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Al-Taqrib number-9-december-2011

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Abstract

This article contains a short glimpse of the life of Shaykh Muhammad Husayn ibn ‘Ali Kashif al-Ghita’, one of the vanguards of the Islamic movement in the last century. Shaykh Muhammad Husayn was a respected religious authority, profound intellectual, and reviver of the faith. What separated him from many others was his belief that the Shia and the Sunni needed to unite against their common enemy. He stressed the importance of re-integrating the fragmented Ummah of the Prophet (S). His thoughts were not limited to his speeches, but through his many visits across the Muslim world, he strove to promote greater unity between Sunni and Shia scholars. He believed that it was only through forming common theological and political understanding that Muslims would be able to effectively defend themselves against the onslaught of Zionism and imperialism.

Keywords: Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita’, reformer, unity, Ummah, ijtihad, wilayah al-faqih.
Family And Education

The Kashif al-Ghita' family was a respected family of scholars in Iraq who lived in the 13th and 14th centuries AH. The members of this family are descendants of the Bani Malik tribe who are believed to be descendants of Malik ibn Harith ibn ‘Abd Yaghuth, famously known as Ashtar Nakhi'i (d. 37), a close companion of Imam ‘Ali ('a). Therefore, some of the members of his family were titled Maliki as well.

His ancestors lived in Janajiyah, Janajiya, or Qanaqiya which were villages near Hillah. At the end of the 12th century, one of the prominent members of this family by the name of Khidhr ibn Yahya (d. 1180) moved to Najaf. This is why some of the ancestors of Kashif al-Ghita’ are known as Janaji as well.

There are a number of prominent scholars who trace their ancestry back to the family of Kashif al-Ghita’. These scholars wrote important academic books and made significant contributions to political activities in Iraq, Iran, and other Islamic countries and Shia communities. The following is a list of the prominent scholars of the Kashif al-Ghita’ family, listed in the chronological order of their deaths:

1. Ja’far ibn Khidhr ibn Yahya Janaji Hilli Najafi, who was famously known as Shaykh Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita’ (1156–1227). He was the founder of the Kashif al-Ghita’ family and was commonly known as ‘the Great Ja’far’ or the ‘Shaykh of the Shaykhs’. After he wrote his famous book about jurisprudence called Kashf al-Ghita’ he was nicknamed Kashif al-Ghita’. He was a strong religious authority (mujtahid), occupied himself extensively in worship, and fought tirelessly against the Wahhabi raid on Najaf and the Russian invasion of parts of Iran.

2. Musa ibn Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita’ (1180–1243). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and a poet. He was the eldest son of Shaykh Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita’. During his father’s life, he helped him in his lessons, verdicts, and meetings with the people. Some scholars considered him to be even more precise in academic and jurisprudential matters than his father. He taught many students, including his brother Shaykh Hasan Kashif al-Ghita’ (1201–1262) and Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, famously known as the Author of Jawahir.

3. ‘Ali ibn Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita’ (1197–1253). He was a jurisprudent and a poet. He is also called the ‘Third Researcher’ due to the high intellectual status that he held. After the death of his brother Shaykh Musa, religious authority was divided between him and Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, famously known as the Author of Jawahir (d. 1266).

4. Hasan ibn Ja’far Kashif al-Ghita’ (1201–1262). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the paradigms of Islamic jurisprudence, and a poet. He studied the preliminary courses with his father and then participated in the lessons of his brother, Shaykh Musa, Sayyid Muhammad Jawad ‘Amuli, and others. He became proficient in many fields, but was mainly known in jurisprudence. His book Anwar al-faqahah shows his proficiency in this field. In 1258 Najib Pasha, an Ottoman ruler, attacked Karbala and killed many people. In 1259 he intended to attack Najaf, but Shaykh Hasan was able to convince him not to. In 1260 Najib Pasha invited scholars and jurisprudents of various Islamic sects to Baghdad in order to give
opinions about the claims and beliefs of Sayyid ‘Ali Muhammad Bab Shirazi (d. 1266). He was present in this meeting as the top representative of the Shia of Najaf. His opinion, out of all of the opinions that were presented, was accepted. This was considered a great accomplishment for him and the Shia jurisprudents and was widely covered by the media outlets of the time.4

5. Mahdi ibn ‘Ali Kashif al–Ghita’ (1226–1289). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the paradigms of Islamic jurisprudence, religious authority, and a poet. He was born in Najaf. He studied Islamic studies under his father, uncle (Shaykh Hasan), his brother (Shaykh Muhammad), and other scholars in Najaf until he reached the level of ijtihad. In his time he was a prominent teacher of jurisprudence and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence. Shaykh Murtadha Ansari would refer many cases of Islamic law and common understanding to him. After Shaykh Ansari passed away, many people of Iran, the Caucus region, and Iraq followed him in taqlid. He became the caretaker of the Indian Awdah endowment of Najaf. He founded two religious seminaries—one in Najaf and the other in Karbala—from which seminary students benefited significantly.5

6. ‘Abbas ibn ‘Ali Kashif al–Ghita’ (1242–1314). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and a poet. He was born in Najaf and lost his father during his childhood. He was raised by his uncle, Shaykh Hasan, and his brothers. After his brother Shaykh Habib Kashif al–Ghita’ (d. 1307) passed away, he also became a religious authority. He passed away in Hindiyah and was buried in Najaf.

7. Muhammad ibn ‘Ali Kashif al–Ghita’ (d. 1268). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the paradigms of Islamic jurisprudence, and a poet. He was born in Najaf and studied under the scholars of his family. He became the marja’ taqlid of some of Iraqi Shias after the deaths of his uncle Shaykh Hasan (the author of Anwar al-faqahah) and Shaykh Hasan (the author of Jawahir). Many of the jurisprudents of the 13th century studied under him. Some of these jurisprudents were given the permission of ijtihad from him. He would be called upon by the Ottoman rulers in order to try to solve the problems that the people were facing.6

8. Muhammad Ridha ibn Musa Kashif al–Ghita’ (1238–1297). He was a jurisprudent and Islamic scholar. He was born in Najaf. He studied the preliminary and advanced Islamic courses under Shaykh Ibrahim Qatfan (d. 1279), Shaykh Musa Khamayisi, Shaykh Ahmad Dijili (d. 1265), his uncle Shaykh Hasan, and the author of Jawahir. He was forced to leave Najaf due to an internal conflict which occurred. He moved to Kazimayn until he returned to Najaf three years later.7

9. Musa ibn Muhammad Ridha Kashif al–Ghita’ (1260–1306). He was a jurisprudent and a poet. He was born in Najaf and studied under the prominent scholars of the time who were located there, such as Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Kazimi (d. 1308). After completing his studies, he moved to Samarra and participated in the lectures of Muhammad Hasan Shirazi. He travelled to Esfahan in 1298 following the death of his father and then returned to Iran in 1306. He passed away in Tehran during this second trip.8
10. ‘Abbas ibn Hasan Kashif al-Ghita’ (1253–1323). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, and a poet. He was born in Najaf and travelled to Samarra after completing the preliminary Islamic courses. He studied the highest levels of Islamic jurisprudence under Shaykh Murtadha Ansari, Mirza Habibullah Rashti, Mirza Shirazi, and his cousin Shaykh Mahdi Kashif al-Ghita’ in Samarra and reached the level of ijtihad. He wrote many books about Islamic jurisprudence and its principles and a number of poems on these subjects were attributed to him.9

11. Ahmad ibn ‘Ali Kashif al-Ghita’ (1292–1344). He was a jurisprudent and religious authority. He travelled to Samarra in order to complete his studies and then returned to Najaf. After the constitutional revolution in Iran (1324) he stopped attending the lectures of Akhund Khurasani, who supported the revolution, and started attending the lectures of Sayyid Kazim Yazdi, who opposed the revolution. He became a religious authority at the end of his life, following the death of Yazdi. People in Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan performed his taqlid despite the existence of scholars such as Mirza Na’ini and Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Isfahani. He passed away in Najaf and was buried there.

12. Murtadha ibn ‘Abbas Kashif al-Ghita’ (1291–1349). He was a jurisprudent, scholar of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, theologian, author, and a poet. He was born in Najaf. He studied the principles of Islamic jurisprudence under Akhund Khurasani (d. 1329) and Islamic jurisprudence under Sayyid Kazim Yazdi. He wrote several books on Islamic jurisprudence and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence in the form of poetry. Some of his works include a critique of Wahhabi theology.10

13. ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Ridha Kashif al-Ghita’ (1267–1349). He was a scholar, a poet, and a historian. He was born in Najaf, where he also studied. He gave extreme importance to solving people’s social problems and was influential among the Ottoman rulers in Baghdad. He became the friend of Siri Pasha, the ruler of Baghdad, who was a lover of poetry, and praised him many times. In 1295, he travelled to Iran where he lived for seven years, in the cities of Tehran, Esfahan, and Shiraz before returning to Najaf in 1302. He also travelled to places such as Damascus, Hijaz, Istanbul, and India. His most famous book was al-Husun al-muni’ah fi tabaqat al-Shi’ah, which was planned for twelve volumes but only seven were completed. He also wrote Samir al-hadhir wa anis al-musafir in five volumes. This book is similar to Kashkul.

14. Hadi ibn ‘Abbas Kashif al-Ghita’ (1289–1361). He was a jurisprudent, historian, researcher, and poet. He was born in Najaf and studied Islamic jurisprudence as well as the principles of Islamic jurisprudence under Shaykh al-Shari’ah ISfahani, Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Yazdi, and Shaykh Muhammad Taha Najaf (d. 1329). His popularity in poetry was so extensive that he was known as the forerunner of poetry in fourteenth century Iraq. He wrote books on various subjects which have been listed by Aqa Bazurg in al-Dhari’ah.11

15. Muhammad Ridha ibn Hadi Kashif al-Ghita’ (1310–1366). He was a jurisprudent and a poet. He was born in Najaf and, after completing his preliminary Islamic courses, he studied Islamic jurisprudence and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence under his father and other scholars of Najaf. As an eloquent poet,
his poetry was extensively published. He died in Beirut and was buried in Najaf.

A number of these scholars played important political and social roles. The first person of this family, Shaykh Ja‘far Kashif al–Ghita’, was a religious authority who was aware of the political situation of his time and who fought continuously throughout his life. When Wahhabi forces attacked Najaf, he went to the battlefield along with a number of other scholars and residents of Najaf. In 1215, Ayatollah Shaykh Ja‘far issued a verdict mandating jihad against the occupiers (this was in reference to the Russian occupation of a portion of Iran). He permitted Fath ‘Ali Shah Qajar to lead the army on his behalf and to call the people to war.

Shaykh ‘Ali Kashif al–Ghita’ (the father of the subject of our discussion, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn) was another mujtahid of Najaf who was politically astute. He was officially invited to the second Congress of Islamic Research in Cairo, where he chose to lecture on the issue of Palestine. He delivered another speech in Cairo, coinciding with the days of ‘Ashura’ and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a), which was aired by a radio station called The Arabic Voice. This particular part of the speech had a tremendous effect on the masses and promoted the Shia creed in Egypt in such a way that was not seen since the Ayyubid dynasty.

In an effort to avert a lengthy discussion into the life of the other members of this family, let us now study the life and personality of Shaykh Muhammad Husayn ibn ‘Ali Kashif al–Ghita’ himself.


Shaykh Muhammad Husayn was a jurisprudent, scholar of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, poet, scholar of traditions, author, and lecturer. He was one of the famous members of the Kashif al–Ghita’ family and was a known resistance fighter. He was born in Najaf in 1294. He studied the preliminary Islamic courses along with Arabic literature, astronomy, and mathematics. He studied the highest levels of Islamic jurisprudence and the principles of Islamic jurisprudence under Sayyid Kazim Yazdi, Shaykh Aqa Ridha Isfahani, and Akhund Khurasani. He studied theology under Mirza Baqir Istahbanati (d. 1326), Shaykh Ahmad Shirazi, and Shaykh Muhammad Ridha Najafabadi. He studied traditions under Hajj Mirza Husayn Nuri. He became a prominent jurisprudent and scholar. In his youth, he leaned towards philosophy and mysticism which further extended the scope of his knowledge. In this regard, he said: “I learned all of the books written by Sadr al–Muta’allihin, including ‘Arshiyah, Sharh hidayah, Asfar, Sharh uSul al–kafi, as well as his poetry from learned professors.”

He also read the poetry of Mawlawi, Jami, and other Persian poets. His familiarity with the Persian language caused him to fall in love with the mystical poetry of Iranian poets. Nonetheless, he never dismissed Arabic literature or Arabic poetry. He loved poetry and used to compose it from the beginning of his youth. As a mere eighteen–years–old, he was one of the youngest students in his classes taught by Akhund Khurasani and Sayyid Kazim Yazdi. He reached a high level of intellectuality after studying for twenty years. Then, he started teaching what he learned to his own group of students.
His lessons were normally taught in the Hindi Mosque of Najaf or next to the grave of Mirza Shirazi, wherein a large number of scholars and seminary students attended. His intellectual fame gradually increased and he was soon considered to be a strong mujtahid of the Islamic Seminary of Najaf. People insisted on performing his taqlid and because of this he published his verdicts along with those of Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Yazdi. His commentary on ‘Urwah al-wuthqa is considered to be the first commentary of its kind, out of hundreds, that has been written on this book. Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Yazdi gave him special attention by delegating various academic and jurisprudential questions to him. After his brother, Shaykh Ahmad, passed away (1344), he became a religious authority, despite the fact that Ayatullah Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Isfahani was the religious authority of that time. People from India, Iran, Qatif, Afghanistan, Muscat, as well as Iraqi nomads performed taqlid of him.

The Jurisprudential Opinions Of Kashif Al-Ghita’

Kashif al-Ghita’ came across a book called Majallah al-‘adl during his research which was a book of civil law of the Ottoman Empire. The book was written in accordance with religious verdicts, but appeared in the form of civil and criminal law. He decided to write a book in this format. As he says:

I examined this book which was the only book of law which was published by legal institutions since the Ottoman Empire. I found that it needed to be corrected. The book, as is inferred from the format that it is written in, gives superiority to the legal side of matters. It can be called legal jurisprudence.

He wrote the book Tahrir al-majallah which critiqued the mentioned book and presented Shia jurisprudence in the format of civil and criminal law. This book was printed in five volumes and was welcomed by lawyers, judges, and all those who worked in the legal system.

The jurisprudential efforts of Shaykh Muhammad Husayn were founded upon correlating his verdicts with the conditions of the time-period and location that he lived in. He believed that a jurisprudent should consider the role that the time period and location that he lives in plays in his ijtihad. On this account, he says: “Is building a number of mosques in a small area correct? Will this cause the people to be divided amongst a few mosques? Will this cause the mosques to become empty and even some of the mosques to be closed? Would building a mosque incur reward in such conditions?”

He requested that the religious authorities guide the people and he requested that the people build schools, hospitals, and other institutions which produce general benefit.

Kashif al-Ghita’ said the following about the powers of a jurist: “A jurist has guardianship over the people’s affairs and over anything which is needed by the Islamic government and society. The guardianship of the jurist (wilayah al-faqih) covers all cases which are in the benefit of Islam and the Muslims.” In fact, Imam Khumayni mentions the name of Kashif al-Ghita with regard to the concept of the guardianship of the jurist: “The guardianship that has been established for the prophets (‘a) and the Imams (‘a) is also established for the jurisprudent. The subject of the guardianship of the jurist is not a
new topic that I created. Rather, this topic has been debated amongst the elder scholars such as the late Kashif al-Ghita’ who has said many of the same things.”

Kashif al-Ghita’ believed that the jurist was the only one who could make decisions about natural resources. He would also issue verdicts about current events before anyone else. Ja’far Khalili, a famous Iraqi news reporter and author, said: “In his speech commemorating the death of Ayatollah Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Isfahani, he said: ‘Sayyid Abu al-Hasan was the first mujtahid to state that a woman whose husband has been sentenced to five years in prison can request a divorce.’” Khalili states: “I asked him what the jurisprudential argument behind the ruling was and he answered: ‘The mujtahid is the legislator.’”

**Journeys On The Path Of Creating Unity**

Shaykh Muhammad Husayn was religiously and politically astute. He knew about the Islamic religion and the history of Islamic nations as well as the political conditions that existed during his lifetime. He was one of the Islamic reformers in the Islamic world of the previous century. He was influenced by the reformers and revolutionaries who advanced Islamic awareness, such as Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi and Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh. But he must be given particular importance due to his extensive knowledge about politics and the conditions of his time-period, his clarity in speech, his bravery in action, and his position as a religious authority. The reforms that he preached were practical. At the same time as he performed the duties of a religious scholar, he spent his time on political and social issues; on making the Islamic ummah aware; and on fighting against imperialism and Zionism. His series of trips to Islamic countries was one of the practical methods that he used to awaken the Islamic Ummah and shows the importance that he gave to Muslim affairs.

He travelled to Hijaz on his first trip in 1328 in order to speak with Sunni scholars and establish unity between the Sunni and Shia madhahib. The book *Nahzah al-samar wa nahzah al-safar* is a diary of that trip. Then, he travelled to Damascus and held discussions with Sunni scholars regarding the problems of the Islamic world and the necessity for unity. After this, he travelled to Beirut and stayed there for two months. He met with various people and scholars of the city and was able to publish some of his works there. From Beirut he travelled to Sayda and stayed there for three months. He met and spoke with Sunni scholars such as Shaykh Salim Bushri and Shaykh Muhammad Najib Muti’i. He married before he left Lebanon and then journeyed off to Egypt where he spoke with Sunni scholars and lectured for the students of the al-Azhar University. He also lectured in a few churches of Cairo. He wrote his opinions about Christianity in his two-volume book *al-Tawdhih fi bayan ma huwa al-Injil wa man huwa al-Masih*. He removed certain superstitions about Prophet Jesus (a) that were written in the Bible.

During the last days of Safar 1331, Kashif al-Ghita’ decided to leave Egypt and return to Iraq, but Shaykh Muhammad Najib asked him to delay his trip. He requested his participation in the celebrations which were to be held on the anniversary of Prophet Muhammad’s birthday in the month of Rabi’ al-
Awwal. His three-years trip ended at the beginning of the First World War in 1332, at which time England occupied many Iraqi cities and due to this he returned to Iraq and fought on the front lines against the English forces.

His Trip To The Islamic Congress In Palestine

After remaining in Najaf for a number of years, he went on a second trip to Palestine in order to participate in the Islamic Congress. This Congress was held in Jerusalem on the anniversary of the advent of Prophet Muhammad's prophethood and was attended by numerous Islamic scholars and personalities such as Sayyid Habib ‘Ubaydi (the mufti of Mosul), Sayyid Muhammad Ziyarah (from Yemen), Rashid Ridha (a student of Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi and the author of Tafsir al-Manar), and ‘Allamah Iqbal Lahuri. He participated in this Congress along with a number of Iraqi scholars. He led the prayers in Masjid al-Aqsa and thousands of Muslims, including the scholars of other madhahib, followed him. He gave an inspiring lecture in the twelfth session of the Congress which was well received by the participants of the Congress and the Islamic world. He spoke about the conditions of Muslims in the past and the present, about the terrible state that the Muslims were in, about the necessity of being unified, and about the necessity of refraining from division. This lecture was originally published in Jerusalem, and then found outlets in various other newspapers and publications throughout the Islamic world.

One of the professors of the Faruq al-Awwal College of Beirut writes the following about the influence of Kashif al-Ghita’s speech in his book Al-Islam bayn al-Sunnah wa al-Shi’ah:

If the blessings of this new movement did not exist, would it be possible to imagine that a large number of Sunni Muslims would follow Kashif al-Ghita’ in prayer? Would it be possible to imagine that his book al-Da’wah al-Islamiyah would be read by Sunni scholars as well as Shia scholars? Kashif al-Ghita’ stayed in Palestine for fifteen days and met with Sunni and Shia scholars who had participated in the Congress. He travelled to various cities in Palestine and met with scholars and other individuals of those cities, inviting them all towards unity. He became so beloved that he has since been titled Imam Kashif al-Ghita’.

Kashif al-Ghita’s speech was accepted by scholars and laymen to such an extent that he became beloved by the people. From that moment on, the scholars who were present in the Congress followed Kashif al-Ghita’ in congregational and Friday prayers. Wahhabi, Nasibi, and Kharijite scholars also followed him in prayer. During the same trip (which lasted fifteen days) he travelled to numerous Palestinian cities, such as Haifa, Nablus, and Yafa (Jaffa). When he returned from his trip, he received a warm welcome from the people of Iraq. He delivered an inspiring lecture in Masjid al-Kufa to those who were impressed by the lecture that he delivered in Jerusalem. This lecture is considered to be one of his best. He reminded people about the greatness of Islam and then juxtaposed it to the present regressive state of the Muslims.
After remaining in Iraq for two years, he made his first trip to Iran in the year 1352 and performed ziyarah of the Eighth Imam ('a). He visited the majority of Iran’s major cities, such as Kermanshah, Hamadan, Qom, Tehran, Shahrud, Mashhad, Shiraz, Khuramshahr, Abadan, and Bushahr. Speaking to the people in Persian, he called them to stand up and fight against the occupiers. While in Qom, he was welcomed as a guest by Ayatullah Shaykh ‘Abd al-Karim Ha’iri, the founder of the Islamic Seminary of Qom, who also asked him to lead the prayers in the shrine of Sayyidah Ma’Sumah. After performing the congregational prayers, he once again addressed the masses. After this trip, which lasted about eight months, he returned to Iraq through Basra. His future trips to Iran in 1366 and 1369 were of a similar nature and were also successful in furthering his aim and purpose.

His Trip To The Islamic Congress In Pakistan

The Islamic Brotherhood held the second Islamic Congress in Pakistan in the year 1371. They requested Kashif al-Ghita’s presence as a lecturer. In his speech, he said:

“Twenty years ago, I made a statement that was published everywhere. I said that Islam is founded upon two things: the word of unity (kalimah al-tawhid) and the unity of the word (tawhid al-kalimah). Islam is a religion of equality with regards to the law. Even before the first century after the great migration ended, various madhahib had already formed. The first corruption (fitna) which stained the heart of the religion was the Kharijites. Differences in the roots and branches of religion were presented and the kings and commanders clung to these differences. The occupiers utilized this opportunity and began their attack. Islamic countries fell into their grips. The new Pakistani government was established in the name of Islam. Pakistan separated from India in the name of Islam. This is why I issued a verdict stating that it is obligatory for all Muslims to aid Pakistan. We say that we are Muslims but our history is Christian or Zoroastrian. We take our holiday on Sunday. Muslims! Gather all of your strength in one place; international politics are attacking Arab and Islamic countries. Presently, the government of Iran (i.e. that of Mossadegh), may Allah help it, has not freed itself from the grips of these polluted policies. They will not free themselves until all of the people come together.”

Kashif al-Ghita’ stayed in Pakistan for forty days. He met with various scholars and personalities of Lahore, Rawalpindi, Azad Kashmir, and Peshawar. He invited them all towards unity as a solution.

His Intellectual Movement Of Reform

Shaykh Muhammad Husayn commonly spoke of the distinguished and honourable status of Muslim history, both in his works and in his speeches. He would praise their civilization and then explain the secrets behind their success and the reasons behind the decline of the modern Islamic Ummah. He believed that the first and fundamental step towards the recovery of Muslims from the terrible conditions that they were faced with was to return to sincere faith that was present during the beginning of Islam. Like many others, he persisted in his call to unity. He did not present a clear definition or explanation of
what this unity is; rather, he desired that Muslims respond positively to his call to it.

As mentioned previously, he gave the utmost importance to Islamic unity. In addition, he considered the crusades, the Mongol attack on the Islamic Empire, and the new Western influence over the Islamic world to be a direct result of the distrust present amongst Muslims. The reasons that he defended the Shia faith (by writing the book Asl al-Shi’ah wa Usuluha) was to correct misunderstandings that the two Islamic schools of thought had of each other and to bring Sunnis and Shias closer together. This is why the scholars of various Islamic schools of thought respected him. Sometimes, as was seen in the Congress held in Jerusalem, even Wahabi scholars would follow him in prayer.

Another instance which shows that he was a reformer was that he called people to fight against occupation and Zionism. Shaykh Muhammad Husayn was aware of the advent of imperialism in his time. This awareness can be illustrated through the letter he wrote to the American Bhamdoun Congress. On the tenth of Rajab, 1372, Garland Evans Hopkins, the then undersecretary of the American Friends of the Middle East, wrote a letter to Shaykh Muhammad Husayn and asked him to participate in a conference which would examine the methods of cooperation between Islam and Christianity in order to combat atheism and materialism. Scholars of the two religions would participate in this conference which was to be held on the 18th of Sha’ban, that same year, in Bhamdoun, Lebanon. He rejected the offer and explained his reasons in a long letter sent to America. This letter was published as a book titled al-Mithl al-uliya.

He called upon Muslims to revive the faith that was seen at the beginning stages of Islam and considered it necessary to fight against Western occupation. He believed that one of the methods of being saved from backwardness and modern occupation was improving the economy and teaching modern sciences. He delivered a lecture in Kufah’s Masjid al-Jami’ after he returned from Palestine, in which he said: “The West will not take ownership of the East unless they do so through industrialization and sapping the wells of wealth. Our noble religion has expressed all interests which would produce wealth; it has mentioned the importance of economic growth.”

Old Age And Death

Shaykh Muhammad Husayn’s call upon the Muslims to unite carried on until his last days. When he was 79 years old, he was admitted to the Al-Kirkh Hospital of Baghdad. During that time, he received news of a heated debate between various tribes in Bahrain (apparently Sunni and Shia tribes). When he became aware of this news, he issued a message for the Bahraini Muslims from his hospital bed, asking them to end their dispute. Part of this message stated that Zionists are united while Muslims are divided. If a Zionist falls ill in Iraq another Zionist in China would become upset. He further emphasized that it was the enemies of Islam that created the war between Sunnis and Shias. He reiterated the need to love other Muslims. It was as a result of this message that the conflict in Bahrain dissipated.

Kashif al-Ghita’ remained hospitalized for about a month. Doctors then advised him to be taken to a
place where there was clean and fresh air. Hence, he was transferred to a village between Kermanshah and Khaniqin. Finally on the 15th of Dhi al-Qa’dah, 1373, after performing the morning prayers and before noon, his life came to an end in Kurnd, Kermanshah. The people of Kurnd transferred the pure body of Kashif al-Ghita’ to Najaf and he was buried in the Wadi al-Salam Graveyard.

May his soul be content and may his path be followed.

1. Da’irah al-ma’arif-i buzurg-i Islami, v.2, p. 100; Amin ‘Amuli, A’yan al-Shi’ah (large edition) (Beirut, 1407), v.4, p.99, no. 300; Da’irah al-ma’arif-i buzurg-i Islami is used extensively in this article.

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