the tranquillity of the hearts, and the display of one of the examples of the unity of thoughts and feelings. As examples, let us name a few of these goals:

A. **Religious Goals:** This includes making the holidays and religious rituals one and the same such as the acts of worship like the call for prayers, congregational prayers, etc. For example, with regard to the sighting of the new crescent moon, we can study a proposal to see if we can determine, through scientific

precision, the day of Eid by relying on new scientific ways and fixing the angle for sighting the crescent on the horizon, so that all Muslims can have their Eid on one day. This will economize many difficulties in terms of holidays and family visitations so that we do not have the issues that arise from having separate days for Eid. Also, we can look into whether or not there is a form for the call to prayers that is acceptable to everyone.

B. **Social Goals**: Of the mutual efforts, there are those that can take shape in the form of combating illiteracy, eliminating homelessness, supporting orphans, and raising the standard of living of the working class. It is very easy for us to establish institutes with these goals in mind or to further develop the institutes that already exist.

C. **National Goals**: Is there any doubt regarding our united national sentiments: the necessity of actively participating in liberating Palestine; the duty of supporting Lebanon against the voraciousness of deceptive enemies; the duty of backing the freedom fighters of Palestine; the need of a state of alertness and complete cooperation with our fellow Arab countries in the face of an offensive that can be expected at any time; the issue of securing southern Lebanon and all parts of Lebanon, so that like a permanent fortress, it can repel Israeli infiltrations in its encounter with it, and through it, can make them consign their own insatiable colonialism to oblivion.

These are all goals for which there are no differences of opinion [amongst the schools of thought], even regarding the smallest of them. In this condition, it is necessary to attach ourselves to these goals, to study them more closely, to determine our duties, to establish cooperation of the efforts of all the children of this country—first, amongst themselves and amongst the country officials, and then between them and the Arab countries in order to mobilize the resources of all the Muslims of the world and all those who have a conscience that is awake and well-intentioned wherever they may be. By wholeheartedly participating in these responsibilities—in other words, freely giving to them to the extent we can—it behoves us that in order to actualize these matters, we must jointly study its procedures and manners of execution so that the cooperation in its implementation becomes apparent and its challenges easy to deal with. These were examples that I have proposed to your Excellency with the hope that the issue gets studied from all its aspects and that you instruct the formation of a joint committee of experts which can immediately set to work.

My elder, before signing off on this letter, I direct your intention to the arrival of the blessed month of Ramaḍān. As you know, the

blessed month is an incomparable opportunity to create a spiritual and energetic atmosphere so that the Muslims are able to revive once again their eternal historical memories and to renew the scene of their own great history in these days. For this reason, I hope that you commission the custodians of Dār al-Iftā' as soon as possible to establish contacts with the members of the Committee of Publication and Propagation of the Grand Assembly of Shias in Lebanon. Also, it should be such that a few of the active and expert *mu'minīn* participate in the official offices of propagation so that in the end, a complete program can be created that can generate an atmosphere in line with this great month—one that can set alight in the hearts, flames of goodness, truthfulness, and heroism. I pray for your wellbeing in the service of Islam and all that is good, as well as for your brothers in the Grand Assembly of Shias, and for your devoted brother,

<div style="text-align: right">

Mūsā Ṣadr.

27 Rajab, 1389

19 October, 1969[5]

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UNIFYING THE FIQH

There are two perspectives—affirmative and negative—that exist at the base level amongst the prominent Islamic personalities (both Shia and Sunni) related to the idea of unifying the followers of the different schools of thought. The belief of those who subscribe to the negative perspective is based on the idea that there is absolutely no point of commonality between the Shia and the Sunni. All that is found in these two schools of thought is completely at odds with one another in every respect. Hence, there is no plausible reason for unity. The proponents of this idea are in the extreme minority even though they may have chosen this perspective with good intentions and sincerity. However, the reality is that this perspective has always been misused throughout history by the enemies of Islam and the colonialists of both the East and West. It has left many problems for the Islamic world; we shall not elaborate on these since they are quite obvious.

However, those who subscribe to the positive perspective regarding this topic have differed in terms of its means and methods; they can be divided into a few groups. The first group is of the following opinion: This topic has absolutely no relation to the unity of the "schools of thought"; each of these schools of thought must preserve their own fundamental and subsidiary doctrines. It is only the followers of the schools of thought that, while preserving the fundamental and subsidiary doctrines of their own school,

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[5] *Journal of Surūsh*, No. 161, Year 4, p. 34.

must unite with the followers of the other schools. This perspective was considered necessary by Imam Mūsā Ṣadr, but never sufficient. Moreover, at the level of action, it would bring about a series of obstacles and challenges that would inhibit the materialization of unity.

Another group is of the belief that all of the Islamic schools of thought are obliged to do the following: while safeguarding their own denominational essence, they should endeavour in the points of commonality between the different schools. Of course, many great and blessed strides have been taken in this direction: the late Shaykh Ṭūsī (r) composed the valuable book, *Khilāf*, ʿAllāmah Ḥillī authored the book, *Tadhkirah*, and today important books on the topic of 'comparative *fiqh*' are being written by capable Shia and Sunni thinkers. This perspective, however, with all the importance that it carries, primarily involves the scholars and thinkers and is contained within scholarly gatherings; it does not have a reality within the masses of people whose numbers range in the millions.

The third group, whose vanguard is most probably Imam Mūsā Ṣadr, while respecting the proponents of the previous perspectives and their followers, consider them as necessary but insufficient. It is for this reason that Mūsā Ṣadr raises the idea of unifying the *fiqh*. He says, "The Islamic fortress—in its foundations—is a single entity, and the Islamic ummah—in its beliefs, divine book, and origin and end—is also one; hence, this calls for unity even in its particulars."[6]

In March of 1970, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr attended the annual conference of 'Collective Discussions on Islam' in Egypt, during which, in a detailed speech in the presence of scholarly personalities, he emphasized this very point. He presented a codified plan on this topic to the conference forum and it was well received by most of the attendees. It resulted in the surfacing of the permanent members of the Assembly. Moreover, during an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *al-Muṣawwir*, in his response to the interviewer regarding the unity of the schools of thought, he stated:

> ... this topic is possible after accepting the unity of *fiqh*; it cannot come about simply through empty dialogue and superficial conversations of the leaders of the schools of thought. These schools have been crystallized in the depth of being of their own followers. I hope that this important goal will materialize with this Assembly, which is composed of the great scholars of the Islamic world. Moreover, con-

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[6] From the letter to Shaykh Ḥasan Khālid.

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sidering the opportune position that Egypt occupies in the Islamic
world, it can play an effective role in actualizing this goal...[7]

In every opportunity and gathering that he had with jurists and scholars
of the Islamic schools of thought, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr would bring up the
topic of the unity between the schools of thought, and in particular the
explanation and elucidation of unifying the *fiqh*. The following year, on
April 19, 1971, after having participated in the sixth congress of the 'Collec-
tive Discussions on Islam' in Egypt, he met with military personnel in the
Suez Canal and the battlefronts of the Egyptian war. While outlining the
importance of fighting against the Israeli occupiers, he emphasized the
topic of unity of the Islamic ummah, and in particular of religious rituals.[8]
Likewise, in 1973, on the occasion of the seventh annual conference of
'Knowledge of Islamic Thought' in Algeria, he once again brought up this
topic in an interview with the Algerian magazine *al-Mujāhid*.[9]

Of course, what Imam Mūsā Ṣadr meant with unifying the *fiqh* was not
that the difference of opinions amongst the jurisprudents of the schools of
thought should end and that all of them should issue one common verdict
for each law and issue; on the contrary, he believed that these differences of
opinion were actually what allowed *fiqh* to progress, jurisprudence to be-
come dynamic, and the jurist to excel [in his field]. He used to say that so
long as this difference of opinion was on the theoretical level—i.e., in the
form of an academic theory—it would always be a source of goodness,
blessing, progress, flowering, and growth. However, the moment it changed
into a verdict for action or a religious slogan within society, the multitude
of the verdicts and slogans would inevitably lead to the dispersal of the fol-
lowers of each verdict and slogan. Hence, all of these perspectives should
end with one verdict and with one slogan so that they do not result in divi-
sion, multiple factions, and the dispersal of the Islamic ummah. Imam
Mūsā Ṣadr used to give examples of the rituals of the *ḥajj*, the call for
prayers, Islamic holidays, and the crescent moons for the months of
Ramaḍān and Shawwāl; he used to say:

... For example, with regard to the sighting of the new crescent moon,
we can study a proposal to see if we can determine, through scientific
precision, the day of Eid by relying on new scientific ways and fixing
the angle for sighting the crescent on the horizon, so that all Mus-

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[7] The entire text of this interview was printed in the Lebanese newspaper *al-Anwār* on March
7, 1970.
[8] *al-Maḥrūr* Newspaper, Beirut, April 20, 1971.
[9] *al-Mujāhid* Magazine, no. 687, Rajab 13, 1393/1973.

lims can have their Eid on one day. This will economize many difficulties in terms of holidays and family visitations so that we do not have the issues that arise from having separate days for Eid. Also, we can look into whether or not there is a form for the call to prayers that is acceptable to everyone...[10]

Imam Mūsā Ṣadr's recommendation of unifying the *fiqh* was brought up for the first time in his letter to the Grand Mufti of Lebanon, Shaykh Ḥasan Khālid on the 27th of Rajab, 1389 AH/1969 (on the Eid of Mabʿath). Since then, around 40 years have passed, and today more than ever—while the whole world, and particularly the Islamic one, has become like a small village—the need to put into practice the concept of the unity of *fiqh* is deeply sensed. In a world in which America leads a global hegemony and each day brings a new unfounded pretence for starting a quarrel with Islam and all too often, one of the Islamic countries becomes the target of its encroachment, transgression, and means of profit—it is completely irrational and impermissible that in street after street of this small Islamic village, the voices of division and conflict be heard and the movements of disharmony and dissonance be seen. Of course, materializing such an important ideal is not a simple matter; it requires thought, contemplation, and the determination of the great jurisprudents and the concerned thinkers of the Islamic world. Imam Mūsā Ṣadr was aware of this reality and it is for this reason that in another part of the same letter he writes:

> In this condition, it is necessary to attach ourselves to these goals, to study them more closely, to determine our duties, to establish cooperation of the efforts of all the children of this country—first, amongst themselves and amongst the country officials, and then between them and the Arab countries in order to mobilize the resources of all the Muslims of the world and all those who have a conscience that is awake and well-intentioned wherever they may be. By wholeheartedly participating in these responsibilities—in other words, by freely giving to it to the extent we can—it behoves us that in order to actualize these matters, we must jointly study its procedures and manners of execution so that the cooperation in its implementation becomes apparent and its challenges easy to deal with.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRISTIAN MINISTERS

In addition to unity between the Islamic schools of thought, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr also believed in a type of union and dialogue between the divine

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[10] From the letter to Shaykh Ḥasan Khālid.

religions. For this reason, from the onset of his arrival in Lebanon, he began efforts to establish links and dialogue with the country's Christian religious and political denominations, and with each day, he increased the depth and breadth of this relationship. In a short period, he became acquainted with all of the Christian minsters and personalities and established formal cordial relations with most of them, particularly with bishop Yūsuf al-Khūrī (Maronite archbishop) in March 1960.[11]

However, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr never sufficed himself to just these relationships; he continued his relations with the rest of the Christian masses. In fact, he commissioned some prominent Christians as associates in his social works and charitable activities. In the summer of 1961, one of the famous Christians by the name of Raflah Manṣad endowed one-third of the shares of his ice-factory to the charitable society, *Mu'assisah Birr wa Iḥsān* (Institute of Goodness and Benevolence)—an institute managed by Imam Mūsā Ṣadr with the aim of tending to the dispossessed in southern Lebanon. Moreover, he made two Christian physicians official members of the same institute.[12]

DEFENCE OF OPPRESSED CHRISTIANS

In July 1962, in the city of Ṣūr, a Muslim ice-cream seller ill-treated his Christian neighbour, who was also an ice-cream seller. The Muslim began to spread the word that based on the teachings of Islam, Christian ice-cream was *najis* (ritually impure) and Muslims should not buy and consume it. This propagation was effective and the Christian neighbour suffered loss as a result. While this was transpiring, a fellow Christian complained to Imam Mūsā Ṣadr and sought his intervention. When informed about the incident, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr appeased the Christian and sent a message to the Muslim shop-keeper to abstain from such unworthy acts. The Muslim, however, did not heed his advice. A few days later, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr issued a clear *fatwā* (verdict) acknowledging the ritual purity of the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book—i.e., Christians, Jews, etc.). Moreover, he personally went to the ice-cream store of the Christian, along with a few other people, and in another act of conciliation, purchased some ice-cream from him to consume. With this act, he defended the rights of a Christian citizen who had been the target of ill-treatment.

This incident became the focus of attention for a few days, and was covered by many of the leading Lebanese newspapers such as *al-Nahār, al-*

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[11] RK: Imam Mūsā Ṣadr, *The Hope of the Deprived*, p. 278.
[12] *Guftār-e Māh Yearbook*, Year 2, p. 39.

Ḥayāh, and *Lisān al-Ḥāl*.[13] It also led to the strengthening of Muslim-Christian relations under the leadership of Imam Mūsā Ṣadr. In fact, in the very same year, with the invitation of the archbishop Grégoire Haddad and other prominent members, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr became a member of the 'Central Council of the Social Movement.'[14] Subsequently, he was invited by Christian leaders to a number of Christian religious centres—such as churches and monasteries—in order to speak on various topics, particularly on "the coexistence of religions."

COEXISTENCE WITH CHRISTIANS

On this issue, he took great strides and has said:

> ... I am for the establishment of one united Islamic front that can allow us, from a position of strength, to extend our hands of cooperation towards our fellow Christians and that can make way for the co-existence of Muslims and Christians. Israel insists on projecting this as a futile attempt in the world. They think that it is impossible to create an independent Palestine wherein Jews, Muslims, and Christians all live next to each other...[15]

He was of the belief that the coexistence of Muslims and Christians was an important asset that must be utilized in order to solve many social problems and issues.[16] In this regard, he strove and made advances to such an extent that he was accepted by the Christian societies as an ethical role model. Imam Mūsā Ṣadr used to say on this topic:

> ... One of the Christian institutes in Lebanon by the name of '*al-Mukhallid* Monastery'—their seminary in which they train clergy—invited me to speak ... a while after my speech, the head of the monastery said to the Director General of Propagation of Lebanon, who was also a Christian: 'that spiritual talk that Sayyid Mūsā gave us in the monastery in a matter of one hour was more than the spiritual talks that we give them [seminary students] in a matter of six months.' This has nothing to do with me, but it has to do with the pure religion of Islam ..."[17]

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[13] Sajīn al-ṣaḥrā, p. 426.

[14] Ibid., p. 432.

[15] Narrated by Imam Mūsā Ṣadr in 'Alī Ḥujjatī Karmānī, *Lebanon*, p. 86.

[16] *Ḥawārāt ṣaḥfiyyah II: al-waḥdah wa al-taḥrīr*, the Imam Mūsā Ṣadr Center for Study and Dialogue, Beirut, p. 26.

[17] Sīmāye Islam Yearbook, p. 90.

One of the other important Christian gatherings that he would attend regularly and where he would speak to the Christian youth, university students, and academics was in the grand, historical church—St. Maroon Church—in the city of Tripoli. Another city which is the centre of Maronite Christians is Bsharri. In this city, thousands of youth and Christians from all walks of life would gather, with indescribable excitement and enthusiasm, to listen to the talk of Imam Mūsā Ṣadr.[18] These youth were so enamoured by him that most of them would bring their marriage vows to him and he would solemnize their marriages.[19]

Establishing Annual Conferences

In yet another essential step forward, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr embarked on establishing a scholarly conference entitled 'Broad Dialogue between Islam and Christianity' in May, 1965, with the assistance of various Muslim and Christian intellectuals. This conference, which was held in the Lebanese Symposium, was attended by well-known Muslim and Christian personalities such as Naṣrī Sulhab, George Khaḍar, Francois Dūbarahlātūr, Yusūf Abū Ḥalqah, Ḥasan Ṣaʿb, Yuwākīl Mubārak, and Ṣubḥī Ṣāliḥ each of whom addressed the audience. In this gathering, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr gave a detailed talk on "Twentieth Century Islam and Culture," which the participants found quite innovative.[20]

The interactive round-table sessions of this conference as well as the speeches, presentations, and views of Muslim and Christian thinkers continued till June with the aim of determining the techniques for deepening and expanding interfaith dialogue. The first part of these talks concluded with the issuance of a joint-manifesto, in which the following essential points were emphasized:

1. Striving towards worshipping one God through common religious practices;
2. Efforts in preserving ethical and human values;
3. The exceptional role of Lebanon in expanding the culture of dialogue between Islam and Christianity;
4. The important role of interfaith dialogue in order to strengthen and unify Lebanon;

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[18] *ʿIzzat Shīʿah*, p. 142, as narrated by Hujjat al-Islam, Sayyid Abū Dhar ʿĀmulī.
[19] Imam Mūsā Ṣadr: The Hope of the Deprived, p. 281.
[20] The entire text of this speech can be located in *Abjadiyyat al-ḥawār: Anthology of Imam Mūsā Ṣadr's speeches*, compiled by Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, p. 43.

5. The establishment of a higher-education institute to conduct comparative studies of the divine religions; and

6. The necessity of cooperation between all Muslim and Christian thinkers in order to deepen the culture of dialogue.

In subsequent years, this conference continued its activities under various conference titles such as 'Justice in Islam and Christianity." It included the participation of various academic, cultural, and political personalities—both Muslim and Christian.

THE FLAG-BEARER OF COEXISTENCE

In his effort to strengthen the ties with well-known Christian personalities, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr—as a Shia Imam and scholar—did not suffice himself only to having official sessions with them; rather, during the days of Eid and various other occasions, he would pay them visits in their homes, attend their funerals, and participate in their joyous and sad ceremonies. It reached a point where Christians would respect and honour him in the same way they did their own leaders. In fact, at times, they would rely on him more than their own leaders.

In an interview with *Monday Morning* on August 22, 1977, Imam Mūsā Ṣadr sketched out his position among the Christians in the following manner:

> ... And I don't think that anyone in Lebanon has raised the flag of the coexistence of religions and the unity of the country and has kept it raised as I have. I became a code for national unity more than I could be my own self. From the point of view of the conspirators, I should have been done away with. In addition to the political, cultural, and social relations that I had with all the heads of the various religious denominations, I had attained such a level of trust that three years ago, I had delivered the sermon of the Easter fast (a particular Christian occasion) for the Christian faithful in the Kabar-shiyīn Church; this perhaps was unmatched in history. In order for you to understand the extent of this claim, let me explain: What I did would be similar to a Christian religious leader delivering the *khuṭbah* (sermon) of the Friday prayers to Muslims gathered for the prayer. Hence, I became the peaceful code for national unity and the brotherhood of monotheistic religions as well as the flag-bearer of the coexistence of the various groups in Lebanon. Due to this, they

began a propaganda war against me as a means of character assassination, and probed into all of my political works and associations...[21]

One of the Christian denominational leaders, by the name of Minister Yawākīm Mubārak, writes his views about Imam Mūsā Ṣadr in an article in the Beirut *al-Nahār* newspaper in the following manner:

> ... Of course, no one can deny that Sayyid Mūsā Ṣadr is a Shia who began his activities in order to fight for the rights of the Shias in this country. However, these current activities [of his] encompass a much greater vision and one must not forget that the Shias in Islam have always been a group of intellectuals and the promoters of justice; in this way, they have devoted their lives and offered many sacrifices. It is for this reason also that the well-being of Lebanon lies with them. In the same way that in the past periods of history, the Maronite and Druze movement was believed to be important, and they saw aspects of seeking freedom and humanity in these movements, now as well, they should support the movement of Mūsā Ṣadr, particularly since this movement is connected and in collaboration with the Palestinian cause...[22]

Professor Ilyās al-Dīrī, a prominent Christian commentator in Lebanon, regarding this aspect of the personality of Imam Mūsā Ṣadr has this to say:

> ... May God preserve Imam Mūsā Ṣadr for a hundred and one years; may He make him live as long as possible so that a roaring bell and resonating cry remain on earth and a conscience that vexes the dead who are drowned in their sleep when creation refuses to close its eyes and cries out in distress. May God preserve him [as a hope] for the dispossessed ones of his own people and the rest of the dispossessed in Lebanon throughout history... In this Lebanon, how many are the number of dispossessed and oppressed and how many in need of a hand to remove the oppression and to eliminate deprivation? Many indeed! How many of them are in dire need of a voice like the voice of this man and a heart like his heart ... Perhaps, it is for the first time that the movement of one religious man is free from the taint of sectarianism and empty of any sign of partisanship. The reason for this is that the movement of this Imam and leader of the Shias has earned the respect, praise, and consensus of the Maronites, the Sunnis, and the Orthodox ... in short, this is Imam Mūsā Ṣadr and this is his position—one which is based on clear and certain realities and sources whether in the view of the innocent faithful masses or the

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[21] Tarjumān Magazine, p. 42.
[22] "The Helpers of Imam," *Imam Mūsā Ṣadr Special Edition*, vol. I, Savak News report on December 14, 1974.

leading intellectuals, whether in the eyes of his own people or the greater Lebanese nation.[23]

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[23] *Surūsh Magazine*, no. 161, p. 33. The entire text of this article was published in the Today's column of the widely circulated Lebanese *al-Nihār* newspaper on April 1, 1975—three years prior to his disappearance.

Imāmah and Wilāyah:
ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn's Approach to Conciliation[*]

Muḥammad Isḥāq Dhākirī

Abstract:

The concepts of *imāmah* and 'the caliphate' are important features of Islam and each school of thought within Islam has developed its own understanding of these particular terms. The present article begins by reviewing and analyzing the different conceptualizations of *imāmah*. The author then surveys the different approaches adopted by conciliatory scholars in dealing with the concepts of *imāmah* and the caliphate. Some of these approaches involve abstaining from the debate, separating the concept of *imāmah* from the caliphate, and engaging in inter-confessional discussion in order to diffuse popular misunderstandings that adherents of each *madhhab* have in relation to the other *madhāhib* through a more accurate portrayal of their core beliefs. ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn adopted this last approach of academic debate and discussion and this is examined in the final section of the paper. His efforts paved the way for the Shia school of jurisprudence to be recognized as a bona fide *madhhab* by the leading authorities of al-Azhar in Egypt.

Keywords: Sharaf al-Dīn, al-Basharī, *imāmah*, *wilāyah*, the caliphate, unity, conciliatory approach, Ahl al-Bayt, Shia, Ahl al-Sunnah.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of *imāmah* and the caliphate (*khilāfah*) in Islam has been one of the important and influential topics pertaining to Muslim society, and many a Muslim scholar has theorized on this topic from a variety of perspectives. One of the important approaches which is brought up in the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Islamic society—and one which has a special importance given the contemporary conditions of the Muslim world—is the approach of conciliation. After all, the most important issue which initially gave rise to the different Islamic schools of thought—according to the views of the majority of scholars on Islamic cultures,

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[*] This is an abridged version of a much lengthier article by the author entitled "Imāmat wa wilāyat dar naẓariyyeh-ye taqrīb-e madhāhib-e Islāmī-ye ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn ʿĀmulī."

creds, and history as well as other scholars—has been the diversity of opinion regarding the issue of religious and political leadership of the Islamic society. On this matter, Shahristānī has said that throughout the history of Islam Muslims have not drawn their swords against each other due to a religious issue as they have with regard to the issue of the guidance and leadership of Muslim society.[1]

'Allāmah 'abd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn 'Āmulī, a personality who was deeply committed to the unity of the Islamic ummah and the reconciliation between the Islamic schools of thought, has remarked in this matter: "Politics has divided the two; therefore, politics must unite the two." Put differently, the topic of caliphate and the result of politics has divided the Islamic ummah into two groups—the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah—and therefore, it is politics and the political interests of the Islamic world that must now bring the two together.

Considering the importance of the issue of leadership and the caliphate, both in Islamic theology as well as in the matter of conciliating the Islamic schools of thought, it seems imperative for the topic of this discussion to be clearly articulated and defined. What aspects pertaining to leadership of an Islamic society are in question and in what manner can leadership and Islamic society be detached? What aspects and facets can be proposed regarding the similarities and differences of the two great Islamic groups—the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah—pertaining to this matter? Finally, is there a difference between the terms *imāmah* and *khilāfah*?

We will begin with a brief discussion and examination of the above-mentioned issues. Subsequently, the views and perspectives regarding the issues of the caliphate and *imāmah* proposed by scholars who are involved in conciliating the Islamic schools of thought—particularly from the Shia school of thought—will be briefly examined. Finally, the conciliatory views of 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn regarding the issue of the caliphate and *imāmah* of Islamic society will be alluded to.

ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERM 'IMAM'

The term *imām* is normally translated as leader or ruler. Leadership, on its own, does not carry a positive or negative connotation; being a leader can be actualized in a true and divine way, in which case such a leadership brings about value and sanctity; however, being a leader can also be actualized in an incorrect and misguided way, in which case it takes on a negative

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[1] Shahristānī, Milal wa niḥal (Cultures and Creeds), v. 1, p. 25.

meaning. In the noble Qur'ān, the term *imām* has been used with both connotations. In one case, the noble Qur'ān states:

$$وَجَعَلْنَٰهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا$$

We made them imams, guiding by Our command. (21:73)

And in other case, it states:

$$وَجَعَلْنَٰهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى ٱلنَّارِ وَيَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ$$

We made them imams who invite to the Fire, and on the Day of
Resurrection they will not receive any help. (28:41)

Therefore, *imāmah* means to lead and direct people. The question that we must turn to now is this: what are the aspects of this leadership?

THE ROLE OF IMĀMAH ACCORDING TO THE SHIA AND THE AHL AL-SUNNAH

Imāmah—in the sense of religious and political guardianship (*wilāyah*) of the twelve Imams ('*a*)—is a pivotal cornerstone of the Shia school of thought, the school of the Ahl al-Bayt ('*a*). According to the Shia, *imāmah* is a part of the *uṣūl al-dīn* (fundamental principles of faith); however, the Sunnis, though they believe in a certain type of *imāmah*, nevertheless, place it as part of the *furū' al-dīn* (subsidiary aspects of religion) and not the *uṣūl*. Shahīd Muṭahharī, in clarifying this issue as to why *imāmah* is a part of the *uṣūl al-dīn* according to the Shia and a part of the *furū' al-dīn* according to the Ahl al-Sunnah, states, "The reason behind the difference in this issue is unknown as to why the concept of *imāmah* according to the Shia is different than that which one finds with the Ahl al-Sunnah."[2]

THE ASPECTS AND FACETS OF IMAMAH ACCORDING TO THE SHIA

In order to attain a clear and precise concept of *imāmah*, an accurate analysis and interpretation of this concept according to the Shia beliefs is fundamental in the discussion on conciliating the Islamic schools of thought. This also includes an investigation and discussion regarding the following questions: What are the aspects and facets of *imāmah* according to the Shia school of thought? In which of these aspects are there similari-

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[2] Muṭahharī, Shahīd Murtaḍā, *Anthology of Works*, v. 4, p. 841.

ties and differences between their view and that of the Ahl al-Sunnah? It is only with a careful exposition of this subject-matter that one can engage in the discussion, investigation, and evaluation of the opinions pertaining to the conciliation that has been proposed by Shia scholars on the issue of *imāmah*.

1. Imāmah in the sense of governing over the public and leading the Muslims

One of the meanings and aspects that has been put forward by the Shia regarding the term *imāmah* is based on the idea of leading the Muslim society. This is conceptualized in the same manner where the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) of Islam had, in his lifetime, the responsibility of governing the Muslim society. After the demise of the holy Prophet (*ṣ*) of Islam, however, while the majority of Islamic groups and schools of thought were unanimous on the issue of Muslim society requiring a leader and head (and *imāmah* in this sense and with this definition is agreed upon by the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah), there arose a difference of opinion between the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah regarding the issue of who this right and responsibility would fall on, how it would be solemnized, and in what manner it would be transferred.

The Shia school of thought is of the belief that the selection and incumbency of the caliph and imam is from the Holy Prophet (*ṣ*) of Islam. For this reason, they are of the view that based on the statements transmitted from the Prophet (*ṣ*), this right had been passed on to Imam ʿAlī (*ʿa*) and to the other immaculate Imams. From this perspective, the 'filling in' of other individuals of the seat and position of the caliphate of the Islamic ummah has been unjust. However, the Ahl al-Sunnah are of the belief that the selection and appointment of the caliph was not of the responsibilities of the Prophet of Islam (*ṣ*); rather, the choice of determining the caliph of Islam was entrusted to the Islamic ummah, and the Islamic ummah chose for the caliphate—initially through consultation—Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī (*ʿa*) respectively.

Critique and analysis regarding this aspect of *Imamah*

As has been stated, the principle of *imāmah*—in the sense of governing the public and leading the Islamic society—is agreed upon by both the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah though there is a difference of opinion regarding the choice of leader and the method used to determine this choice. The question is: is this the only meaning and aspect of *imāmah* that has been presented? If so, then it appears that eliminating the differences between the

Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah on this topic is possible. According to the statement of Shahīd Muṭahharī, *imāmah* with this meaning is better situated within the *furū' al-dīn* and not the *uṣūl al-dīn*; he states:

> If the issue of *imāmah* is confined to this—i.e., it is only a matter of the political leadership of Muslims after the Prophet (ṣ)—then surely, we who are Shias, would have considered *imāmah* as part of the *furū' al-dīn* and not the *uṣūl al-dīn*; we would have said that this is a side issue like the canonical prayers. However, the Shia—who are of the belief in the cornerstone of *imāmah*—do not limit it to this by saying that 'Alī was one of the companions of the Prophet and Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and a hundred other individuals were also companions of the Prophet; that 'Alī was better, superior, more knowledgeable, more God-conscious and further ahead than them; and that the Prophet had appointed him. No, the Shia do not believe in limiting it to this; rather, they add two other issues, neither of which, in principle, the Ahl al-Tassanun (i.e. Sunnis) subscribe to (i.e., it is not that they subscribe to these beliefs but feel that 'Alī was lacking in them). One of them is the issue of *imāmah* in the sense of religious authority …[3]

2. *Imamah* in the sense of religious and intellectual authority

One of the other duties of the imam that the Shia school of thought subscribes to is his religious authority. In elaborating on this concept, the following question has been asked: are all the rules and teachings of the religion of Islam enumerated in what has been revealed in the Qur'ān and what the Prophet of Islam has preached for the Muslims during his lifetime? In other words, is it the case that everything that Islam has wanted to relate regarding its religious rules and teachings the same as that which appears in the Qur'ān or that which the Prophet of Islam himself related to the public? Or, is it more likely the case that what the Prophet of Islam made known to the public in the short lifetime that remained after the beginning of his prophetic mission was not all the teachings of Islam— particularly considering the issues he had to deal with and the various battles that he had with the unbelievers and the Jews?

Of course, this is not to imply that Islam was presented to the Prophet of Islam by God in an incomplete manner; rather, the conviction of the Shias is that first of all, God did not reveal the teachings of Islam to the Prophet in a partial form nor did the Prophet of Islam relate only a part of those teachings to the people. Second, the teachings of Islam have only

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[3] Ibid., p. 845.

been revealed to the noble Prophet and he is the only one who has brought Islam [as a complete religion] to mankind. Moreover, God had revealed to the Prophet of Islam that which needed to be revealed of Islam and certainly, other than the Prophet of Islam, no other personality had received this revelation.

In conclusion, our claim is not that a portion of the rules and teachings of Islam was left unrevealed to the Prophet; rather, our claim is in this point: Were there any rules and teachings of Islam which were left untransmitted to the public? The view of the Shias is that, considering the limited time that the Prophet of Islam had at his disposal on the one hand, and considering the fact that many of the rules and obligations of Islam during the time of the Prophet were not even up for discussion on the other, the Prophet (ṣ) simply did not have this opportunity. That which he imparted to the public was not the entirety of the Islamic teachings. Hence, the noble Prophet of Islam taught all the rules and teachings of Islam—at least in terms of their essentials—to ʿAlī (ʿa), his successor and the caliph after himself. Further, the Prophet introduced ʿAlī to the people as one of the exceptional scholars and competent authorities—one who was protected from making mistakes and errors and who was acquainted with all the particularities of the religion of Islam. The Prophet, moreover, stated that after himself people should ask his successor whatever they wished regarding any religious matters.

Shahīd Muṭahharī, in expounding this aspect of *imāmah*, has stated:

> In reality, *imāmah* in this case is a type of authority of Islam, an authority much higher than that of a jurisprudent: an authority from Allah. [The Imams] are those that are true Islamicists, but not Islamicists who have understood Islam based on their own rationality and logic (which would undoubtedly make them fallible); rather these are individuals who have received the teachings of Islam from the Prophet through a secret and hidden medium (one which is veiled from us).[4]

However, the Ahl al-Sunnah are of the belief that the Prophet of Islam had transmitted the entire corpus of the Islamic rules and rituals as well as its religious teachings to all the companions and people. Further, the entirety of the Islamic teachings was that which the Prophet (ṣ) had narrated to all the companions. For this reason, the Ahl al-Sunnah do not subscribe to the view that the rank and position of the one succeeding the noble Prophet of Islam is one of religious and intellectual authority, one from

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[4] Ibid., p. 846.

whom Muslims may derive the particularities of their duties and who are infallible and immune from making errors. It is not that they believe in such a position after the Prophet of Islam but are in disagreement with the Shia school of thought regarding the person who is to occupy such a position [rather, they do not believe in there being such a position to begin with].

As a result of this, according to the Ahl al-Sunnah, the standard of religious rulings and Islamic teachings in an age after the demise of the Prophet of Islam, is the literal noble Qur'ān and the narrations of the Prophet of Islam which have been transmitted through the companions. If a situation arises where their scholars cannot derive a divine ruling from the Qur'ān or if the ruling of that issue has not appeared in the prophetic narrations, then the means used to acquire the rulings of such issues are *qiyās* (analogical reasoning) and the *ijtihādāt* (independent judgements) of the companions and the religious authorities. This is despite the fact that such *ijtihādāt* are not immune from error; it is possible that the scholars are correct [in their rulings] in which case they are rewarded for it or that they make an error in which case they are excused for it.[5]

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in explaining this issue, has stated:

> A short while after assuming the caliphate, the first caliph addressed the people from on top of the Prophet's pulpit and announced the way and method of his own rulership. He said, 'The noble messenger in his own way was assisted by God and was supported by divine revelation; however, since we are not as fortunate to receive revelation, we will proceed in managing the affairs of the Muslims through *ijtihād*. It may be, through the assistance of God, that our conclusions are accurate, but it is also possible that we make mistakes.[6]

Likewise, Shahīd Muṭahharī, in elaborating the view of the Ahl al-Sunnah regarding this aspect of *imāmah* (the aspect of the imam being the religious and intellectual authority), has stated:

> The claim of the Ahl al-Tasannun is that whatever the teachings of Islam were, they were no different than what the Prophet expounded for his companions. However, in issues where nothing has been narrated from the companions, they are at a loss at what to do. It is here that the concept of *qiyās* enters the scene and they say, 'we will com-

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[5] It would appear that in the Sunni perspective the said religious authority is more diffused and continues by way of the presiding sanctity and *walāyah* of the saints, the general expertise and *baṣīrah* of the 'ulamā, and the collective will and *irādah* of the ummah. [Ed.]

[6] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 'Allāmah Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Ẓuhūr-e Shī'eh dar Islām* (The Appearance of the Shia in Islam), p. 17.

plete [those issues where no narration appears] with the law of *qiyās* and comparison.' Of course, the leader of the faithful ('a), in the Nahj al-Balāghah, has critiqued (this *qiyāsī* form) and in his response to them, has said, 'does that mean that God has sent an incomplete religion that you need to come (with *qiyās*) to complete it?'[7]

Analysis and critique of this aspect of *Imamah*

This form of *imāmah* is counted as one of the distinguishing features and characteristics of the Shia school of thought. The understanding of *imāmah* as a rank and position in which the Imams ('a), after the Prophet of Islam (ṣ), had complete religious and intellectual authority within Islamic society in such a way that they were immune from making errors and their obedience was mandatory on all Muslims is only found within the Shia school of thought. The Ahl al-Sunnah in no way subscribe to such a position, not only regarding the Shia infallible Imams, but also regarding the caliphs and religious authorities of their own. It is true that the Ahl al-Sunnah agree to one aspect of this understanding [of *imāmah*]—the intellectual position of the Shia Imams—as many of the authorities within the Ahl al-Sunnah admit and acknowledge the intellectual grace, understanding, and superiority of the infallible Imams and the noble Household of Islam. However, this view of theirs does not at all corroborate the intellectual and religious rank and position that the Shias attribute to their own Imams; rather, the Ahl al-Sunnah place this intellectual position and religious authority of the Imams and the Prophet's Household on the same plane and level as their own religious scholars and predecessors who, as admitted by the Ahl al-Sunnah themselves, are not immune from error.

3. *Imamah* in the sense of *Wilayah*: the Perfect Man and the Proof of the Age

One of the other meanings for *imāmah*, as found in the Shia school of thought, involves the 'Perfect Man' (*Insān al-Kāmil*) and 'Proof of God' (*Ḥujjat Allah*). The idea is that in every age there exists one perfect human who is the bearer of humanity's universal spirituality, who is counted as God's vicegerent on earth, and who carries all the perfected qualities of humanity. This Perfect Man is considered the Proof of God and the Proof of the Age and the phrase *wa law lā al-Ḥujjah lasākhat al-arḍ bi ahlihā* ("Were it not for the Ḥujjah, surely the earth would sink with its inhabitants") alludes to this fact that the earth has never been and never will be

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[7] Muṭahharī, v. 4, p. 847.

deprived of the Perfect Man. This Proof of God has ranks and distinctions that are unfathomable by us, one of which is having *wilāyah* over all phenomena—i.e., being the *Walī* of God and Proof of God in respect to all things. Another distinction of the Perfect Man is the fact that he is the intermediary of divine grace and mercy. Moreover, the Imam and *Walī* of God is the intermediary of divine guidance among human beings and, according to the idea of 'the awaited Imam' and the concept of the Mahdi, he is inseparably linked to this world.[8]

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in speaking to Henry Corbin, has recounted the following from him regarding this aspect of *imāmah*:

> Dr. Corbin then added: 'it seems to me that the Shia school of thought is the only school which has preserved the divine relationship between God and creation forever, and it has established and revived the concept of *wilāyah* in a continuous and uninterrupted manner. The Jewish faith terminated prophecy—which, in reality, is the link between God and the world of man—with the *kalīm* (i.e., Moses) and has not admitted to the prophecy of Jesus or Muḥammad after that and hence has broken the above link. Similarly, the Christians have stopped at Jesus and among the Muslims, the Ahl al-Sunnah have likewise stopped at Muḥammad (ṣ), and with the ending of prophecy amongst them, the link between the Creator and creation no longer exists. It is only the Shia school of thought that accepts the seal of prophecy with Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) but considers *wilāyah*—which is none other than the relation of guidance and perfection—as a living reality that has continued after the Prophet and will do so forever.'[9]

Analysis and critique of *Imamah* in the sense of the *Wali* of God and the Perfect Man

Imāmah in this sense and with this understanding is again one of the distinctions of the Shia school of thought. The Ahl al-Sunnah do not believe in such a position, either for the Shia Imams or for anyone else. However, the mystics and Sufis from amongst the Ahl al-Sunnah do subscribe to a version of this belief, and that is that in every age there exists a *walī* of God and the Perfect Man who, at times, is referred to as the Pole (*quṭb*). Almost all of them trace the spiritual lineages of their Poles to 'Alī ('a). However, firstly, even the Sufis have taken this doctrine of theirs from the Shia school; and secondly, their understanding of the Pole and the Perfect

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[8] Ibid., p. 849.
[9] Ṭabāṭabā'ī, p. 8.

Man, as well as the particularities regarding this station, is different than the understanding the Shias have regarding the *walī* of God and the Perfect Man.

In conclusion, the doctrine of *imāmah* that one finds within the Shia school of thought is composed of many aspects. The evidence for these aspects as well as the [various] meanings of *imāmah* requires another venue altogether as there are many scholars who have offered evidence for them. Shahīd Muṭahhari has said the following regarding this:

> The issue of *imāmah* (amongst the Shias) exists at three levels, and if these are not distinguished from one another, we will inevitably fall into error regarding the evidence that has been offered for them. Hence, even Shiism has degrees. Some Shias are only of the belief that *imāmah* involves social leadership and that the Prophet (ṣ) appointed Ali (ʿa) as the leader after himself. These people are only Shias to this extent and with regard to the other two issues, either they do not believe in them or they remain silent. Some others also subscribe to the second understanding but stop short of the third level. However, most Shias as well as the Shia scholars also believe in the third level.[10]

Another point which is important in the discussion on *imāmah* is the fact that just as distinguishing between the aspects of *imāmah* has an effect on the very evidence of *imāmah* and its forms, so too does it play an important role in the discussion on bringing the different schools of thought together and the scholarly views that have been offered—with the aim of conciliating the Islamic schools of thought—regarding *imāmah* and the caliphate in Islam. The correct understanding and exposition of the idea of *imāmah* within the Shia school of thought as well as distinguishing the nuances and forms which have been offered regarding it are beneficial to an analysis, critique and, evaluation of the conciliatory views, approaches, and solutions that have been presented by Shia conciliatory scholars on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate. As to which of the previously discussed conciliatory approaches is more beneficial in this discussion is what will now be investigated.

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[10] Muṭahharī, v. 4, p. 850.

STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF THE CONCILIATORY PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES ON THE TOPIC OF IMAMAH

1. The perspective/approach of silence vis-à-vis the topic of *Imamah* and the caliphate

One of the solutions of reconciliation which is presented by some of the conciliatory scholars on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Muslim society is the approach of silence and refraining from entering into any discussion on the *imāmah* and caliphate of the early Islamic society—particularly in this day and age. The conciliatory theorists who follow this approach have defended their views with the following explanation: The topic of the caliphate and *imāmah* at the advent of Islam and the inception of the first Muslim community is a topic relevant only to that age. The question is: who had a greater right to sit on the throne of the Islamic caliphate and what related events transpired during that time? This is a topic relevant only to that period and has no relation to the present situation of the Muslims. Reviving this discussion has no benefit for the Muslim community today. In this manner, the best and most useful way to reduce religious tensions and antagonisms between the Muslims on the issue of the caliphate of Islamic society—and, occasionally, on some other issues—is to suspend discussion on this topic. Moreover, in today's age, each of the Islamic countries has their own particular mechanism through which the political administration of their country operates and to which they are bound. They consider such mechanisms beneficial for the course of their own country and do not feel the need to discuss the issue of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Muslim society.

Analysis and critique of this perspective and approach

The perspective of suspending discussion on the topic of the caliphate of the first Islamic society appears to be beneficial according to the perspective of the Ahl al-Sunnah who limit the *imāmah* of Islamic society to political and social leadership and the preservation and execution of rules in an Muslim society. The argument is that after the *imāmah* of the first Islamic society, the issue took on a historical aspect, and therefore its study and analysis is only useful to that extent and no more. Further, within this domain, one cannot deny the caliphate of the Caliphs.

Essentially, however, if the topic of *imāmah* is confined to this meaning, not only in this day and age, but also during the early days of Islam, it should not have caused the deep divisions amongst Muslims. As stated by

Shahīd Muṭahharī, if the topic of *imāmah* was limited to who should have sat on the throne of caliphate after the demise of the Prophet of Islam, then it would be better for the Shias to have relegated it, like the Ahl al-Sunnah, to the *furūʿ al-dīn* and not to the *uṣūl al-dīn*.[11]

However, as discussed previously, the topic of *imāmah* according to the Shia school of thought contains numerous facets, only one of which is the issue of political and social caliphate and the rule over the Islamic society; the other facets include religious and intellectual authority of the Imams (ʿa) as particularly understood by Shia authorities, as well as the existential and legislative *wilāyah* of the Imams over all creatures. The fact is that the elders and scholars of the Shia school of thought see the essence of Shiism and Shias reflected in the mirror of *imāmah* and its facets. Moreover, they do not consider it possible to define the essence of the Shias without explaining their relation with the issue of *imāmah*. For this reason, they do not consider the deviation of the first Islamic society on the issue of *imāmah* and the caliphate to be one limited to the political or social dimension or the execution of Islamic rule. Rather, according to great religious scholars such as Imam Khumaynī (r) and Āyatullah Burūjardī (r), the deviation of the first Islamic society on the issue of *imāmah* resulted in the Islamic ummah being deprived of many of the religious rulings and Islamic teachings.[12]

Now, considering the points alluded to, it seems that the perspective of avoiding discussion on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Islamic society in order to achieve the goals of reconciliation is not an appropriate perspective. This is because if *imāmah* according to the Shias was, like the view of the Ahl al-Sunnah, limited to the dimension of political and social rule, then avoiding discussion and even accepting the caliphate of the first caliphs may have been useful in promoting the goals of reconciliation. ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, in his response to Shaykh Nuḥī Ḥanafī who had accused the Shias of not accepting the caliphate of the Caliphs, goes on to accept their caliphate—i.e., that it did take place in history. Certainly, having discussions and debates on only this dimension of *imāmah* has no benefit whatsoever for today's Islamic society.[13]

However, considering the fact that *imāmah* within the Shia school of thought has a particular meaning and a number of facets of it have been presented, it seems that the approach of refraining from discussion on the topic of *imāmah*—which is intimately linked with the essence of Shiism—

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[11] Ibid., v. 4, p. 845.
[12] Khurāsānī, Muṣāḥabah Wāʿiẓ Zādah, *Journal of Haft Asmān*, no. 9/10, p. 18.
[13] Sharaf al-Dīn, ʿAllāmah ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn, *al-Fuṣūl al-muhimmah*, p. 207.

is not the appropriate approach to adopt. On the contrary, the religious and intellectual duty of the Shia conciliatory scholars demands that they have scholarly and well-documented discussions as well as 'goodly' exchanges with the Ahl al-Sunnah scholars such that through such dealings, they may be able to come to a mutual understanding on this topic, or at the very least, they can clearly present the viewpoint of the Shia school of thought regarding the topic of *imāmah*. This is precisely the approach adopted by ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn approximately a century ago—a communicative approach of dialogue—in order to authenticate, in an intellectual manner, the fundamental beliefs of the Shias to the leading figures of the Ahl al-Sunnah. In fact, this was during a time when the Shias were under severe social, intellectual, and denominational strain and were the target of various verdicts labelling them as unbelievers. This approach of ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn will be discussed and analyzed later.

2. The conciliatory approach and perspective of separating *Imamah* from the caliphate

According to this perspective, *imāmah* has been defined in terms of an intellectual and religious authority while the caliphate has been defined in terms of political, social, and executive rule within the Islamic society. It is on this basis that the promoters of this perspective, in order to pursue their conciliatory goals, are of the belief that these two topics had been separated during the early days of Islam, and now too, in order to achieve a reconciliation of the schools of thought, we must continue to affirm their separation [in principle]. This means that regarding the topic of the caliphate, the Shias should consider the caliphate of the first caliphs as legitimate and in return, the Ahl al-Sunnah should accept the intellectual and religious authority of the Imams (ʿa). Of course, the Ahl al-Sunnah do accept this matter for they do not deny the knowledge and nobility of the Imams (ʿa). On this issue, the view of the late ʿAllāmah Samanānī has been presented as such:

> The demised ʿAllāmah Samanānī, in the journal *Risālah al-Islām* used to say: 'The issue of *imāmah* and caliphate is essentially two issues. The Caliphs accepted the *imāmah* of ʿAlī (ʿa) and ʿAlī also accepted their caliphate. However, he said to them, "You administer but let me handle the difficulties." They accepted this.'[14]

The conciliatory views of these scholars is established on this basis that the position of *imāmah*—which the Shias attribute to the infallible

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[14] Khurāsānī, p. 20.

Imams—is not inconsistent with the position of the caliphate—which the Ahl al-Sunnah attribute to the caliphs. On the contrary, they have always been compatible and in agreement. *Imāmah*, according to the Shias, is conditional on infallibility and the appointment from God and the Prophet, and this position was never assumed or rejected by the rightly-guided caliphs; moreover, the position of *imāmah*, according to the Shias, is not conditional on assuming the position of the external caliphate and ruling the Islamic society. In contrast, the caliphate of the rightly-guided caliphs is another position altogether which our infallible Imam (*ʿa*), during his 25 years, neither denied nor annulled. It is for this reason that *imāmah*, in the Shia dictionary, has not had any opposition or intolerance to caliphate and in substantiating caliphate there is no need to deny *imāmah*.[15]

Analysis and critique of the perspective of separation (of *Imamah* and caliphate) in the topic of *Imamah*

1. First critique

The proponents of this perspective have ignored the first aspect of *imāmah*—the aspect of political rule—that exists within the Shia school of thought and which is also underscored by Shia scholars and leading figures. In other words, the proponents of this perspective have separated this aspect of *imāmah* from the essence of *imāmah* itself, and under the heading of caliphate, have endowed it to others. This is despite the fact that one of the aspects which is agreed upon in the discussion of *imāmah* is the aspect of the political, social, and executive rule of the Imams which was transferred to them from the noble Prophet of Islam even though it may not have been actualized. Further discussion on this would require another opportunity.

2. Second critique

The proponents of the perspective of separation (of *imāmah* and caliphate) are of the belief and opinion that the Ahl al-Sunnah, and at their head, the rightly-guided caliphs, have accepted the *imāmah* of the Imams (*ʿa*)—and by this they mean the aspect of intellectual and religious authority of the infallible Imams as stipulated within the Shia school of thought—and in return, the Shia Imams, and at their head, Imam ʿAlī (*ʿa*), had accepted and legitimized the caliphate of the three caliphs. However, this topic and

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[15] Māzandarānī, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ, "Imāmah wa khilāfah", in Shīrāzī, ʿAbd al-Karīm, *Hambastagī-ye maḏāhib-e Islāmī* (*Unity of the Islamic Schools*), p. 218.

this point are at the essence of the controversy between the Shia and the Ahl al-Sunnah and hence, begs the question so to speak.

3. Third critique

Thirdly, the perspective of separation (of *imāmah* and the caliphate) is in opposition to the religious basis for political reign. This is because according to the religious sources of the Shia school of thought, the foundational grounds for legitimizing politics is based on the true dominion of God over all things and his existential and legislative lordship over everything other than Himself. No individual, without the permission of God, can rule over another.[16] Based on this, the essential view on the legitimization of political rule after the Prophet of Islam returns to its axis (the *imāmah* of the infallible Imams) in the sense that that Shia school of thought acknowledges the religious texts regarding the appointment of the Prophet's successor. Having accepted the appointment of the infallible Imams as the governors of Islamic society, they consider the legitimization of their political governance arising from Divine Will. However, the perspective of separation (of *imāmah* and the caliphate)—which considers others legitimate in the rule of the caliphate and the political governance of the Islamic society—assumes the perspective of the separation of religion and politics and accepts the basis of democracy in the area of political governance where the legitimization of political rule emerges from the will of the people; such a basis is not justifiable.

3. Perspective and approach of academic debate and discussion regarding the topic of *Imamah*

The third approach which can be investigated and which is adopted by conciliatory thinkers on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate is the approach of academic discussion on this topic amongst the scholars of the different schools. This approach allows for each of the two sides to present a documented and scholarly elaboration of their beliefs on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate, which can then either result in the acceptance of one of the sides regarding the proofs offered by the other, or at the least, it can make both sides involved in the debate and discussion to be aware of their opponent's beliefs and the grounds for their support. In either case, the conciliatory goals will have been accomplished to a reasonable extent.

Analysis and critique of this approach

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[16] Miṣbāḥ-Yazdī, ʿAllāmah Muḥammad Ṭaqī, Naẓariyah siyāsī-ye Islām (Islamic Political Theory), v. 1.

It seems that the approach of a well-documented academic exchange in the discussion of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Muslim society is one of the best methods on this subject in order to reach the goals of conciliation. This is because the topic of *imāmah* is one of the pillars and foundations of the Shia school of thought and moreover that the issue of *imāmah* is linked and tied to the history and essence of the Shia school in such a way that presenting an accurate, acceptable, and clear picture of Shiism is not possible without elaborating on its essential principles such as the discussion on *imāmah* itself. If Shia conciliatory scholars would like to introduce the Shia school of thought as one of the orthodox schools in the Islamic world while, at the same time, pursue their goals in bringing the Islamic schools of thought together, then the most appropriate approach regarding the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate is scholarly discourse. Through it they may be able to both defend the legitimacy of the Shia school of thought as well as adjust and correct the view of the opposing side regarding Shiism. From the discussion and study of ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, it becomes clear that the approach which he considered the most appropriate in uniting the Muslims and conciliating the Islamic schools of thought, at least in the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Islamic society, was the approach of scholarly discourse and dialogue. Moreover, it seems that ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, in his academic discussions and conversations with scholars of other Islamic schools of thought, was successful in advancing his goals of conciliation. If this was not the case then his expositions and intellectual-demonstrative defence of the Shia school of thought—of both its essential components as well as its auxiliary ones—which he presented to the leading scholars of Al-Azhar in Egypt in his various discussions and conversations with them (as well as similar efforts by ʿAllāmah Qummī) would certainly not have paved the way for the formation of the *Dār al-Taqrīb al-Madhāhib al-Islāmī* (the House of Conciliating the Islamic schools of thought) in Egypt. Moreover, it would not have resulted in the verdict of the grand Mufti of the Ahl al-Sunnah in officialising the jurisprudence of the Shia school of thought alongside the other schools.[17] For this reason, it is necessary to analyze, evaluate, and take lesson from his conciliatory perspective on the topic of *imāmah* as well as other related topics in order to fulfil the goals of conciliation.

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[17] Shaltūt, Shaykh Maḥmūd, then leader of Al-Azhar, Egypt, "Verdict of officialising the jurisprudential school of the Shia," 1378 A.H. To access the text of the verdict, refer to Shīrāzī, ʿAbd al-Karīm Bī Āzār, *Hambastagī-ye maḏāhib-e Islāmī* (*Unity of the Islamic Schools*), p. 310.

THE CONCILIATORY PERSPECTIVE OF ʿALLAMAH SHARAF AL-DIN ON THE TOPIC OF IMAMAH

According to Sharaf al-Dīn, the fundamental causes for discord and division amongst the Muslims and the followers of the Islamic schools could be traced to an inaccurate and insufficient understanding of Muslims regarding the religious and denominational beliefs of the other schools. On this note, professor Subḥānī has said:

> One of the important contributions left by ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn and one of the important avenues that he opened—not only for the Shias but for the Islamic world—was in his explanation that the division, separation, and mutual animosity between Muslims was due to the fact that the two sides did not understand one another: the Shias lack awareness regarding the Sunnis and the Sunnis are uninformed regarding the Shias. Hence, if they learn from one another, engage in conversation, and accurately present themselves to each other, the truth will become clear and the differences will vanish.[18]

Moreover, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, apart from his efforts in uniting the Muslims and reconciling the Islamic schools, was concerned with defending the school of thought of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and portraying an accurate picture of both the *uṣūl al-dīn* and the *furūʿ al-dīn* of this school, particularly on the topic of the caliphate and *imāmah*. In this regards, the following has been said:

> ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn was the symbol of the successful amalgamation of defending the school of thought of the Ahl al-Bayt [on the one hand] and guarding the unity and proximity of the Islamic schools of thought [on the other]. He did not consider the idea of conciliation to mean retreating from one's intellectual and doctrinal positions or to disregard ideological preferences and he did not find himself engulfed by the whirlpool of society... Yet with all this, he was not of those who would live through history and consider attacking the caliphate as the fundamental task-at-hand or to take the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah as the direct heirs of those who usurped the position of *imāmah* and hence issue death verdicts with reproach and rancour! ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn lived at the peak of moderation. He showed that the open-minded was the wise one who defends his beliefs and intellectual foundations without resorting to flattery or compromise... Nevertheless, with all this, he demonstrated that speaking candidly is not to be taken as stubbornness and disclosing

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[18] Speech of Ustād Jaʿfar Subḥānī in *Special Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn*, p. 6.

one's beliefs and revealing one's position necessitates professional conduct for those who are learned.[19]

In this manner, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn considered the approach of exposition and scholarly argumentation by way of dialogue and discourse of the parties involved as the best approach to follow regarding the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Islamic society. Through it one would be able to achieve two things: 1) to present a scholarly and accurate portrayal of the axioms of the Shia school of thought and to defend these doctrinal axioms associated with the school, and 2) through the scholarly exchange of ideas, after having gained a more favourable impression from the scholars and followers of the other Islamic schools towards the doctrinal school of the Shias, it would result in their having an accurate and positive view towards the Shias. Through this way, they will have achieved the goals of conciliation.

In the past and present, as much as there have been and still are intra-denominational dialogues on controversial topics amongst the scholars of the Islamic schools of thought, nevertheless, it seems that his [i.e., ʿAllāmah's] approach of dialogue is endowed with certain merits that distinguish both the essence of his approach as well as its theoretical and practical effects from other approaches of dialogue. A few of these merits will be alluded to later.

ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn has authored numerous books and articles on the topic of *imāmah* of Muslim society. Further, in other works of his, he has implicitly presented arguments to establish the *imāmah* and successorship of Imam ʿAlī and the other Imams. The writings and books that ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn has authored on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Muslim society include the following:

1. *Sabīl al-muʾminīn fī ithbāt imāmat al-dīn* (*The Path of the Believer in Establishing Imāmah in Religion*): This book was composed in three volumes on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Islamic society and includes intellectual and textual *(naqlī)* arguments for proving the *imāmah* of the infallible Imams (ʿa), the virtues and tradition of the Imams, and political philosophy in Islam. Although a few parts of this book have been published in the journal *al-ʿIrfān*, the original book has been destroyed at the hands of the French in the incident of the burning of ʿAllāmah's library.

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[19] Ṣāliḥī, Sayyid ʿAbbās, "'ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn: Symbol of the Defender of the Ahl al-Bayt and the Gaurdian of Unity," in *Journal of Ḥawzah*, no. 124, p. 2.

2. *al-Nuṣūṣ al-jaliyyah fī al-imāmah* (*The Clear Texts on Imāmah*): This book contained authentic hadiths from the Ahl al-Sunnah and Shia in establishing the *imāmah* of the infallible Imams (ʿ*a*). It too was destroyed in the fire.

3. *Tanzīl al-āyāt al-bāhirah* (*Revelation of the Splendid Verses*): In this book, the author had extracted over a hundred verses from the noble Qurʾān whose interpretation and contexts of revelation were derived from Ahl al-Sunnah texts in order to offer evidence for the *imāmah* of the Imams (ʿ*a*). This book is also not accessible.

4. *Falsafat al-mīthāq wa al-wilāyah* (*The Philosophy of the Covenant and the Wilāyah*) : In response to the request of Ḥajj Shaykh ʿAbbās Qulī Tabrīzī, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, in this book, undertook to offer an interpretation of two verses among the verses related to *wilāyah* and *imāmah*. With the assistance of the verses of the noble Qurʾān and hadiths, he has established the *imāmah* of the infallible Imams.

5. *al-Murāja'āt* (*The Consultations*): ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn has presented the main issues in the subject of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Islamic society through proofs from Qurʾānic verses, narrations, and authentic historical documents. Initially, this was in the form of correspondences that he had with the Shaykh of al-Azhar in Egypt, Shaykh Salīm Basharī, and later it was compiled into the valuable book *al-Murāja'āt*. The arguments of ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn in this book, particularly regarding the proof for the *imāmah* and successorship of Imam ʿAlī and the other Imams, is largely based on the transmitted sciences relying on verses, narrations, and authentic historical evidence. The reason for this is because these arguments of ʿAllāmah had been in response to questions that were raised by the other side, and ʿAllāmah felt that the most appropriate way, which was also in line with the inclination of the other party in the discussion, was to resort to Qurʾānic verses, narrations, and authentic historical texts. Further, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, in acceding to the request of the other party, outlined the discussion on leadership and *imāmah* within the domain of the religious and jurisprudential rulings separately from the general topic of *imāmah*. For each of these discussions, he utilized appropriate arguments.

THE QUALITIES OF THE CONCILIATORY PERSPECTIVE OF 'ALLAMAH SHARAF AL-DIN ON THE TOPIC OF IMAMAH

Various theories have been presented by Islamic scholars on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate of Muslim society. The Ahl al-Sunnah scholars have presented views rebutting the Shia understanding of *imāmah* while providing their own particular interpretation of it. Similarly, Shia scholars have considered this topic to be of utmost importance and have numerous intellectual and transmitted proofs from the Qur'ān and narrations in order to prove their own particular understanding of *imāmah*. As an example, one can mention 'Allāmah Amīnī's book, *al-Ghadīr*. Likewise, conciliatory scholars of the Shia faith have presented their own views on the topic of *imāmah* with the aim of bringing together the Islamic schools of thought, which have already been alluded to. However, it seems that the conciliatory view of 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn on this topic has its own distinct merits and characteristics which distinguish it from the rest of the views that have been presented on the idea of *imāmah* and uniting the Islamic schools of thought. A discussion and analysis of these characteristics is as follows.

1. Conviction regarding the essence of *Imamah* and *Wilayah* of the Imams

One of the unique features that adds value to the conciliatory view of 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn on the topic of *imāmah*—and which distinguishes it from the rest of the perspectives presented on this topic—is his faith and conviction in the concept of *imāmah* and *wilāyah*. In his entire academic life he did not doubt for a single moment this conviction—a fact that can be gleaned from all his works, particularly his book, *al-Murāja'āt*.

This feature created in him the belief that there was no enigma or problem regarding this concept except that it could be answered through academic study and research as well as further efforts in examining the intellectual and textual bases of this issue. For this reason, in response to a request for a scholarly exchange and dialogue with Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī in order to clarify the truth, 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn mentioned to him the following: "Ask whatever you wish and say whatever is on your mind; the honour and precedence of making a just judgement and arbitrating between truth and falsehood is yours."[20]

'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn reminds us in an important section of his writings that in the academic and ideological discussions of the Shias, they do

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[20] Sharaf al-Dīn, Sayyid Mūsawī, *al-Murāja'āt* (*Consultations*), p. 47, letter #2.

not pursue nor have they pursued any goal except clarifying the truth; in line with this purpose they are prepared to make themselves available for any type of scholarly discussion or question-answering opportunity. Likewise, he stipulates the following in another important area of his writings: "We Shias are the ones who search for that which is lost, and are of those who discuss and inquire about the truth..."[21]

2. The essential difference between Shias and Sunnis is on the issue of *Imamah*

'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn considered the most important point of difference within the Islamic ummah to be the issue of *imāmah*. Of course, considering the interpretation that he had with regard to this concept, what he meant by *imāmah* had to do with all its dimensions—that of political leadership, religious and intellectual authority, and *wilāyah* of the Imams—and not just the outer caliphate. The solution that he suggested to diffuse this difference was for Muslim scholars to contemplate and ponder over the proofs and sources of the Islamic schools of thought, particularly on the issue of *imāmah*, in order to clarify the truth. On this note, he has stated:

> The greatest point of difference that has come about within the ummah is on the issue of *imāmah*. Never have there been so many swords drawn for the principles and religious sources in Islam as there have been for the idea of *imāmah*. For this reason, the issue of *imāmah* is one of the greatest factors that has exasperated these differences. Many a generation has been habituated and moulded with prejudice regarding this issue of *imāmah*, and have become accustomed to this partisanship without been conscious of it and without any thought regarding it. If each of the two groups had glimpsed at the proofs of each side from an investigative stance and not one of enmity and anger, the reality would have become clear, and the dawn of truth would have risen for those who see with true insight [and not with a sectarian bias].[22]

3. Choosing an approach of dialogue and discussion

Another important feature that has contributed to the conciliatory views of 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn on the issue of *imāmah* and *wilāyah* is the use of mutual dialogue and debate to discuss salient topics. Like many other theologians and Islamic scholars, by studying previous works and critiquing them, he was able to present his views in the form of personal

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[21] Ibid., p. 56.
[22] Ibid., Introduction, p. 41.

writings without considering the antagonistic views of the time. However, he was well aware of the fact that if he wanted to outline an effective theory on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate as well as all other essential topics of conciliation that can further assist the unity of the ummah, then he must utilize new approaches—ones that consider the preoccupations of the opposite side as well as the contemporary circumstances of the age. For this reason, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn was looking for an individual whose sensitivities he could appreciate and who could become his partner in dialogue. As indicated through his own testament, he had to bear much difficulty in this path—the path of pursuing the goal of conciliation and the unity of the Islamic ummah—until he managed to find what he was looking for in Egypt. In this regards, he says, "At the end of 1950, I went to Egypt with the hope that I would achieve my dream, that I would be able to find a way for Muslim unity and cooperation and to make use of their penmanship on this matter." In continuation, and in his memoirs with Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī (the then head of al-Azhar in Egypt), ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn recalls the following: "I poured out to him the pains of my heart and he narrated his own complaints to me."[23]

As is evident, such an approach carries with it particular characteristics: one of the important ones is the discovery of the knots and dead-ends of the other party to which no solution has seemingly been found. Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī clearly states this in one of his talks: "If you permit, let us delve into those deep matters and difficulties that have agitated my heart."[24]

For this reason, in most of his own works and in particular in his book, *al-Murāja'āt*, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn has considered—in his content, critique, and investigations—the conditions of the time and the preoccupations of the opposing side. It seems that one of the factors for the effectiveness of his works in clarifying the Shia school of thought and in advancing the goals of conciliation is this very approach.

Even though the approach of intra-faith dialogue existed in the past among Islamic scholars, it appears that the reason for ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn utilizing it is different than the reason that others in the past have used the same approach. In general, there are two types of reasons that one can stipulate regarding the use of scholarly dialogue:

A) Scholarly discourses that are carried out in order to prevail and dominate over one's opponent with the intention of destroying the intellectual and doctrinal basis of the opponent. Such is the case

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[23] Ibid., p. 41.
[24] Ibid., p. 46, letter #1.

with the polemical debates of Niẓām al-Mulk, Ghazālī, and other scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah vis-à-vis the Ismāʿīlī school of thought, which were carried out with the intention of uprooting it.

B) Scholarly discourses and dialogues that are carried out with the hope of clarifying the truth and which is accompanied with the belief that man is instinctively attracted to the truth.[25]

In studying and discussing the works of ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn, and in particular, his book, *al-Murājaʿāt*—which appears in the form of a written dialogue—one can easily discover that he had no other intention but to clarify the truth, particularly with regard to the issue of *imāmah* and the caliphate. In fact, right from the beginning of his correspondences with Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī, he leaves the final decision with the Shaykh including deciding between truth and falsehood and whether or not to accept the conclusions. Implicitly, he suggests that his aim is not to force his own ideology on others; rather his intention is to discover the truth and reality and to pave the way for its acceptance: "Ask whatever you wish and say whatever is on your mind; the honour and precedence of making a just judgement and arbitrating between truth and falsehood is yours."[26]

4. Choosing evidence from authentic sources of the Ahl al-Sunnah

One of the important points in academic discourse is providing evidence from sources that the other party considers legitimate. Adhering to this principle carries a particular importance in academic discourses on various topics with the Ahl al-Sunnah, especially on the topic of *imāmah* and the caliphate in Islam. It is for this reason that Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī, in his seventh letter to Sharaf al-Dīn requests that he should provide evidence from sources that are considered valid by the Ahl al-Sunnah: "Present [to me] proof and evidence from the words of God and the Prophet—a proof that bears witness to your claim on the necessity of following the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (ʿa)—and excuse us from not accepting the words of other than God and the Prophet."[27] In his thirteenth letter as well, Shaykh Salīm states, "... however, at times it can be argued that the narrations regarding the context of revelation of the above verses are Shia [interpretations] while the Ahl al-Tasannun do not accept Shia narrators

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[25] Bāghistānī, Muḥammad, "Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn: Enlightener of the Link between Theology and History," in *Journal of Hawzah*, p. 124, p. 162.
[26] Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Murājaʿāt*, p. 47, letter #2.
[27] Ibid., p. 65, letter #7.

and do not use them to derive proofs. Therefore, what would the response to this be? Please answer if you may."[28]

It is on this basis that ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn strove to take the first step in providing a well-evidenced and convincing response to the questions posed by Shaykh Salīm. He also established the following: firstly, that the narrations regarding the revelation of Qurʾānic verses were not limited to Shia narrators; rather narrators, who were trusted and reliable according to the Ahl al-Sunnah, could be found in the Ahl al-Sunnah sources—particularly in the book *Ghāyat al-Marām*—regarding the revelation of the same Qurʾānic verses; secondly, it is not the case that the Ahl al-Sunnah distrust the Shia narrators; on the contrary, most of the authentic books of the Ahl al-Sunah—such as the *Ṣiḥāḥ al-Sittah* (the Six Authentic Books)—narrate from Shia narrators in many instances. On the latter point, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn enumerated almost one hundred names of such individuals to his partner in dialogue.[29]

In another step, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn exerted great efforts in his academic discussions to utilize authentic documents according to the Ahl al-Sunnah such as the Six Authentic Books and other historical texts of theirs. This method and approach of ʿAllāmah, in its own way, carried beneficial results in defending the school of thought of the Ahl al-Bayt [from false charges] and in furthering the goals of unity. This is because by investigating, analyzing, and studying the sources of the Ahl al-Sunnah, he was able to pursue two goals: first, accessing narrations and historical evidence that pointed to the authenticity of the claim of the Ahl al-Bayt school of thought on the topic of *imāmah*; and second, by exposing the inconsistencies existing in the authentic sources of the Ahl al-Sunnah, he forced the Ahl al-Sunnah scholars to respond and contemplate [regarding them]. In order to ascertain the truth, he requested them to put aside subsidiary issues; in fact in his letter that he wrote to the scholarly Arab assembly in Damascus, he requested from them the following: "My request to the directors of the Assembly and to all Muslims is that they should avoid a thoughtless partisanship of their own schools of thought and they should only submit to religious evidence—that which our ancestors did during the beginning of Islam."[30] Moreover, in the introduction to his book, *Abū Hurayrah*, he says:

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[28] Ibid., p. 132, letter #13.
[29] Ibid., p. 136, letter #16.
[30] Sharaf al-Dīn, ʿAllāmah, Ilā al-majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿArabī bi Dimishq (To the Scholarly Arab Assembly in Damascus), p. 13.

After offering this book—which is the result of our study and en-quiry—no one should turn away or become offended. We consider thought to be great and superior to the filth of superstition and to imprisoning ourselves in a wall of a fanciful sanctity. We do not like everything to be mixed up; rather, we expect that when facing the ad-herent of various schools and customs, we should throw them [i.e., superstitions] afar with free thinking, and like a sage, study deeply and wisely.[31]

It is on the basis of this approach that in order to show that the opposi-tion of some of the companions regarding the *imāmah* and successorship of Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) was not [intended to be] an opposition with the religious texts, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn wrote the valuable book *Naṣṣ wa ijtihād*. In it, on numerous occasions, he alluded to how the initial companions had ended up opposing the religious texts by establishing their own personal understanding and *ijtihād* as the criteria....

5. Disassociating the topic of religious and jurisprudential leadership from other discussions of *Imamah*

Based on the logistics of the discussion and in accordance with the re-quest of Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī, who represented the other side of the dia-logue, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn discussed the issue of jurisprudential leader-ship in the Shia and Ahl al-Sunnah schools of thought as a distinct item—distinguishing it from the discussion of *imāmah* in the sense of leadership of the affairs of the Muslims. For each of these issues, he reviewed and stud-ied them with their own particular proofs and sources.

THE PROOFS OF ʿALLAMAH SHARAF AL-DIN ON IT NOT BEING NEC-ESSARY [FOR SHIAS] TO FOLLOW THE THEOLOGICAL AND JURISPRU-DENTIAL SCHOOLS OF THE AHL AL-SUNNAH

In his response to a question from Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī as to why the Shias do not follow and adhere to the Ashʿarī theological school in their theology and the four jurisprudential schools (Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, and Ḥanbalī) of the Ahl al-Sunnah in their jurisprudence and laws, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn prepared and put forth a documented and convincing an-swer. Attention and reflection on both the manner of argumentation as well as its contents reveals many beneficial and useful points.

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[31] Sharaf al-Dīn, ʿAllāmah, *Abū Hurayrah*, p. 16.

THE DISCUSSION OF ʿALLAMAH AS TO WHY THE SHIAS FOLLOW THE SCHOOL OF THE AHL AL-BAYT

In response to the above question, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn pursued a logical, scholarly, and persuasive path in such a way that initially he discussed the positive aspect as to why the Shias follow the school of the Ahl al-Bayt on the basis of evidence and proof, implying that it was an act of adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṣ). In this regard, he states, "Our not adhering to the school of the Ashʿarī in the *uṣūl al-dīn* and our not following the four jurisprudential schools in the *furūʿ al-dīn* is not due to enmity, factionalism, or partisanship ... rather, it is a religious decree that necessitates that we follow the school of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ)."[32] Again, he emphasizes this point when he states:

> It is only in submission to proofs and it is only through following the practice of the Prophet of Islam (ṣ)—the greatest of divine prophets—that we have chosen this path. If the evidence had given us permission to oppose the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (ṣ) or if we were able to act according to another school of thought (other than that of the Ahl al-Bayt) in carrying out our duties, we would have gone with the majority and we would have followed in the same footsteps as them until the contract of friendship was strengthened and the latch of brotherhood became more certain; however, definite proofs blocks the way of a believer.[33]

From the talks of Sharaf al-Dīn, one can ascertain that following the Ahl al-Bayt for the Shias carries two distinctions which do not exist in the Ahl al-Sunnah school of thought.

DISTINCTIONS OF THE SHIAS IN FOLLOWING THE AHL AL-BAYT SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

First dinctinction: unified approach in extracting the principles and subsidiaries of the faith from the Ahl al-Bayt

The unified approach of the Shias in extracting the principles and subsidiaries of the faith from the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa)—not only in these two areas but also other areas such as the field of ethics and social customs and manners—is the Shias' way of following the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). This is done in such a way that the followers of the school of the Ahl al-

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[32] Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Murājaʿāt*, p. 52, letter #4.
[33] Ibid.

Bayt obey the infallible Imams in both the *uṣūl al-dīn* and the *furū' al-dīn* as well as in the field of ethics; it is not a case where they derive the *uṣūl al-dīn* from one individual or school, follow the *furū' al-dīn* from other individuals or schools of jurisprudence, and in the field of ethics emulate yet other role models. This unified approach in deriving the *uṣūl al-dīn*, *furū' al-dīn*, and ethical doctrines from one source plays an important role in the internal consistency and absence of inner doctrinal discrepancies. 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn has implicitly alluded to this: "Rather, it is a religious proof that compels us to follow the school of the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (ṣ)—compelling us to follow a school that has been nurtured within the precincts of the Prophet (ṣ), whose house was where the angels used to visit, the place where the Qur'ān was revealed. It is for this reason that we are connected to them in our *furū' al-dīn*, doctrinal beliefs, principles of jurisprudence and their laws, knowledge of the Sunnah and the Qur'ān, and the science of ethics, manners, and customs.[34]

Second distinction: historical continuity of this school of thought

Another distinction that is latent in the Shias' following the school of the Ahl al-Bayt, and which Sharaf al-Dīn has exemplified in his writings, is the historical connection of this school with the beginning of Islam and the time of the blessed Prophet of Islam (ṣ). This is such that there is no conceivable gap or historical disconnect in the adherence of the Shias in obeying the infallible Imams and the school of the Ahl al-Bayt. On this issue, 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn has said, "However, the Shias have subscribed to the school of the Ahl al-Bayt since the beginning of Islam (since the Ahl al-Bayt [People of the House] are more aware of what is in the house) and the non-Shias acted according to the schools and customs of the scholarly Companions and the *Tāb'īn* [those who proceeded them]."[35]

'ALLAMAH SHARAF AL-DIN'S EXPLANATION ON WHY THE SHIAS DO NOT FOLLOW THE JURISPRUDENTIAL SCHOOLS OF THE AHL AL-SUNNAH

The second step of 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn's response to Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī carried a negative aspect in the sense that he stated that the Ahl al-Sunnah did not have any grounds for making it obligatory on Muslims to adhere to the Ash'arī doctrinal school of thought or the four schools of

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., p. 55.

jurisprudence. He did this while respecting and honouring the jurisprudential leaders of the Ahl al-Sunnah. In this regards, he says:

> The majority do not have any grounds on preferring their own schools of thought over others, let alone making it mandatory to follow them. We have looked at the proofs of the Muslims with a keen and academic eye, in a scholarly manner and with complete thoroughness, and we did not find any basis for the necessity of following them, though we admit to that which has been mentioned to you: the *ijtihād*, trustworthiness, justice, and high station of the leaders of the four schools of jurisprudence. However, as you know very well, this *ijtihād*, trustworthiness, justice, and high station is not just limited to them. Therefore, how can it be that their schools of jurisprudence be classified as those that are mandatory to follow?"[36]

MOTIVATIONS OF THE MAJORITY IN FOLLOWING THE FOUR SCHOOLS OF JURISPRUDENCE AND AVOIDING THE SCHOOL OF THE AHL AL-BAYT

After having explained why the Shias follow the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and after stating that the majority do not have grounds for preferring or making obligatory the adherence to their schools of jurisprudence, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn goes on to explain why the Ahl al-Sunnah follow the four jurisprudential schools and not the school of the Ahl al-Bayt. The main reason for the decision of the majority, according to ʿAllāmah, had to do with the political motives during the beginning of Islam. He states, "however, political expediency necessitated (that others be given precedence) and you know very well what politics called for during the early period of Islam and what happened as a result."[37]

ʿALLAMAH SHARAF AL-DIN'S CRITIQUES OF THE MAJORITY FOLLOWING THE FOUR SCHOOLS OF JURISPRUDENCE

After going through the above three-fold stages in his argument and response to Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī, which prepared the grounds for a critique, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn raised some clear questions regarding the approach of the Ahl al-Sunnah in their following the four schools of jurisprudence and staying away from the school of the Ahl al-Bayt. These critiques are composed of the following:

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[36] Ibid., p. 53.
[37] Ibid.

First critique: reliance on common wisdom regarding the superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt over the jurisprudential leaders of the Ahl al-Sunnah

At the height of these arguments and talks, 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn established common wisdom and narrated proofs as his criteria. Not only did he consider as unproven the preference or necessity of obeying the jurisprudential leaders of the Ahl al-Sunnah, but on the contrary, through common wisdom and narrated proofs that supported his claim, he established the superiority of the Ahl al-Bayt:

> I can never imagine that someone would dare believe that they were superior to our Imams in knowledge or action—in other words, the belief of their superiority over the Imams, the pure family, the arcs of salvation, the door of relief for the ummah, the centre of safety from divisiveness of the ummah in religion, the flags of guidance, the provisions of the messenger of God and his remnants left among the Islamic ummah. The Prophet of Islam (ṣ) has said regarding them: 'Do not go ahead of them that you may be destroyed, do not fall short from joining them that you may perish, and do not instruct them in anything since they are more aware than you.'[38]

Second critique: historical criticism of the jurisprudential schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah

In his second critique, 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn challenges the historical sources of his counterpart who expressed the idea that the righteous men of the past were followers of the majority Ahl al-Sunnah school of thought. The issue that all of the righteous men of the past in all places and all times were followers of the majority school of thought was considered as being historically baseless by 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn. Regarding this, he states:

> It is quite surprising that you state that the righteous men of the past were followers of this school of thought and you consider them the most just and most honoured amongst all the schools of thought... It is as if you are not aware that the righteous men of the past as well as those that came after them—i.e., the Shias of the family of Muhammad (ṣ), who compose half of the Muslims in reality—were followers of the school of thought of the Imams (Ahl al-Bayt) and the weightier remnant of the Messenger of God [i.e. the Qur'ān], and they did not deviate in the least from [these two].[39]

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

Third critique: contravention (the absence of the Ahl al-Sunnah juris-prudential schools during the first three centuries)

In his third critique regarding the majority opinion [of the necessity] to follow one of the four jurisprudential schools as well as the request of Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī for all Muslims to fall in line with one of these schools, 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn raises the following point: How is it that you call all Muslims to become the followers of these jurisprudential schools while the Muslims of the first three centuries were not followers of any of these schools since they had not yet been established during that time? He says, "Therefore, what kind of authority obliges all Muslims to act according to the stated jurisprudential schools after three centuries, and not a school of jurisprudence which was already acted upon from before? Also, what forced them to bypass the Qur'ān's match and counterpart, the weighty envoys, the blood of the Prophet (ṣ), the treasury of his knowledge, the arc of salvation, the leaders, the Imams, and the door of relief for the ummah."[40]

Fourth critique: methodology

In the fourth level, 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn offered a critique of methodology on the approach of the Ahl al-Sunnah regarding this topic. The absolutistic obedience of the Ahl al-Sunnah to the four jurisprudential schools and their inviting others to follow them, has caused the doors of *ijtihād*—as well as the deep study into religion and religious laws—to be shut and permanently closed. This is despite the fact that during the first three centuries the path of *ijtihād* was always open for the Muslims, and which actually resulted in the appearance of great jurisprudential schools in the Islamic world including the well-known jurisprudential schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah. 'Allāmah Sharaf al-Dīn says the following on this topic:

> What is it that has caused the doors of *ijtihād* to be closed shut for the Muslims while they remained wide open for everyone during the first three centuries? ... Who can consciously or unconsciously convince himself of this truth and say: 'God has chosen the best of prophets and messengers in order to bring the gift of religions. He revealed the highest of celestial books with the best of wisdom and teachings to the Prophet, perfected the religion through him, completed the blessings on him, and taught him the knowledge of the past and future. And all this culminates with the companions of these four schools of jurisprudence! And he should accept this con-

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[40] Ibid., p. 55

clusion.' ... Moreover, they do not give anyone the permission to go beyond that which is in accordance with their own judgement; are they the inheritors of the prophets? Or has God terminated *imāmah* and successorship with them, and taught them the knowledge of the past and future, and has granted them something which no one in the world has been granted? No! They were like other scholars, servants of knowledge, and inviters towards it. No inviter to knowledge ever closes the doors to the [endless] treasury of knowledge.[41]

In such a manner and with such a firm argument, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn invited all scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah to contemplate and reflect over the approach that been taken.

ʿALLAMAH SHARAF AL-DIN'S SOLUTION IN RECONCILING THE SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT AND IN UNIFYING THE ISLAMIC UMMAH

After having established that Shaykh Salīm's request for the Shias to fall in line with one of the majority schools of thought was unwarranted and after showing how the approach of the Ahl al-Sunnah on this matter was faced with many difficulties, ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn in his response to Shaykh Salīm showed how the Shaykh's avenue of creating unity of the Islamic ummah was unpractical and would lead to a dead end. Thereafter, he put forth his own appropriate and wise solution in order to establish brotherhood, friendship, and the unity of the Islamic ummah:

> The time has now come when we must together find out how to save the Muslims from division. In my opinion, this will not be achieved by the Shias renouncing their school of thought and following the path of the majority; nor will it be achieved by the Ahl al-Sunnah renouncing their school of thought.[42] To oblige Shias to abandon their own school of thought and not others is not a wise approach; rather such an act is adverse and unfounded—it is unpractical as has been shown from the previous talks. Instead, the harmony and unity of the Muslims will take form through an avenue where you announce the school of the Ahl al-Bayt as being independent and consider it as

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[41] Ibid.

[42] This echoes the famous statement of Imam Khumaynī (*r*) in which he said that, "those who wish to make Shias into Sunnis, or Sunnis into Shias, are neither." It is also the standing policy of the present leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Khamenei who said, "I do not mean to say that Shias should convert to Sunni Islam or Sunnis should convert to Shia Islam. I do not intend to say that all religions should be amalgamated into one religion. Rather, what I intend to say is that Shias and Sunnis should not make intellectual efforts only to lend credence to their own beliefs." (http://english.khamenei.ir//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=868&Itemid=12) [Ed.]

one of your own schools of thought (where any Muslim can act according to it). It should be such that the followers of each of the schools of jurisprudence—the Shāfiʿī, Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī—consider the Shias of the family of Muhammad (ṣ) in the same way that they consider the followers of the other schools of the Ahl al-Sunnah.[43]

CONCLUSION

In this manner, the academic approach of Sharaf al-Dīn in shedding further light upon the truth and his intellectual arguments in verifying the path of the Shias in following the school of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), along with the logical approach that he displayed, became the catalyst through which he positively influenced his academic counterpart, Shaykh Salīm al-Basharī—who, himself, admits, "...for this reason, your letter is very strong in providing a proof and reason for both issues (first, it not being mandatory to follow the four schools of jurisprudence and second, leaving the doors of *ijtihād* to remain open for everyone) and your arguments with regards to both issues are sound and clear. Even though, we did not explicitly delve into these issues, it appears that your view is the [true] view."[44] Moreover, the intellectual argument of Sharaf al-Dīn and his logical solution for the unity of the Islamic ummah became the seed and sapling which would mature years later at the hands of Shaykh al-Azhar (Shaykh Shaltūt). Years after the request of Sharaf al-Dīn, he responded positively and proclaimed the legitimacy of the school of thought of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) alongside the other Islamic schools of thought, which itself was a great and effective stride in creating friendship and brotherhood amongst the Muslims. Therefore, conciliatory activities will only reach fruition when they are accompanied with the desire for the truth and when such desire is based on composure and on scholarly and valid proofs.

ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn is one of the Shia scholars who, in his approach and discussions on conciliation, seems to have 'squared the circle' so to speak, in the sense that on the one hand he emphasized conciliation, while on the other, he vigorously defended the Shia principle of *imāmah* in most of his books as well as his spoken and written works. It is because of this that, at times, his activities have been described as pertaining to [exclusivist] Shiism as opposed to conciliation.

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[43] Ibid., p. 56.
[44] Ibid., p. 58, letter #5.

However, in studying the works of ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn and in responding to this idea that on the surface he was trying to combine opposites, one can allude to the following: ʿAllāmah Sharaf al-Dīn firmly believed in the principle of the unity of the Islamic ummah as well as the principle of *imāmah* in the Islamic faith. It is precisely because of this that his conciliatory activities began first with establishing the fact that between these two Islamic principles there is no contradiction or discrepancy. Moreover, since he considered the principle of *imāmah* and *wilāyah* of the Ahl al-Bayt as undeniable and as being established within Islamic sources and Islamic history, in his next step, he strove to establish the movement of conciliation on the basis of seeking the [higher common] truth and employing a conciliatory approach. Moreover, he wished for the efforts of other conciliatory scholars to be based on the desire for truth and on an enlightened approach by which to revisit certain events in Islamic history. It was in his attempt to establish this goal that he presented his valuable work, *al-Murāja'āt*, to the world of Islam—a work which contains both the quality of conciliation as well as the desire for truth regarding the issue of *imāmah*. In reality, the book, *al-Murāja'āt*, can be counted as a practical workshop for efforts towards reconciliation from a number of perspectives—scientific, ethical, methodological, etc.—which is based on the search for truth. Certainly, this approach is one of the successful approaches and methodologies in the field of the conciliation of the Islamic schools of thought and the unity of the Islamic ummah.

Saudi Arabia's Role in Creating Disunity in Yemen

Hamid Waqar

Abstract:

Despite signs of a relatively lasting ceasefire, the current conflict in Yemen between ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ's government and the al-Hūtī Movement seems to have intensified in recent times. Each side claims that a third country was involved in breaking the short-lived ceasefire. The current article attempts to analyze the history between Saudi Arabia and Yemen and the potential role of Wahhabi elements in fuelling ideological and sectarian tensions within Yemen.

Keywords: Yemen, disunity, Saudi Arabia, Iran, al-Hūtī (al-Houthi), ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ, Wahhabism, Zaydi

INTRODUCTION

Yemen has been the focus of a great deal of media news attention in recent times. The internal war between ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ's government and the al-Hūtī (al-Houthi) Movement (HM) ended not too long before the auspicious month of Ramaḍān, with both sides independently calling for a ceasefire.

The government of Yemen retracted a condition that it had placed on the HM in order for a ceasefire to be reached; the condition was disbarment. The HM would never agree to put down its arms and the standoff between the two sides extended for a considerable period of time. ʿAbd al-Mālik al-Hūtī, the head of the HM, agreed to the conditions and thereafter called for a ceasefire.

The ensuing peace did not last for long. Shortly after the ceasefire, the crisis resumed on a much higher scale as fierce fighting was reported on ʿĪd al-Fiṭr. Though initially limited to Saʿdah the bloodshed spilled into neighboring areas such as the ʿAmran and Harf Safyan provinces. It was reported that 150 soldiers died in the battles.

Both sides had seemed quite eager to come to an agreement and bring peace back to the country. There is much speculation over why calls for a ceasefire were disregarded by both parties and fighting resumed. Each group claimed that a third country was the culprit. ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ

claimed that the Islamic Republic of Iran was at fault while ʿAbd al-Mālik al-Hūtī claimed that Saudi Arabia was to blame.

The truth of the matter will become clear if one looks back into the history of Yemen and its relationship with Saudi Arabia. This paper will examine this relationship as well as briefly review the potential pros and cons of the claim that the Islamic Republic of Iran had interfered in the internal war.

SAUDI ARABIA'S HISTORY WITH YEMEN

There has been a great boundary dispute regarding the two major cities along the Saudi Arabian and Yemeni border. Yemeni nationalists call the cities, or better termed provinces, the 'lost provinces.' King ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Saʿūd annexed the ʿAsir region in 1934. The two cities Najran and Jizan came along with it. Thereafter, the Saudi Arabian army led by Prince Fayṣal invaded Yemen, conquering territories far south of the region in dispute. In the end, the Imam of Yemen sought pardon and King ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz gave back much of the land that was taken.

This was followed by the Ṭāʾif Agreement, signed in 1934. The two countries came together and demarcated their border from the seacoast to a point in the mountains, the area east of which was left undefined. Furthermore, this agreement was given a twenty year lifespan after which the agreement would be nullified and the territory agreed upon would be in dispute once again.

When the twenty years was over, Saudi Arabia extended the period because, as they claim, neither side seemed to pay any attention to the fact that the Ṭāʾif Agreement was expiring. In 1974, Yemeni Prime Minister, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hajrī, extended the agreement for another two decades, but he was soon overthrown and the extension was never ratified.

The boundary between Saudi Arabia and Yemen is the only border in the Middle East which is not clearly defined. This has caused many a dispute and even war between the two countries. The only reason that it is not defined is Saudi Arabia's desire to occupy large portions of what is commonly known as Yemen. This border has been in dispute since 1934 and before that the two countries were constantly at war.

Saudi Arabia has also occupied numerous islands that belong to Yemen. These islands are located in the Red and Arabian seas. Saudi Arabia currently occupies over ten Yemeni islands.

Yemen has had serious internal feuds that led to it being split up into two countries. North and South Yemen have always been at odds with one

another. In 1972, the South declared independence after the United Kingdom withdrew its occupation. Eighteen years later, on the 22nd of May, 1990, the country reunified when ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ of the North became Head of State and ʿAlī Salīm al-Bīḍ (al-Beidh) of the south became Head of Government. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia continuously tries to disrupt this unity and create civil war. They usually side with South Yemen, despite the fact that its leaders are communists. Saudi Arabia savours the day when ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ will face ʿAlī Salīm al-Bīḍ militarily.

Shortly after the unification, Saudi Arabia financially supported the leaders of various Yemeni tribes beginning a civil war. This war was fought between ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ's government in Sanaʿa and the Yemen Socialist Party who were fighting for an independent South. The government prevailed and prepared legal cases against the southern leaders for misusing governmental funds. These leaders included: ʿAlī Salīm al-Bīḍ, Haydar Abū Bakr al-ʿAṭṭās (a member of the Yemeni Socialist Party who was appointed Prime Minister by ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ in 1990), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿAlī al-Jifrī (Chairman of the National Opposition Front), and Ṣāliḥ Munaṣṣar al-Siyalī.

An interesting note to mention is that before the civil war, an agreement was made between the North and the South in Amman, Jordan. Immediately after its ratification, ʿAlī Salīm al-Bīḍ went to Saudi Arabia to inform the Saʿūd family of the details. Barely twenty-four hours later, fighting between the North and the South intensified and a full-flung civil war engulfed Yemen. The civil war ended after a full month of warfare. Over two-hundred southern commanders fled Yemen and found refuge in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia did not only provide financial aid to the southern fighters in the civil war of 1994, but they sent many generals into Yemen to fight alongside ʿAlī Salīm al-Bīḍ's forces. This was a bloody war and, at the lowest count, two hundred thousand Yemen citizens were either killed or injured.

This is a taste of the Saudi Arabia's desire to control Yemen. There are more examples but mentioning all of them would be outside of the scope of this brief article.

CONFLICT BETWEEN YEMEN'S GOVERNMENT AND THE HM

There are three main theories behind the fighting between Yemen's government and the HM. The first one is that the Wahhabi faction in Saudi Arabia (Wahhabism lying outside the domain of Sunni Islam) feels threat-

ened by the HM's ideological differences. The HM are Zaydi Shias who have a different outlook on religion than do the Wahhabis. The secular faction in Yemen, headed by ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ, also feels threatened by the HM's ideological beliefs. They want a secular, irreligious Yemen whereas HM wants a more religious state. Saudi Arabia and ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ have joined forces to destroy the danger that both of them are feeling.

The second possible reason is a little more interesting. In order to understand it, one has to turn to Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia funded a plan to create disunity between the Afghan government and the 'United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan' also known as the 'Northern Alliance'. This disunity resulted in a war which weakened the government allowing another group to take over: the Taliban. Some believe that the same plan is being implemented in Yemen. The secular Shia government of ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ is being pitted against the Shia al-Hūtī Movement in order to weaken Yemen and provide a door for the Taliban to come through.

The third possibility is that the HM is fighting to regain the government that they controlled before the unification of Yemen.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ stated that Iran is behind the fighting that took place on ʿĪd al-Fiṭr. This is hard to imagine considering the following facts: Iran does not share a border with Yemen; its language is different from that of Yemen; it state doctrinal beliefs are different than that of Yemen; and their cultures have very little in common. In general, Iran has no interests in Yemen and hence, no reason to interfere there.

It seems much more likely that Saudi Arabia would be the third country that had interfered and the catalyst through which bloodshed continued in the country. In the least, ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ must provide some sort of evidence to solidify his claim.

If Iran was not the culprit, what motives would ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ have for claiming this? This is an interesting question. It seems that ʿAlī ʿAbdullah Ṣāliḥ has turned into a loudspeaker for the Saudi Arabian government and what he says and does seems to be in accordance with the kingdom's desires. Labelling Iran as the culprit—i.e., a country which helps Shia groups fight against established Arab governments—would help Saudi Arabia in its psychological war against Iran.

خلاصة المقالات

في آخر فصل من المقال. وقد كانت مساعي السيد شرف الدين قد عبّـدت الطريــق للفقــه والمذهب الشيعي ليعترف به كأحد المذاهب الاسلامية من قبل الأزهر.

الكلمات الرئيسة: شرف الدين، البشري، الامامة، الولاية، الخليفة، الوحدة، التوجّه التقريبي، أهل البيت، الشيعة، أهل السنة.

دور العربية السعودية في ايجاد التفرقة في اليمن

حميد واكر

الخلاصة: برغم بوادر الاستمرار النسبي لوقف اطلاق النار تبدو وجود مؤشرات على تصاعد حدة الصراع الجاري بين حكومة عبد الله الصالح وحركة الحوثيين في الآونة الأخيرة. كلّ من الطرفين يدّعي تورّط دولة ثالثة في نقض اطلاق النار. المقال يسعى لتحليل تــاريخ الســعودية واليمن ودور العناصر الوهابية في تأجيج الصراع وايجاد حالة عدم الاستقرار في اليمن.

الكلمات الرئيسة: اليمن، التفرقة، السعودية العربية، ايران، الحوثي، عبد الله الصالح، الوهابية، الزيدية.

المترجم: الشيخ تحسين البدري

التقريب

وحدة المذاهب الاسلامية من وجهة نظر الامام موسى الصدر

عبد الرحيم أبا ذري

الخلاصة: حتّى في شبابه، حيث كان يدرس في الحوزة العلمية في قم، كان الامام موسى الصدر مهتمّاً بشأن الأمة الاسلامية والمأزق التي تعيش فيه. وبمجرّد انتقاله الى لبنان تحــوّل الى قائــد المجتمع الشيعي في تلك المنطقة. وكان ايجاد العلاقات مع علماء السنة وشخصياتهم البارزين من أولى مهمامه. ومن تلك الشخصيات التي أوجد علاقة معها هو مفتي لبنان الشيخ حسن خالد. وفي رسالته التاريخية لمفتي لبنان عبّر عن وجهة نظره نجاه وحدة الامة داعماً ايّاهــا بمختلــف الممارسات العملية لتحقيق الهدف. لم يمضِ الكثير على تواجده في ذلك البلد حتّى أصبح السيد الصدر رمزاً للوحدة لا بين الفرق الاسلامية فحسب بل بين الفرق المسيحية في لبنان كــذلك. المقال يسعى لاستكشاف آراء ونشاطات السيد الصدر فيما يخــصُّ الوحــدة ودوره المهــم ومكانته كأحد الشخصيات الرائدة في حركة الوحدة الاسلامية.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الامام موسى الصدر، لبنان، الوحدة، العلاقات الشيعية السنية، العلاقـــات الشيعية المسيحية، وحدة الفقه، روّاد حركة الوحدة الاسلامية.

الامامة والولاية: التوجُّه المتميّز للعلامة شرف الدين في مجال التقريب

محمد اسحاق ذاكري

الخلاصة: مفهوم الامامة والخلافة يعدُّ طابعاً مهما للاسلام ولكلٍّ من مدارسه الفكرية، وقــد بلورت كلٌّ منها تصوّراتها الخاصة نجاه هذين الاصطلاحين. المقال يبدأ بسرد وتحليل التصوّرات المختلفة عن الامامة، ثمّ يدرس التوجّهات التقريبية التي تبنّاها العلماء فيما يخــصّ الامامــة والخلافة. من هذه التوجّهات هو الامتناع عن الحديث عن الموضوع، ومنها: الفصل بين مفهوم الامامة ومفهوم الخلافة، ومنها: الدخول في حوارات علنية لغرض نشــر المعـارف المذهبيــة وتصحيح تصوّرات أتباع المذاهب نجاه بعضها الآخر بالنسبة الى المعتقدات الاصولية. والعلّامة شرف الدين قد تبنّى التوجُّه الأخير ودعى الى حوار أكاديمي، وهذا ما تناول دراسته الكاتب

الأبعاد الاجتماعية للولاية

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الخلاصة: انّ مفهوم الولاية يلعب دوراً مهماً في الفكر الشيعي. ففي الوقت الذي يُركّز كثيراً على البُعد العمودي للولاية ــ من قبيل: العلاقة بين الوالي ورعيته ــ نجد كثيراً ما يُتغافل أو يُساء فهم البُعد الأُفقي لها. المقال عبارة عن كلمة ألقاها محمد علي شمالي بمناسبة سنوية رحيل الامام الخميني(ره) محللاً فيها الأبعاد الأفقية والاجتماعية للولاية كما تفهم من خلال بعـض الزيارات والأدعية التي صدرت عن أهل البيت(ع) مؤكّداً فيها على الوحدة بين الشيعة وعموم العاملين في طريق الامام المهدي مهما كانت رؤاهم تجاه الفكرة المهدوية، معتبراً الوحدة الصيغة الأكثر الحاحاً وضرورة في هذا المجال.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الولاية، الامام المهدي، الجماعة والمجتمع، الدعاء، الزيارة، الامام الخميني.

يوم القدس العالمي: انبثاقة جديدة لتوحيد النظم الاجتماعي للأُمة

منصور ليمبا

الخلاصة: مضى ثلاثون عاماً كاملة على اعلان الامام الخميني آخر جمعة من شهر رمضان يوم القدس العالمي، في حركة منه لاعلان التضامن مع الشعب الفلسطيني الـذي يـرزخ تحـت الاحتلال الصهيوني. وحالياً أصبح يوم القدس عالمياً يُحيى من خلال المظاهرات والمسيرات في مختلف الدول. المقال يبدأ بالتأكيد على الصلة بين أرض فلسطين المقدسـة وظهـور الامـام المهدي(عج) كما وجدها في بعض الأحاديث، ثم يتحرّى رؤية الامام في مجال الانتظار ودوره في الاعلان عن يوم القدس العالمي. ومن خلال تصفّحه مصادر الانترنيت في مجال يوم القـدس وجد هذا اليوم قد لاقى زخماً نوعياً وكمياً تجاوز الحدود العرقية والمذهبية. ومن خلال تحليلـه لدور ومقبولية هذا اليوم يخلص كاتب المقال الى أنّ يوم القدس يعدُّ عيداً حقيقيـاً في العـالم الاسلامي.

الكلمات الرئيسة: المهدي، يوم القدس، الامام الخميني، فلسـطين، فضـاءات الانترنيـت، الانتظار، النظم الاجتماعي.

التقريب

الحوار الحضاري والعرفان: القرآن الكريم وميتافيزيقية ابن العربي

رضا شاه كاظمي

الخلاصة: المقال يبدأ بالتنبيه على الشمولية والعالمية المستبطنة في اعتقادات جميع الأديان، لكنَّ المؤكّد عليه في الاسلام بالخصوص — حتّى في أبعاده الظاهرية — هو الخاتمية. صاحب المقـال يرى هذا المفهوم ممّا يمكن استنباطه من كتب الأديان المعرّفة في القرآن. ويستمر بالقول بـأنَّ الشمولية في الاسلام لا تحول دون ادّعاءات الحصرية التي تولّد الهوية الدينية للمسلمين وتسمح التشرّع و التزام بالأحكام مضافاً الى ممارسة الدعوة، وأنَّ تموضع الاسلام بين الدعوة والحـوار يشير ضمنياً الى عدم وجود تضاد وتنافر بين هذين العنصرين بل نوع تآلف حكيـم بينــهما. كما يقترح الكاتب في هذا المقال الى نمط من التآلف بين العنصرين يعتبره وسطاً بين نمطيـن، أحدهما افراطي، والاخر تفريطي، وهما: النمط الاصولي في الدعوة الذي ينفّر الآخرين بسبب ادّعاء الحصرية النافي للآخرين، والنمط الآخر هو الذاهب الى التعددية الذي يدعو الى تآكـل الهوية على حساب التعرّض لهجوم مبطّن على التشرّع و الشريعة.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الحوار الحضاري، العرفان الاسلامي، عالمية القرآن وشموليته، ابن العـربي، الحوار بين الأديان، التعددية الدينية.

صوت الوحدة: وحدة المجتمع الاسلامي

محمد واعظ زادة خراساني

الخلاصة: موضوع الوحدة واسع يتضمّن دراسة الكثير من المفاهيم والمظاهر، من قبيل: الأُسس الدينية للوحدة، وتصوّر الاسلام عن الأُخوّة، وجذور الاختلافات، وتاريخ المذاهب الفقهيــة والعقائدية، والعوامل الداخلية والخارجية المؤثّرة في تكوّن المذاهب، وروّاد حركـة التوحيـد والتقريب. المقال يتناول أحد هذه المفاهيم، فقد درس موضوع الأُمّة من وجهة نظر الاسـلام وأُسسها الدينية. فأشار الى أشكال وصيغ مختلفة للوحدة نجدها في القرآن اضافة الى شـروطها كالتأكيد على ضروريات الدين وتقبُّل المسؤوليات المشتركة التي تقتضيها الوحدة.

الكلمات الرئيسة: الوحدة الاسلامية، الامة، الاخوّة الاسلامية، المذاهب، اسبوع الوحدة.

التقريب

رسالة متخصصة تعنى بقضايا التقريب بين المذاهب و

وحدة الامة الإسلامية

العدد الخامس

ذوالقعدة ١٤٣٠