

The Voice of Unity Part 1: Unity of the Islamic Community

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Featured Category:

Resources for Further Research [10]

Unity between Shi’a & Sunni [11]

Topic Tags:

Ummah [12]

Islamic Unity [13]

The Voice of Unity Part 1: Unity of the Islamic Community

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Muhammad Wa’iz-Zadeh Khurasani

Translated by Hamid Waqar

This is the first of a series of talks delivered in 1991 by Muhammad Wa’iz-Zadeh Khurasani, the then secretary-general of the ‘Majma’ Jahani Taqrīb Madhahib Islami’, 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.

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 madhahib (schools of jurisprudence and thought), internal and external factors in the development of the madhahib, 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. It alludes to the different forms of unity found

within the Qur'an 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, madhahib, Unity week, Friday prayers.

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Allah states:



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 Wali al-Faqih, 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 ‘Abdullah (s)—and on the blessed birthday of the founder of the [Shia] *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence), Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (‘a), 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 Rabi’ 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 (*wahdah*) in the Islamic community, so too the birthday of Imam Sadiq (‘a), who brought the leaders together, has become the scale of proximity (*taqrib*) amongst the schools of thought. The explanation of this is that the four Imams of the Sunni schools of thought intellectually benefited from Imam Sadiq (‘a) either directly or through a middleman.

Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767) was a mufti who was alive during the same period as Imam Sadiq (‘a) and he took pride in being the Imam’s student. Imam Malik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), the founder of the Maliki sect, was an official student of Imam Sadiq (‘a). He narrated traditions directly from the Imam in the oldest Islamic jurisprudential book that exists today, *Muta’*, and which is the foundation of the Maliki sect.

Imam Shafi’i (d. 204/819) was a student of Imam Malik and transmitted traditions from Imam Sadiq (‘a)

through him and others as well. These traditions exist in the *Musnad* of Shafi'i. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), the founder of the Hanbali sect, was a student of Imam Shafi'i. When Shafi'i 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 Ahmad ibn Hanbal."

Therefore, the root of the four *madhahib* is Imam Sadiq (‘a) 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'an 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 *madhahib* in Islam and the reasons behind their differences." It is clear that there were no *madhahib* 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 *ijtihad* (interpretive reasoning)? *Ijtihad* 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'an 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 *madhahib* 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 *madhahib*, 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 *madhahib* 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-Tabshir wa al-isti'mar* 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 *madhahib* 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 *madhahib* 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.

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

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِتْيَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السُّحُبَ بِالْمَاءِ فَمُتَّبِعُونَ أَمْرَهُ لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْكٰفِرِينَ﴾
﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِتْيَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السُّحُبَ بِالْمَاءِ فَمُتَّبِعُونَ أَمْرَهُ لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْكٰفِرِينَ﴾
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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’an. One of these definitions is “general congregation.” Another is “leader” as is mentioned in the verse:

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِتْيَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السُّحُبَ بِالْمَاءِ فَمُتَّبِعُونَ أَمْرَهُ لَعَنَ اللَّهُ الْكٰفِرِينَ﴾

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 Óusi writes in *al-Tibyan fi tafsir al-Qur’an* 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*, *nihlah*, and *diyana* 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 *imam* are taken from the same root definitive.

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

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

1. Unity of humanity



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'ub* is the plural form of *sha'b* which means “nation”. We say *millat-e Īran* (the Iranian nation) while Arabs say *al-sha'b al-'arabi* (the Arab nation). Allah has made it so. Likewise, the tribes are smaller circles of *sha'b*. We³ 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? Absolutely not. The Qur'an 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'an 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 *insan* (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'an states:

﴿قَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّمًا وَعُرُوبًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾
﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾
﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَخَوُّنَهُ وَابْتَغُوا الْوَسِيلَةَ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ إِنَّكُمْ بِعِندِ اللَّهِ لَكُنُودُونَ﴾

... 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)

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:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ

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'an 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'an. There are verses that state that the truth is Islam:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ

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

Or:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرْسِلُونَ

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

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَمْرًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِنَ النُّجُومِ نَزْيًا أَوْ سَحَابًا مِنْ غَمَامٍ غَمَامًا مُرِيمًا فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ لَمْ تُبَدِّلْ بِهِ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ إِلَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

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'an states:

إِنَّ دِينَكُمْ إِذَا اتَّخَذْتُمُ الرَّسُولَ تَحْتَفِظُهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ الْإِسْلَامَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو الْحِكْمِ

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

According to the flow of the Qur'an, 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'an. Then the following verse is mentioned:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَمْرًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِنَ النُّجُومِ نَزْيًا أَوْ سَحَابًا مِنْ غَمَامٍ غَمَامًا مُرِيمًا فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ لَمْ تُبَدِّلْ بِهِ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ إِلَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

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:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَمْرًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كِسْفًا مِنَ النُّجُومِ نَزْيًا أَوْ سَحَابًا مِنْ غَمَامٍ غَمَامًا مُرِيمًا فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ لَمْ تُبَدِّلْ بِهِ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ إِلَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

... 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.

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ يَوْمِهِمْ الَّذِي يَصْعَقُونَ فِيهِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ مُتَوَسِّطِينَ ذَاتُ أَلْجَانٍ مَشْجُورَةٍ أَلْجَانُهُمْ يَسْفِكُونَ كَلِمَةَ اللَّهِ كَلِمَةً يُحَرِّمُهَا رَبُّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

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'an 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:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقْوَاهُ وَالصَّلَاةَ إِحْسَانًا وَارْكَبُوا الْوَسِيلَ السَّيِّئَ وَلَا تَمْسِكُوا بِسُلُوكِ الْغَيْرِ الْمُنْجَرِّمْ ذَلِكُمْ لَكُمْ آيَاتٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

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'an recited at the beginning of my speech:

hereafter ('all that the Qur'an 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'an 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 *hajj*, 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 *imamah* (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 *madhahib*.

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'an. This means that one should hold on to what is mentioned in the Qur'an. 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 *madhahib*. Otherwise, religion branches out (and must branch out) when it falls into the hands of religious authorities (*mujtahidin*) 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 *madhahib*—do you find a direction of prayer other than the Ka’bah? There is no other direction. All Muslims believe that the ordinances issued in the Qur’an 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’an and Islam state 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 *hadith* 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’an—is also obligatory. Just as it is obligatory on you to pray, to fast, to perform the *hajj*, 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 Imam⁸ 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 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 *hajj*) 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 Muhammad Shakir 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 Falsafi, 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 (s)—the Messenger of Unity—and with the purified Imams (‘a) and grant us a blessed ending.

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1. Literal translation of a Farsi proverb that means peace. [Tr.]
 2. al-Tibyan fi tafsir al-Qur'an, v. 1, p.477.
 3. When he states 'we' here, he means Iranians. [Tr.]
 4. This is a line of poetry attributed to the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ('a).
 5. Nahj al-Balaghah, sayings 125.
 6. Kafi, Kitab al-iman wa al-kufr, Bab 70, hadith 1 and 5
 7. Kafi, Kitab al-iman wa al-kufr, Bab 70, hadith 5.
 8. I.e., Imam Khomeini. [Tr.]

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- [11] <https://www.al-islam.org/feature/unity-between-shia-sunni>
- [12] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/ummah>
- [13] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/islamic-unity>