

the breath in his chest and the lover has no choice but to remember the beloved.

Separation between the lover and the beloved cannot erase the beloved from the lover's mind. On the contrary, it causes the lover to be totally obsessed with the sentimental image of the beloved's face, and to remember him or her at all times.

Proximity in the view and practice of great scholars

*By Abd Al-Rahim Abazari **

Manner of proximity among scholars

During the minor and major occultation, great Shia scholars, while being inspired by the ideology of the Infallible Imams (peace be upon them), experienced very little tension when dealing with Sunni scholars. These two groups always worked together side by side and for the good of the common and united Islamic community. Shiite scholars and jurists in particular made efforts to discuss only common points that existed with the Sunnis.

They refrained from conveying those points that would result in

segregation and separation. The important book, «Al – Khalaf», was written by inspiring jurist Sheikh Tousi (deceased in 460 AH) in line with the very same purpose. By writing this book, he aimed at collecting views and ideas from various Islamic schools of thought. After his demise, Allameh Helli (deceased in 726 AH) continued his valued efforts and authored the book «Al – Tathkerah». In this book, he consolidated the principle of unity among scholars or Islamic schools, expanding and deepening on the area of «comparative jurisprudence».

Leaders, followers and scholars of these schools lived together during this period of time. They studied in common seminary schools. Scholars of various schools learned from and taught each other and benefited from one another's knowledge in such areas as: Prophetic traditions, science and theology. During these times, both Shiite and Sunni seminary schools were always together.

Ali ibn Isa Romani, who was a well known Mu'tazelite scholar, had a very friendly relationship with Mohammad ibn Mohammad ibn No'man otherwise known as the Great Sheikh Mufid (deceased in 413 AH). The two used to hold extensive and numerous sessions to discuss ideology and speculative theology. In one of these sessions, Sheikh Mufid was able to respond to all the questions that Ali ibn Isa asked and consequently the Mu'tazelite scholar bestowed the title of Sheikh Mufid on him.¹ This title was considered a gift from the Mu'tazelite scholar.

Another example in history comes from the life of the great jurist Zainuddin ibn Ali Ahmad Ameli famously known as Shahid Thani (the second martyr) (martyred in 966 AH). In addition to studying with Shiite scholars, during a journey from his birth city

1. Seyed Mohsen Amin, A'yan Al-Shi'a, Vol 9, Page 421.

Jaba in Lebanon to Egypt and Palestine, he learned jurisprudence, methodology, interpretation, rhetoric, logic, and geometry from such Sunni scholars as Shahabuddin Bukhar Hanbali, Nasuddin Tablavi, Abdul Hamid Sonhevari, Mohammad ibn Abul Qadr Shafe'i and so on.¹

In 942 AH, while travelling to Damascus, he studied some parts of Saheeh ul Muslim and Saheeh ul Bukhari with a number of Sunni scholars including Shamsuddin ibn Touloun Dameshqi Hanafi and was granted permission to narrate traditions from these books.

In the month of Zihajah in the year 948 AH, he traveled to Jerusalem where he continued his study of these two books with Shamsuddin ibn Abel Latif Mu'tazelite and was given authorization to narrate traditions by him as well.² Shahid Thani exchanged scientific letters as a Shiite scholar with Judge Askar Mohammad ibn Qazizadeh Romi (the judge of the Ottoman government in Rome) who was a knowledgeable man of enlightened mind. When the judge was certain of the martyr's scientific capabilities, he asked him to accept the offer to manage one of the major schools in Syria and Aleppo. He accepted and was in charge of the Nourieh School in Ba'albek and there got to know another Sunni scholar by the name of Syed Abur Rahim Abbasi, the author of «M'ahedu Tansis».³

He resided in and managed the Nourieh School in Ba'albek for five years. During this period, he taught according to the five legal schools and was the religious and jurisprudential source of imitation

1. Ibid., Vol 7, Page 149.

2. Sheikh Abbas Qumi, Favaed Al-Razavieh, Page 187.

3. Ibid., Page 188.

for followers of various Islamic schools. He was referred to from all schools and answered their jurisprudential questions.¹ This fact obviously shows the ultimate belief and trust that the Sunnis had for a Shiite scholar. One point that is worth mentioning is that both Sunni scholars and Shiite scholars were saddened by the martyrdom of Shahid Thani (the second martyr) which was at the hands of radical divisive individuals. Syed Abdur Rahim Abbasi (a Sunni scholar and one of the Shahid's teachers) asked King Salim to execute his murderer and the King agreed.² Scholars of various schools continued their scientific and emotional relation even after Shahid Thani. Enemies of Islam made efforts to bring about friction between the Shiite government and the Ottoman government during the Saffavid era. They did not succeed in fulfilling their intention thanks in large part to the vigilance of many Shiite scholars.

When the Ottoman government was engaged in battle with European countries, Russia, Germany, and Austria sent envoys to Saffavid King Soleiman and requested him to open a new front against the Ottoman government from the East and unite them in this war. King Soleiman, being inspired by the principles of great Shiite jurists' such as Allameh Majlisi, refused the offer, reiterating the concept of brotherhood with the Ottoman government and preventing the enemies from penetrating into the hearts of Muslims.³

Heralds of unity

As you see there have been some sporadic arguments and

1. Ibid.

2. Sheikh Abbas Qumi, Ibid., Page 189.

3. Hassan Ebrahim Zadeh, Allameh Majlesi, A man from the future, Page 66.

clashes between Shiite and Sunni Muslims since the time of the Infallible Imams (pbut). These clashes began at the time of the major occultation lasting until the Saffavid dynasty. One point that needs to be understood is that foreign agents and hidden secret allies have brought about all these friction. The followers, leaders and scholars of various religious schools, did not have the slightest trouble with one another.

Unfortunately, in spite of all the efforts of the leaders of religious schools to safeguard the principles of Islamic unity, the enemies' conspiracies and behavior have increased and ultimately as we have moved away from the beginning of the major occultation, the distance among leaders and followers of the different Islamic schools has broadened. Meanwhile, wise men of the schools took this threat seriously and withheld no efforts in guarding this vital principle and propagating it through the Islamic community. We will take a look at the efforts of some of these heralds of unity during the past two centuries.

1. *Syed Jamaladdin Asad Abadi* (1254 – 1314 AH)

He was one of the dignitaries who propagated uprising against the western world through Islamic unity.¹ He made vast efforts to actualize his ideas. He had frequently traveled to Islamic and European countries to meet with political, religious and cultural scholars. He published various magazines, including «Orvatul Vothqa» and wrote numerous articles for international newspapers and journals concerning Islamic unity. During one of his travels to Istanbul, while meeting with King Abdul Hamid (King of the

mighty Ottoman government) he reported sectarian differences in the world of Islam, reiterating the need for unity and integrity among Muslims and with the help of King Hamid co founded «the community of Islamic unity».

To pursue his proximity efforts, he wrote nearly 600 letters to religious leaders and intellectuals to Islamic societies existing in Islamic countries. He invited them to participate in the Unity Congress. High ranking Islamic dignitaries welcomed this movement and took part in this congress. During the inauguration, while addressing the audience, he said:

«Islam is a religion that resembles a ship nowadays, under the captaincy of Mohammad ibn Abdullah (May God bless him and his household). All Muslims, high and low, are on board in this sacred ship. In this era, this ship has faced severe storms in the ocean of global and is in threat of sinking. What are the journeyers of this ship expected to do? Should the salvation of the ship be the top priority? Or should we argue with one another on differences of ideas and the pursuing of our personal interests?»¹

2. *Mohammad Abdoh* (1266 – 1323 AH)

After Syed Jamal, his students including «Mohammad Abdoh» continued his proximity efforts. Concerning Abdoh, Shahid Motahhari writes:

«Abdoh felt the same pains Seyed Jamal had detected. Just like Seyed Jamal, Abdoh sought the unity among the world of Islam and was not on good terms with sectarian prejudice. When he, as he states himself, discovered Nahjul Balaghah, he decided to

1. Mohammad Javd Sahebi: Seyed Jamal Al-Din Husseini the forerunner of the unity and proximity movement, Page 176. 187

interpret and propagate it».¹

Abdoh thought of Wahhabism as a radical and rhetoric group and said:

«They revolted to make correction and had ideal purposes, but they exaggerated. What necessitates destruction of the shrines of the Imams and the Holy Prophet (peace be upon them)? Why should all Muslims be referred to as infidels except Wahhabies? Why should Muslims be compelled to follow superstitious thoughts and ideas by the force of weapon and the sword? There would be no problem if this were all verbal, but they made these unjust threats and ideas practical».²

He was expelled from Egypt and resided in Beirut in 1299 AH, over being accused of cooperating in “Ahmad Arabi Pasha» an up riser against the British government. He founded «the community of proximity among religions and schools». He expanded the idea of proximity from schools to religions. A plethora of Islamic schools and Christian followers participated there and assisted him with unity and integrity, such that the priest in the British church «Isac Tailor» joined this movement and authored a number of articles in London praising the Islamic religion.³

In an effort to broaden his proximity activities, he replied to Syed Jamal’s call positively and left Beirut to head to Paris. Working with Syed Jamal, he published the magazine *Orvatul Vothqa*. Syed Jamal was the director of the magazine and Abdoh held the editorship position. Abdoh authored and published numerous articles on the significance and advantages of unity among schools

1. Islamic Movements in the last one hundred years, Page 36.

2. Maliheh Ahmadi, Sheikh Mohammad Abdoh, The Symbol of Correction; Page 131.

3. Ibid., Page 133.

and religions.¹

3. *Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Kashef Al-Ghata* (1294 – 1377 AH)

The son of Sheikh Ali Kashef Al-Ghata and grandson of Ayatollah Sheikh Ja'far Kashef Al-Ghata was considered to be an outstanding student of Mirza Mohammad Taqi Shirazi, Akhound Khorasani, Mohadeth Nouri and Syed Kazem Yazdi.

He was among the pioneers of proximity among Islamic schools and devoted his life to propagating religious culture and to bring about an understanding among Shiite and Sunni scholars. Since he was young, Kasheful Ghata was obsessed with the idea of unity.²

He traveled to Saudi Arabia in 1329 AH to perform the sacred rites of Pilgrimage. Having performed them, he started to discuss and exchange ideas with Sunni scholars. Then he continued his journey to Damascus, and Beirut, and after meeting with Sunni scholars, he called for unity and integrity. He resided in the city Sour in Lebanon and became very close with Sunni scholars such as Sheikh Salim Bashari and Sheikh Mahmmad Najib Motiee. To continue the proximity journey, he left Lebanon and headed for Egypt. Being invited by the scholars of Al Azhar University, he delivered a lecture there. He eventually was asked to teach at the university. He taught jurisprudence, theology and exegesis for three years.³

Kasheful Ghata was invited by the Supreme Parliament of

1. Mustafa Hussein Tabatabayi, Sheikh Mohammad Abdoh, Great reformer of Egypt, Page 62.

2. Mohammad Reza Samak Amani, Kashef Al-Qata, Chapter: The indignation, Page 28.

3. Mohammad Reza Samak Amani, Kashef Al-Qata, The call for vigilance, Page 35.

Palestine in 1350 AH, to speak at a comprehensive conference which was hosted by remarkable dignitaries from the Hanafite, Shafism, Maleki, Zeidi and Shiite schools. He discussed the predicaments in the world of Islam and how to achieve unity and integrity among religious schools. In parts of his lecture he said:

«The power Muslims have in their hand today has no use in western countries. We Muslims possess the enthusiasm to guard Islamic values, even though the West is more developed than us economically. Love of Islam is beating in the hearts of Muslims. It is encouraging to hear about the continuous efforts of the hosts and guests of this conference in order to achieve worthy outcomes. Earlier I said something which I hope perpetuates. I said the dome of Islam is based on two principles: Divine Unity and Unity of Ideas. Oh Muslims, if we are not united in our thoughts, we will have to bid farewell to Islam for good».¹

Also, while participating in and addressing the second universal congress of Islam in 1371 AH in Karachi, Pakistan, he said:

«Initially, the Islamic movement founded the principles of monotheism and equality of human rights and every body, according to this law, enjoyed an equal stance. No one has any privileges over the others except for their piety. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) spread brotherhood among his followers. Habib Romi, Balal Habashi, Salman Farsi and Abuzar Ghaffari. Having traveled so far to participate in this conference, we are hopeful to possess the ability to revive Islam and create a blessed movement which guarantees our prosperity and breathe new life to the Muslims' soul so that people from Iraq, Yemen, Hejaz, Iran and Pakistan can

unite together and live a life of friendship and peace».¹

4. *Ayatollah Syed Abdul Hussein Sharafuddin* (1290 – 1377)

He could not bear to witness the turbulence that the Muslims were experiencing particularly the sectarian differences. He was obsessed with the idea of creating unity so that Muslims can be provided with their magnificence and glory again. Sharafuddin authored a book by the name of «Al Fosousul Mahmeh» in which he reiterated the need and value of Islamic unity. He invited all dignitaries in the fields of science and politics as well as from the Islamic community to the system of uniformity and accord.

He traveled to Egypt in 1329 AH and met Sheikh Bashari at Al Azhar University. These two dignitaries got to know each other and became close. Sheikh Salim was infatuated with Sharafuddin and Sharafuddin also found him a knowledgeable, fair and true man. They decided to let their scientific discussions continue through writing letters. Sheikh Salim would pose a question in a letter and await the answer from Sharafuddin. On the 6th of Zilqa'deh , 1329 AH, Sheikh Salim wrote his first letter:

«Salam to grand Allameh, Abdul Hussein Sharafuddin Mousavi ...».

I had never, in my life time, made the intention to learn about the domestic affairs of Shiite people nor have I ever thought about their behavior or beliefs. I had neither lived within their community, but I always aspired to have discussions with scholars and live with their common people to become familiar with their ideas and purposes. This dream did not come true until destiny bestowed

1. Mohammad Reza Samak Amani , *Kashef Al-Qata, Surah, The Indignation*, Page 113.

me the honor of meeting you. Your ocean of science and erudition quenched my thirsty lips and my ignorance was removed. I swear by your grand father Mohammad Mustafa (God bless him and his household) who was the city of knowledge and your father Imam Ali (peace be upon him) who was the gate of this city, that I have never found any source of knowledge purer than yours to satisfy my needs».¹

Answering Sheikh Salim's first letter, Sharafuddin wrote:

«Salam to our master Sheikhul Islam ... I received your affectionate letter. How will I ever be able to appreciate your blessings? I am speechless. You have written about your wishes and ideas while you yourself are cynosure and refuge for all refuge seekers. I have departed my homeland and am heading towards your home having a plethora of wishes. I am sure I will get back home, obtaining hope for a better life and wishing to be empowered, God willing. You asked me the permission for argumentation, I will grant it to you. You are the one to make decisions in this regard. Ask whatever you want, say whatever you desire. Superiority and virtuousness suit you and the criterion to distinguish right and wrong is your fair speech God bless you».²

The discussion went on for six months and these two respected Shiite and Sunni scholars exchanged 120 questions and answers. In his last letter in Jamadi Al Awwal 1330 addressing Sharafuddin, Sheikh Slim wrote:

«I testify that you are the follower of the Imams from the family of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon them) in the fundamental

1. Al - Moraje'at, The first letter.

2. Al - Moraje'at, The first answer.

as well as secondary principles of religion. After meeting you I realized that I was wrong about Shias, and this ignorance was due to incorrect information being presented by your enemies. Having met and held discussions with you, I obtained salvation».¹

In his last letter to Sheikh Salim, Sharafuddin wrote:

«I testify that you are well informed in the art of debate regarding the reality of Imamate and Caliphate. You are determined and have implemented a great deal of survey and argumentation concerning the same topic with incredible speed. You were not willing to simply put forth the effort but rather comprehend on the level of personal interest».

After 25 years, Sharafuddin collected these letters and published them under the title of «Al – Moraje'at» in the city of sour in Lebanon in the year 1355 AH. His purpose was to serve as a proper model for the future of the Islamic community.

5. Grand Ayatollah Syed Hassan Broujerdi (1292 – 1380 AH)

As a scientific dignitary, he had complete understanding of the writings, sources and jurisprudential and judicial reasoning of many Sunni scholars. Not only did this dominance include four legal schools, but also it embedded the opinions and reasoning of the companions, successors, and other Sunni scholars such as «Leith Thouri», «Owzaie», «Zaherin» and some others. When some Sunni dignitaries met him and found out about this reality, they were astonished and acknowledged Ayatollah Broujerdi's superiority.²

He emphasized the issue of unity among religious schools since

1. Ibid., Page 315.

2. The summit of Authoritative Reference, Page 127.

the beginning of his authority, and was of the view that it is of the most vital and supreme duties of each and every Shiite and Sunni scholars to settle this issue.

Regarding this, Martyr Motahhari writes:

«One of his remarkable attributes was his high concern and interest in the issue of Islamic unity and understanding and mitigating among the various Islamic religious schools. Being familiar with the history of Islam and Islamic religious schools, he was well aware how effective the policies of previous kings have been in flaring up the disunion. He also took this point into account that colonial policies make the best use of this disunity in the present era, and worse than that they aggravate it. He was also conscious about the point that Shiism is not known for other religious schools due to the separation between Shias and other schools and that resulted in having false comprehension about Shiism. That was why he was so eager to establish true understanding between Shiite and Sunni Muslims».

Prior to his final heart attack that led to his death, he had another heart attack. Surprisingly I was told that upon regaining consciousness after the attack, before mentioning his own condition; he brought the issue of Islamic unity and proximity up and said: I had great hope in this regard.¹

Daru Taqrib Bein Al Mazaheb Al Islamiah (the center for proximity among Islamic religious schools) was founded in Egypt by deceased Sheikh Mohamad Taqi Qumi in association with a number of Al Azhar University scholars including Sheikh

1. Morteza Motahhari, *Six Articles*, Page 260; and Morteza Motahhari: *Human's social evolution*, Page 204.

Abdul Hamid Salim and Sheikh Mohammad Shaltout. Ayatollah Broujerdi supported It financially and spiritually. The Late Sheikh Qummi was his representative there. Following these activities Ayatollah Broujerdi exchanged a number of letters with Sheikh Al Azhar, Abdul Hamid Salim, and then Sheikh Mohammad Shaltout, strengthening the relations between Shiite and Sunni scholars, and in the process removed a lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings.¹

The King of Saudi Arabia Malek So'oud sent Ayatollah Broujerdi a volume of the Holy Quran along with a piece of the Ka'ba's curtain in the late 1330s. Utilizing this opportunity, in a letter, Ayatollah Broujerdi sent him a comprehensive narration by Imam Sadiq (pbuh) containing around 400 rules regarding the rites of pilgrimage as narrated by Sunni scholars. By doing so, Ayatollah Broujerdi intended to make Saudi Arabian king that the sacred rites of the Pilgrimage can be conducted in harmony and in conformity with common principles and narrations adopted by Islamic schools and made the highest and the best use of this monistic manifestation inline with establishing unity among Muslims.

Scientific circles and religious dignitaries in the world of Islam welcomed this letter warmly at that time, and it was also published in numerous newspapers and magazines including «Resalat Al Ahkam» a magazine affiliated to «Daru Taqrib Bein Al Mazaheb Al Islamiah» (the center for proximity among Islamic religious schools).²

1. Va'ez Zadeh Khorasani, Ayatollah Brojerdi's life, Page 269.

2. Ibid., Page 377.

6. *Sheikh Mohammad Shaltout* (1310 – 1383 AH)

He was one of the most remarkable Sunni dignitaries who took great and crucial steps for bringing about unity among religious schools. Shaltout was of the idea that:

«Religious brotherhood creates a bond of friendship with Muslims' hearts and makes them united as a family. Muslims get happy and sad as a result of one another's happiness and sadness. When one of them goes astray, the others guide him, when he is deceived, they inform him, and take pity on him when he is weak; they treat him in a way that they prefer to be treated themselves».¹

Elsewhere he says:

«Prohibiting disputes includes religious disunion as well. Despite the fact that there are countless jurisprudential schools in Islam and they possess various principles, they are all derived from unique principles namely the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet's sayings and actions. They can all center on common grounds and a united word, since they all believe in fundamental issues, the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet's sayings and actions».²

In his view, being prejudice was the most significant source of disunity among religious school of Islam. He says:

«The first step towards unity is leaving your prejudice behind and observing cooperation and justice. This will culminate in the actualization of other preparations such as seeking a united Islamic culture and benefiting from all opinions of Islamic thinkers».

Having this idea in mind, he invited Sunni and Shiite scholars

1. Ali Ahadi, *Sheikh Mohammad Shaltout, The sign of Bravery*; Page 51.

2. *Ibid.*, Page 53.

to unity and said:

«In the name of God and the Holy Quran, and in the name of Islamic unity and supplicating God's bond I, once more, invite all Shiite and Sunni scholars to strengthen their unity and correlation. Definitely the most venerable before God is the one who initiates the movement towards this sacred goal. Firstly he detects the gap among Muslims and gives them back the mosque and the slogan which conveys the message of Islamic unity».¹

Participating in an Islamic conference in Palestine in 1350 AH, he followed the leadership of Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Kasheful Ghata in prayer along with other participating scholars. Later he described the glory of that scene and wrote:

«How beautiful the impression of Muslims is where their representatives gathered in Aqsa Mosque during an Islamic conference in Palestine, and followed the leadership of one of the greatest Shiite Mujtahids, the honorable Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Kasheful Ghata. Regardless of the differences between the ones calling themselves Sunni and the ones claiming to be Shiite, they all formed united lines behind a single prayer leader, worshipping a single God and facing a single Qiblah».²

Having had constant interaction with Shiite scholars and having studied in a Shiite school with great care, Sheik Shaltout took a great step in another mitigating measure. He issued the permission of acting according to judicial opinions of Shiite scholars and following the Shiite school. This permission shows his great zeal to mitigate and his deep concern and the challenge regarding this

1. Abd Al-karim Bi Azar Shirazi, Sheikh Mohammad Shaltout, the Forerunner of Mitigation, Page 138.

2. Ibid., Page 41.

fateful issue in the world of Islam.

On Rabi ul Awwal 1378 coinciding with the birthday of the Holy Prophet (God bless him and his household) and Imam Ja'far Sadiq (pbuh) founder of the Ja'fari school, in an official ceremony in the presence of representatives from Shafi'I, Maleki, Hanafite, Hanbalite, Zeidi, ad Shiite schools, he issued his judicial opinion in this way:

«Islam has not forced its followers to follow a specific religious school of thought rather each Muslim is allowed to follow any religious school which has been narrated genuinely and has authored its rules in specific books, and anyone following any of these four legal schools may turn to another one. The Ja'fari School known as the Twelvers School is legally allowed to be followed just like other Sunni religious schools are. So Muslims are required to comprehend this reality and refrain from inadmissible and unjust prejudice towards any specific religious school. Divine religion does not follow and is not restricted to any particular religious school, rather all leaders of schools are Mujtahids and their interpretive reasoning is accepted by God the All Mighty. Those who are not included in this circle are allowed to follow any religious school they desire by following its jurisprudential rules. There is no difference between religious acts and business in this regard».¹

In a letter to the director general of the «Center of proximity among Islamic schools» Sheikh Mohammad Taqi Qummi, Sheikh Shaltout asked him to keep a copy of this judicial opinion in the archives of the center as a historical document and his medal of honor.

Prior to Shaltout, the former director of Al Azhar University, Sheikh Abdul Majid Salim made an effort to conduct such a great task, but the enemies of Islam conspired and simultaneously published a book on behalf of the Shiite Muslims and Sunni religious schools and distributed it among Al Azhar University students and hindered the efforts of this scholar. This resulted in him becoming ill and eventually leaving this world. After him Sheikh Shaltout took this difficult responsibility over and succeeded.

He writes:

«I have been determined to conduct a survey regarding Shiite jurisprudence for the past thirty years, and asked for Shiite jurisprudence books from Iraq and Iran, but I could not receive them or they were not sponsored until recently after Egypt's freedom from colonization and the capturing of the canal. I received and studied your books. I was convinced and without being influenced by anybody or anything issued that judicial opinion».¹

In another step towards proximity, Shaltout founded the course of analogue jurisprudence in Al Azhar University, in which all religious schools including the Shiite school were free to express their opinions. By doing so, he aimed to pull Shiite and Sunni jurisprudence away from prejudice. He wished to connect jurisprudence with evidence and proof, such that the one possessing more reasonable proofs be accepted.

As a matter of fact by so doing, he intended to value the efforts of Sheikh Tousi in «Al – Khalaf» and those of Allameh Helli in «Al – Tazkerah» during the fifth and eighth centuries. He wished to make research in this sacred field flourish and also at the same time pave the way for future generations so that they can go on

1.Ibid., Page 195.

with greater ease and simplicity.

7. *Ayatollah Imam Mousa Sadr (birth: 1929 – missing: 1979)*

As soon as he arrived in Lebanon in 1960, he immediately established friendly relations with Sunni scholars in «Sour» city. He held constant interaction with Mohyeddin Hassan (Mufti of Sunni Muslims in Sour). On many occasions like Mab'ath, Ghadir, the Grand nights of the month of Ramadan, Tasou'a and Ashoura, these two mounted the rostrum in the same place like «Old Mosque» and «Imam Sadeq Nadi» and lectured, and everyone including Shiite and Sunni listened to them. If someone joined these sessions from another city, he would fail to distinguish Shiite from Sunni Muslims.¹

Imam Mousa Sadr said:«There is no contradiction between Shiite and Sunni. They are the followers of two schools in the same religion». Holding this view, he went on with his efforts to mitigate religious schools. During a two month travel to Africa in the summer of 1964, in an innovative measure, he established a continuous and efficient relation between the Islamic centers in countries like Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Shiite seminary schools and top centers in Lebanon.²

He founded the Shiite Supreme Council in 1970 in Lebanon and during a ceremony on May 1970 23, he accepted the chairmanship. In this ceremony hosted by executive, political, and scientific dignitaries including Lebanese president at the time Mr. Sharl Helo, while elucidating plans and general policies of the council, Imam Mousa Sadr emphasized two crucial issues; namely taking

1. Al-Imam Al-Sadr, Markaz Al-Imam Al-Sadr Lel Bahthat Va Al-Darsat, Page 29.

2. Ibid, Page 44.

basic measures to prevent disunion among Muslims and the establishing of perfect unity and cooperation amongst all religious sects in Lebanon. He mentioned and reiterated this policy in the first declaration of the Supreme Council issued at the end of the session.¹

In a memorable letter to the grand Mufti in Lebanon, Sheikh Hassan Khalid in December of 1970, Imam Mousa Sadr stressed some delicate details concerning unity among religious schools for matching call to prayer, canonical times, and the sighting of the lunar crescent in the Holy month of Ramadan and other Islamic feasts and holidays in Lebanon.² Actually he believed in «jurisprudential unity» and said: Islam is based on a range of fixed principles, and the unified community shares the same belief, book, origin and end. Thus such vast common points necessitate Muslims to be also united in details. Our previous scholars (May their sprits be sanctified) also greatly wished for the actualization of the idea of unity in various details or mitigating them. We can see that one thousand years ago, Sheikh Abu Ja'far Mohamad ibn Hassan Tousi wrote a book on comparative jurisprudence under the title of «Al – Khalaf» and following him Allameh Helli - Hassan ibn Yousof ibn Matahhar authored «Al – Tazkerah». Comparative jurisprudence in actuality is the pure seed to grow jurisprudential unity and to complete unity among religious laws³.

In Zihajjeh of 1389 AH, participating in the annual conference of «Islamic argumentation» in Cairo, Imam Mousa Sadr emphasized jurisprudential unity which was exceptionally welcomed by

1. Abd Al-Rahim Abazari, Imam Musa Sadr, *The Hope of the Deprived*; Chapter eight.

2. The complete letter and its Persian translation is mentioned in the last source.

3. Ali Hojjati Kermani: *Nai Va Nei*, Page 356.

audiences and dignitaries of world of Islam. Being asked about the unity among religious schools by a journalist from «Al – Mosavvar» magazine from Cairo in the side line of these meetings he said:

«This is only possible after achieving jurisprudential unity and is not obtained through superficial talking and negotiations. That is because religions and schools are in the heart of the followers and I am hopefully looking forward to actualizing this vital goal in this conference which is hosting great scholars of the world of Islam».¹ He also participated in similar conferences held in Algeria under the title of «Recognition of Islamic thought». In the following years, he illustrated and reiterated jurisprudential unity.² The point to be mentioned here is that by jurisprudential unity, Imam Mousa Sadr did not mean to remove all differences among jurists of religious schools, rather he was of the view that such differences can bring about theoretical growth and advancement. He said:

«As long as these differences are discussed as scientific and theoretical ideas, it does not matter. But as soon as it changes to law and is practiced in society it unintentionally causes disunion and scatters people. That is why all of them are required to be changed into one law and one slogan».

He mentioned the rites of Pilgrimage, the call to prayer, Islamic feasts, and the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan as examples when he said:

«For instance we can discuss the suggestion to determine the sighting of the lunar crescent scientifically and rely on determining

1. Al-Moharrar Newspaper, Beirut 1971.

2. Al-Mojahed Newspapre, Rajab 13th 1393 AH.

the angle of the crescent in the horizon and decide about the feast scientifically, so that all Muslims can have a feast on one single day. This will economize on plenty of predicaments regarding holidays, visiting one another and numerous feasts. And we also can agree on a form of call for prayer to be accepted for everyone».¹

It is about forty years since suggesting jurisprudential unity by Imam Mousa Sadr. Nowadays the entire world has changed to a small village due to satellite and internet communication and the world of Islam is one district of that. Taking these circumstances into account, we can feel the need to revive and conduct jurisprudential unity among Islamic countries more than ever. Now that the American led invaders are seeking a monopoly and a new Middle East and is invading Islamic countries, it does not make sense to be the voices of disagreement and opposition from such countries.

However actualizing this unity is not so easy and entails culture making, wisdom, and the effort of great jurists and concerned scholars of Islamic and Shiite world. Somewhere else in this letter, Imam Mousa Sadr points to this issue:

«... achieving these goals necessitates exact investigations, determining responsibility, coordination among everybody in this country, including citizens and authorities, and also with Arab countries, and utilizing all potentials in Muslims and vigilant consciences the whole world over. Real contribution in this responsibility means doing our best. To actualize these issues, we ought to examine the executive methods jointly to be able to coordinate all activities in speed and depth».²

1. Part of Imam Musa Sadr's letter to Sheikh Hassan Khaled.

2. Ibid., Page 278.