

Introduction

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

Those who are aware of the circumstances prevailing in the Muslim world know well that nowadays the Muslim *ummah*¹ has become “*ummahs*” and every “*ummah*” has its own way and customs and the life of its subjects has fallen into the grasp of individuals who regard their hegemony and survival as depending on kindling flame of differences.

Consequently, these individuals have made investment in various forms and are able to make use of every possible means.

This situation has left no room for dialogue among the Islamic sects and there has been a lot of dispute over many questions. Most of these questions are scholastic {*masa'il-e kalami*} originated by Muslim scholastic theologians {*mutakallimun*} and many Muslims are unaware of those differences.

However, there are common axes which form a good ground for unity among them. In fact, the common points of the various Muslim sects are more than the points of difference; yet, the sponsors of discord have dwelt on those differences and so they mention nothing but the common issues related to the roots and branches of religion.

In one of the conferences on “Proximity among the Islamic Schools of Thought”, I was assigned to expound on the topic, “The Schools of Jurisprudence Regarding Personal Statuses” (marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.).

I presented to the conference the writer’s paper which surprised the Sunni participants. Prior to reading the paper, they rejected the idea that in most issues pertaining to these three questions the Shi’ah jurisprudence has identical view with that of the present four Sunni schools of thought.

From a distance a grudge is nursed and the Shi’ah is regarded as apart from the Muslim sects. Day and night they speak in the mass media against this group which has been wronged by history. This act can only render service to the common enemy.

This unwary group is invited to lift the veils of ignorance from their views and establish better ties with

the Shi'ah,² strengthen their connection with their 'ulama' and scholars, and recognize the Shi'ah as their own brothers—an aim which the Shi'ah has for centuries been looking for, and thus, realizing the purport of the verse that follows:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

“Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord. So worship Me.”³

One of the old plots hatched by imperialism in the Muslim nations is to create skepticisms and to intensify problems and then to strike a blow for the glorious Islamic Revolution, and various forms of this old method was common in the Middle East and other regions in recent centuries.

On meeting Iranian pilgrims during the *Haji* season, many pilgrims who have familiarity with the Islamic Revolution and whose minds are poisoned with the enemy's sinister propaganda, ask questions and want to know the answers.

In response to this demand, the eminent and honorable scholar, Sayyid Rida Husayni Nasab, compiled the answers (to those questions) under my supervision and according to the permission given to him, he was to observe brevity in answering the questions and to put detailed explanations to a later time.

It is hoped that this little service would be accepted by the Imam of the Time (may our souls be his ransom).

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1. Ummah: the entire Islamic community which knows no territorial or ethnic distinction. {Trans.}

2. In this volume, I have maintained the word “Shi'ah” to refer to both the group (single collective unit) and the individuals constituting the group (plural). {Trans.}

3. Surah al-Anbiya' 21:92. A similar verse is Surah al-Mu'minun 23:52: “Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so be wary of Me.” In this volume, the translation of Qur'anic passages is adapted from Sayyid 'Ali Quli Qara'i, *The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004). {Trans.}