

UNITY AND AFFINITY BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF IMAMATE WITH RELIANCE ON THE COMMON FOUNDATIONS OF BOTH SECTS

Morteza Alizadeh Najjar¹/Mohammad Taqi Subhani²

Abstract: *Undoubtedly, referring to the biography and sayings of the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) is the best guide for presenting a religious and effective ideology in the realm of unity and affinity. From the common Islamic tradition, it is evident that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny) consistently warned against the issue of leadership and succession - which has been the first point of separation in the Islamic nation - and considered the path of unity and affinity achievable only through this route. The present writing, adhering to the tradition of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny), elucidates the path of unity and affinity with the Imamate-centered model and deems its realization possible. In this perspective, Islamic unity, through agreement on the principles of leadership and affinity, will also be achieved by creating a common discourse centered around the Imamate. This*

¹PhD student of Islamic Theology, University of Religions and Islamic Denominations, Qom, Iran (corresponding author) alizadehnajar.m@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Theology, Research Institute of Islamic Sciences and Culture, Qom, Iran. Sobhani.mt@gmail.com

discourse should open cultural and social avenues for dialogue on the issue of leadership and, in the first step, expose the truths of the beliefs of Islamic sects and their foundations, dispelling misunderstandings. The most important strategies of this theory include returning to the root of differences, enlightening on religious and historical truths, and delineating the distinction between unity and affinity through social unity and coexistence.

Key words: Sectarianism, unity, affinity, Imamate.

Introduction

The history of Islam, in its highs and lows, has always been witness to tensions that have inflicted serious damage on the body of Islam and created a deep rift among Muslims. The root of all these tensions was a disagreement that emerged at the outset of Islam following the passing of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) regarding the issue of leadership and Imamate. At a time when some groups of Muhajirun (migrants) and Ansar (helpers) gathered at the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah to choose a successor for themselves, another group believed in divine leadership and maintained that the Imam or Caliph had been introduced during the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his progeny) lifetime. The former group, leveraging the prevailing conditions in society, managed to seize control of the reins of leadership and ostensibly eliminate the opposing faction from the arena of governance and politics. However, from the perspective of the opposing group, divine Imamate was not something to be erased from the scene of history, and removing the Imam from the realm of governance could not undermine his spiritual position.

Perhaps on that day, many Muslims did not know what dire consequences awaited this disagreement and how far-reaching the repercussions of this conflict would be. It didn't take long for the extensive dimensions and profound impact of this disagreement to become apparent in religious, social, and political affairs.

The pristine laws and teachings of Islam became subject to distortion and misinterpretation amidst these disputes, and the community plunged into confusion and moral and social deviations. Countless lives were lost, and irreparable damage was inflicted upon the body of Islam and its followers. In the aftermath of these events, the flames of Shia-Sunni confrontation intensified, gradually portraying an undesirable image of Islam in the global community; an image that cast doubt on the authenticity of Islam and labeled Muslims with accusations such as terrorism and violence, leading unaware people to become pessimistic and suspicious of Muslims and paving the way for the colonization of Muslim lands.

At this point, various Islamic movements felt threatened, and scholars, intellectuals, and politicians, each with their own specific goals, began to contemplate reform and propose solutions. Approaches under the banner of unity and affinity were put on the agenda, and religious and social activists with diverse motivations and objectives entered the field, offering theories to solve this problem. Unfortunately, the theories pursued so far in the path of affinity and reconciliation between Shiism and Sunnism have not been very successful; indeed, some have themselves been damaged and have even contributed to intra-religious divisions, especially within the Shiite sphere.

The most significant reason for the inefficacy of these approaches is the neglect of Quranic strategy and prophetic heritage in resolving Islamic disputes and moving beyond areas of contention. While the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was more aware of the dangers of discord within the Ummah, more knowledgeable about addressing its root causes, and more compassionate towards the well-being of Muslims than anyone else, he consistently warned against the roots of discord and introduced solutions to remedy it.

1. Understanding Unity and Affinity

Before turning to the prophetic tradition, understanding the meaning of unity and affinity is inevitable; because it must be clarified what we are seeking in this concept. Today, one of the theoretical afflictions of unity and affinity is the crisis of meaning. Previously, theorists and actors in this field each had their own specific term and meaning in mind; for example, in the speeches of Sayyid Jamal (Islamic unity), the subject of discussion has been addressed¹, or Imam Khomeini spoke more about the unity of nations and the coexistence of Muslims. It is clear that the origin of the discussion in this perspective was not the epistemic and substantive interaction between religions; rather, the focus was on the political-social interests of the Islamic Ummah and harmonious tendencies in international politics. The discourse that emerged in the House of Convergence in Egypt also initially had a social meaning; but in the middle of the road, it found an epistemic meaning and addressed religious beliefs and sectarian differences. Today, it is not clear what is meant in the practical realm and what is being pursued, and to what extent practitioners in this field adhere to their definitions of unity and affinity. In addition to the crisis in meaning, appropriate relations of unity and affinity in the world today are facing ambiguity in scientific discussions, actions, methods, and objectives. Even the recipients and custodians of these concepts are not precisely identified.

In general, the interaction between followers of different sects and leaders of Muslim nations involves three separate concepts that need to be distinguished to understand their intended meanings:

1. Islamic unity or cooperation among Islamic nations;
2. Social coexistence of Muslims and Islamic groups;
3. Religious collaboration and ideological affinity.

¹Asad Abadi, Jamal al-Din, *Jamalieh Articles*, pp. 166 and 169-170. Also, look into: Sahabi, Mohammad Javad, *Reformist Thought in Islamic Movements*, pp. 179 onwards.

It is clear that the primary discourse revolves around interests, benefits, and power. This perspective endeavors to unite Islamic governments and states around the axis of public interests and common benefits of Muslims, amidst all ideological diversities and biases. It aims to ally them against any front that jeopardizes the economic interests or refuses to recognize their political positions and power. The audience and actors in this section will be politicians and powerful figures, as well as those who control major economic enterprises in the Islamic world, rather than social masses and religious scholars. The method and approach for advancing this project are also defined within political frameworks and methods of interaction in international relations.

However, in the second discourse, the focus is on the security and social well-being of the Islamic Ummah, and the actors in this section are the masses; those who seek to live in peace, prosperity, and security. Undoubtedly, the prerequisite for coexistence is not necessarily a religious event or the denial of religious differences; although resolving religious differences can facilitate the path to improving coexistence. It is also clear that advancing this project pertains to social concepts, and social knowledge and life experiences in various lands are heavily relied upon.

In the third discourse, affinity, intellectual-cultural closeness, and safeguarding Islamic beliefs are the focus, and the actors in this realm are religious scholars and intellectuals. The main goal in this perspective is to achieve intellectual and ideological proximity and to avoid cultural and spiritual tensions while preserving the Islamic heritage. The effects of this approach can extend beyond the realms of knowledge and spirituality to address other fundamental issues, such as social cohesion and cooperation within the Islamic world.

As it is evident, today, all three realms are necessary in the Islamic world, and planning and effort are required to achieve them. Implementing each of these three projects can pave the way for other approaches as well. However, it is emphasized that conflating these three concepts can lead to serious consequences. Adhering to

the conditions and requirements of each project and avoiding interference from destructive factors greatly influences their precise and swift implementation.

What is discussed in this essay pertains to the third discourse; a discourse that seeks to provide a framework and introduction for elucidating the theoretical and practical aspects of this project and is concerned with the epistemic discussions in this area. Based on this, several important points are noteworthy:

1. Verses related to unity are used in such a way that in Islamic unity and real convergence, attention must always be paid to the principle of righteousness, and any path that leads to deviation from the truth will be divisive. For example, the verse "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided"² considers adherence to the "rope of Allah," which is nothing but the truth and the relationship between humans and the Almighty God, as the criterion for unity. The verse "And do not be like those who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them"³ also considers division as a result of not following the "clear proofs," meaning the scientific evidence, realities, and religious truths. In a noble tradition from the Commander of the Faithful, unity is understood as adherence to righteousness, and division is understood as following falsehood, interpreting the community as the "community of the people of truth."⁴ Therefore, considering the various evidences and understanding the term "division," which is opposed to unity, in the context of "recognizing things by their opposites," one can arrive at a definition of Islamic unity and understand unity as "the gathering of the Islamic Ummah based on truth."

² Ale Imran: 103

³ Ale Imran: 105

⁴ A man came to the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali) and said, "Inform me about the Sunnah and innovation, and about the community and the faction." Imam Ali replied, "The Sunnah is what the Messenger of Allah has ordained, and innovation is what has been introduced after him. The community is the people of truth, even if they are few, and the faction is the people of falsehood, even if they are many." - (Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, Bihar al-Anwar, 2/244)

Various definitions have been proposed for the affinity between sects. In most definitions, emphasis has been placed on religious and social solidarity without necessarily eliminating differences. It is also always mentioned that this matter is achieved based on Islamic commonalities.⁵ In the context of affinity, the presence of hidden differences is acknowledged, and affinity theories strive to prevent religious harm from these differences through dialogue and agreement on commonalities, while preserving Islamic values.

From here, the difference between unity and affinity becomes clear. Unity and integration are not compatible with differences; rather, they stand opposite to it. Islamic unity will only take shape when there is agreement on fundamental principles and ideologies. However, in the definition provided earlier, affinity does not mean consensus on religious principles; instead, it means reducing religious differences based on the common scripture and tradition to foster solidarity. Affinity

⁵Ref: Kashf al-Ghummah, Muhammad Husayn, "Bayan al-Muslimin," Risalat al-Islam, 3/269: "The purpose of affinity among Islamic sects is not to eliminate the root of their disagreement, but rather the ultimate goal and main purpose is to remove this disagreement as a cause of enmity and animosity. The purpose is to replace distance and conflict with brotherhood and convergence." Hayri Mazandarani, Muhammad Saleh, "Minhaj 'Amali li'l-Taqrīb ila Ikhwani-na al-Muslimin," Risalat al-Islam, 6/606: "Affinity should take a real practical form, gradually, without the Sunni abandoning their Sunnism or the Shia abandoning their Shiism."

Tashtiri, Muhammad Ali, "Goftari Pīramun Wahdat Islami va Taqriz-i Madhahib," Andisheh Taqriz, 8/16: "Affinity of sects means the followers of Islamic sects coming closer with the aim of recognizing each other's commonalities and expanding these commonalities to achieve religious brotherhood based on Islamic principles and commonalities, as well as excusing each other in matters of disagreement..."

Sabzavari, Jafar, Risalat va Maqalat, 1/622: "The purpose of affinity is to bring together the leaders of sects and, consequently, their followers, by drawing broad common lines that unite Islamic sects in the fields of creed and Sharia. If there is any disagreement, it is very minimal concerning agreed-upon matters."

Wa'ez Zadeh Khorasani, Muhammad, "Al-Wahdah al-Islamiyyah Ma'alimaha wa A'lamaha," Risalat al-Taqrīb 21/11: "Affinity among Islamic sects means making efforts to eliminate separations that have led to the distance between Islamic sects and their leaders and followers. It also means establishing good relations among the leaders and scholars of sects, creating a guiding atmosphere, and recognizing each other based on religious commonalities and exchanging views on matters of disagreement."

endeavors to create epistemic discourses aimed at resolving Islamic conflicts in the pursuit of truth and fostering collaboration. Of course, the outcome of affinity could be achieving the Islam of the Prophet's era, which unites all Muslims harmoniously and brings them love, brotherhood, and happiness in both this world and the hereafter.

2. The Prophet's warning about the occurrence of discord

"Undoubtedly, discord within Islam is like a burning flame that jeopardizes the spiritual and worldly lives of Muslims and poses challenges to the progress of Islam and the happiness of Muslims. No one, undoubtedly, has had as much compassion for Islam and Muslims as the Prophet of Islam, nor has anyone been as concerned as him about the occurrence of discord. The Prophet's concern about this unpleasant event is reported in both Shia and Sunni traditions and has resonated in many societies, as he said":

"Very soon, my nation will be divided into seventy-three sects⁶, all of which except one will be in Hellfire⁷".

These narrations are so widespread that many Sunni scholars have acknowledged their abundance or their frequent recurrence⁸".

The tradition about the division of the Muslim nation, in addition to the Prophet's prediction of imminent discord, clearly indicates his concern about divisive tumults.

⁶In some narrations, seventy-two sects are also mentioned

⁷Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, Musnad, 3/120; Hakim Nishaburi, Muhammad, Al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn, 1/6 and 128-129; Tirmidhi, Muhammad, Sunan, 5/25-26; Muttaqi Hindi, Ali, Kanz al-Ummal, 1/210-212; Manawi, Abdul Raouf, Fayd al-Qadir, 2/20 and 5/384; Ayni, Mahmud, Umdat al-Qari, 18/224. Also see: Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, Bihar al-Anwar, 28/3-36; Hurr Ameli, Muhammad ibn Hassan, Tafsir Wasail al-Shi'a, 27/49-50; Tabatabai Borujerdi, Hajj Agha Hossein, Jame' Atradition al-Shi'a, 1/16 and other sources.

⁸Hakim Nishaburi, Muhammad, Al-Mustadrak ala al-Sahihayn, 1/6; Manawi, Abdul Raouf, Fayd al-Qadir, 2/21; Fayyad Abadi, Haidar Ali, Muntaha al-Kalam, p. 264; Abu Zahra, Muhammad, Tarikh al-Mazahib al-Islamiyya, p. 11.

But did the Prophet of Islam, as the messenger of Islam and the custodian of an everlasting law, not contemplate any solution to prevent it despite being aware of this event? Undoubtedly, the mission of the Seal of Prophets necessitates that they have a solution to prevent such corruption. It is inconceivable that a Prophet who had plans for the minutest social and individual affairs of humanity and considered his religion the most complete would not offer a solution to eradicate discord, of which he was aware of its occurrence. In this regard, Abdul Majid Salim, a prominent scholar of Al-Azhar and an advocate of reconciliation and unity, writes".

"The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) was deeply concerned about this dangerous division and warned against it. He considered the believers as one body, and nothing, after disbelief in Allah, was more detestable to him than discord and conflict, even though it might seem mundane matters. The only way to reform this nation is to be liberated from discord, unite on the principles of true faith and belief, and maintain self-restraint in the face of disagreements with valid reasons and evidence behind them⁹".

"Undoubtedly, the tradition and biography of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) are the best sources for reconciliation, unity, and eradication of discord. Whatever they have stated is in accordance with (And he does not speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed)¹⁰, and the proof of infallibility; it is nothing but divine will and heavenly mission".

"The Quran also consistently presents the Prophet (peace be upon him) as the ultimate arbitrator in resolving disputes and establishes submission to his judgment as the criterion of faith, as it states: 'But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what

⁹ Refer to Muhammad Saadi, *Mausooa Aalaam al-Dawah*: vol 1 pg 686

¹⁰ Najm: 2,3

you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission.¹¹ Additionally, it says: 'And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger¹²'.

Based on this, to eradicate discord, one must seek refuge in the sanctuary of the Prophet's mission and seek solutions in his tradition and biography, entrusting dispute resolution to him. It is clear that any path other than this will not lead to unity and reconciliation, and often the outcome will be the perpetuation of discord, unpleasant consequences, and missed opportunities.

3.Imamate: The Model for Affinity and Unity

The continuous biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him) clearly indicates that from the beginning of his call, he was sensitive to the issue of leadership and Imamate and considered the welfare of Muslims dependent on the matter of succession. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was well aware that in the near future, discord and division would emerge concerning Imamate. Therefore, at every opportunity, he warned about it, from the "Day of the House" when he gathered his relatives for the first public call, to the grand assembly of Ghadir and the final days of his life. The Prophet (peace be upon him) considered the management of leadership as divine and, with a prophetic logic, endeavored to safeguard the Islamic community from deviation and division in this matter, cautioning society against any decision-making regarding it. He knew well that societal interference in this matter would tear Islam apart and lead to social, political, and religious disarray. Hence, he always strived to prevent and remedy this affliction. Among the prophetic directives, some are explicitly aimed at devising solutions to prevent discord and deviation in the Muslim community. Examples include the "Tradition of Thaqaalayn," the "Tradition of the Ark," and the "Tradition of the Iman," which are among the most significant commonalities between Shia and Sunni traditions, acknowledged by all as authentic.

¹¹ Nisa: 65

¹²Nisa: 59

3.1 The Tradition of Thaqalayn

The tradition of Thaqalayn has been narrated multiple times and in various contexts from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and it has been transmitted in numerous authentic ways acceptable to both Shia and Sunni sources. Some research sources have counted the narrators of the tradition of Thaqalayn to be more than thirty companions¹³ and esteemed scholars and traditionists of Sunni Islam who have transmitted this tradition in their gatherings have counted them to be more than one hundred and eighty individuals.¹⁴ Valuable efforts have also been made to prove the continuity of this tradition.¹⁵ Even if someone does not accept the continuity of this tradition, they can never disregard its authenticity because its fame and external indications are such that one can be certain of its issuance. Ibn Hajar Haytami, after reporting the chains of narration of the tradition of Thaqalayn and acknowledging the authenticity of some of them, has stated that the number of companions who narrated this tradition is twenty-some.

The Tradition of Thaqalain

The tradition of Thaqalain is a famous and oft-quoted tradition from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) that emphasises the importance of following the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them). The tradition is narrated by numerous companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and is recorded in both Sunni and Shia sources.

Some research sources have estimated the number of companions who narrated the tradition of Thaqalain to be more than thirty¹⁶, and the number of Ahle Tasannun

¹³Sayyid Hussein Tabatabai Borujerdi in "Jami' Atradition al-Shi'ah": 1:46 and 61; Ali Husayni Milani, "Nafahat al-Azhar", 1:185

¹⁴ Ibid, 1/46

¹⁵ Ali Husayni Milani, "Nafahat al-Azhar", 1:186

¹⁶ Refer: Tabatabai Boroujerdi, Seyyed Husain, Jame Atradition Shia, 1/46 and 61; Hosseini Milani, Ali, Nafahat al-Azhar, 1/185

scholars and traditionalists who have narrated this tradition in their tradition collections to be more than one hundred and eighty.¹⁷

There have been many valuable efforts to prove the continuous transmission of the tradition of Thaqaalain.¹⁸

Even if someone does not accept the continuous transmission of this tradition, they can never ignore its authenticity, because the fame of this tradition and its external evidence are such that one can be sure of its narration.

Ibn Hajar Haythami, after reporting the chains of transmission for the Tradition of Thaqaalain and also acknowledging the authenticity of some of them, has stated the number of companions who narrated this tradition to be more than twenty and has written:

"Then know that for the tradition of holding fast to it (the Quran and the Ahlul Bait), there are many chains of transmission that have been narrated from more than twenty companions."¹⁹

What adds to the strength of this tradition is its presence in the Sahihs, Musnads, and Mu'ajams; works such as Sahih Muslim²⁰, Sunan of Tirmidhi²¹, Mustadrak of Hakim²², and Musnad of Ahmad²³.

According to the view that considers all the traditions of the two books of Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari to be authentic, this tradition will be one of the most authentic ones.

¹⁷ Tabatabai, Borujerdi, Haj Agha Hossein, *ibid.*, 1/46

¹⁸ Hosseini Milani, Ali, *ibid.*, 1/186

¹⁹ Ibn Hajar, Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Sawa'iq al-Muharqa, p. 150

²⁰ Nishaburi, Muslim, Sahih, 122/7-123

²¹ Tirmidhi, Muhammad, Sunan, 621/5-622

²² Hakim Neishaburi, Muhammad, al-Mustadrak Ali al-Sahiheen, 3/148

²³ Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad, Musnad, 17/3, 26, 59

Hakim Nishapuri in Mustadrak, after narrating a version of the Tradition of Thaqaalain, explicitly declares its authenticity based on the condition of the two Sheikhs (Bukhari and Muslim).²⁴

Ibn Kathir also acknowledges the authenticity of the tradition and explicitly writes: And it is confirmed in the Sahih that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny) said in his sermon at Ghadir Khumm:

'Indeed, I am leaving among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my progeny...' ²⁵

Nasir al-Din al-Albani, after narrating the Tradition of Thaqaalain with the title "Tradition of the Progeny, acknowledges its authenticity and enumerates various evidence and reports for it.²⁶

Based on this, the Dar al-Taqrīb of Egypt published a treatise entitled "Tradition of Thaqaalain" written by Muhammad Qawam al-Din Qumi Washnavi, which collects many of the evidence and chains of transmission for this tradition from Sunni sources. Dar al-Taqrīb explicitly states that the author has taken the path of wisdom and moderation in collecting this tradition.²⁷

The reports of this tradition in Shia sources are also so many that there is no doubt about continuous transmission. With a simple software search, a long list of its sources and narrations can be obtained. To the extent that the author of Wasail al-Shia explicitly states:

"It has been narrated on the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) by both the Ahle Tasannun and the Shia that he (peace be upon him and his

²⁴ Hakim Neishaburi, Muhammad ibid.

²⁵ In Kathir, Ismail bin Umar, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azeem,

²⁶ 122/4 Albani, Muhammad, Series of Al-Atradition Sahih, 357/4-355.

²⁷ Qumi Washnavi, Qawam al-Din Tradition Saqlain, Muqaddame Dar al-Taqeeb, p. 3.

progeny) said: 'Verily, I am leaving behind among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my progeny my Ahlul Bait. If you hold fast unto them, you will never go astray. They will not separate from each other until they return to me at the Hawd (the fountain in Paradise).'"²⁸

It should not be forgotten that the tradition of Thaqaalain has been narrated with different words and texts. In some traditions, the word 'Itrah' is used, in others, the word 'Ahlul Bait', and in some, both are mentioned together.

However, it should be noted that all of these words and texts speak of the same reality, namely, holding fast to the Holy Quran and the 'Itrah or the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them). The 'Itrah is not only interpreted as the Imams in Shia and Ahle Sunnah tradition sources²⁹, but also Ahle Sunnah scholars have accepted this interpretation.³⁰

Without a doubt, if the goal is to find common ground for reconciliation between different Islamic faiths, one of the most important and prominent commonalities between the two sects is the tradition of Thaqaalain. As such, prominent jurists such as Ayatollah Boroujerdi previously guided the Dar al-Taqrīb on this basis, and many great scholars have considered the way to unity and reconciliation to be through referring to this tradition.³¹

²⁸ Hurr Ameli, Muhammad bin Hassan, *Tafseel Wasa'il Al-Shi'a*, 34-3.

²⁹ For example, see: Juwayni, Ibrahim, *Fara'id al-Simtayn*, 1:317-318; Tabarsi, Ahmad ibn Ali, *Ihtijaj*, 1:149; Subat ibn Jawzi, Yusuf, *Tadkhirat al-Khawass*, p. 27.

³⁰ Hosseini Milani, Ali, *Nafahat al-Azhar*, 3-347

³¹ As an example, the first volume of *Jami' Ahādīth al-Shī'ah*, by Ayatollah Boroujerdi, proposes the basis of intellectual reference based on the Tradition Thaqaalain. Ayatollah Safi Golpaygani wrote the valuable work *Al-Amaan Al Ummah Minal Zalal Wal Iktelaf* on the same basis. Ustad Ayatullah Hosseini Milani, in the preface to *Ghadir: Aakhereen Jaayegah Elan Ummawi*, pp. 13-17, presents the plan of unity based on the Tradition Thaqaalain from his great-grandfather Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Hadi Milani. For more information, see: Hosseini Milani, Ali, *Jawahir al-Kalām*, 14:347-348.

Without a doubt, any solution in the field of rapprochement that is separate from the Prophetic solution is an effort in the face of the text, and it will not lead anywhere.

The most important points that can be derived from the tradition of Thaqaalain are:

- The obligation to follow both, the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them)
- The continuity of both the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) until the Day of Judgment
- The exclusivity of salvation from all kinds of misguidance in these two paths of guidance
- The inseparability of the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them)
- The knowledge of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them)
- The unconditional obedience to the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them)
- The infallibility of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them)

All these points indicate the Imamate, and they deny any non-infallible example from the Tradition.

Of course, if there was any proof or guidance for getting rid of discord other than the Holy Quran and the progeny of Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him and his progeny) would have mentioned it. But the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) did not do this; rather, he (peace be upon him and his progeny) only left these two trusts. The tradition of Thaqaalain clearly states that any path other than referring to the Imamate of the Thaqaalain will lead to deviation and separation from the religion. It also clearly says that the Imamate is the axis of salvation and the remover of troubles; because if it were not for this, the exclusivity of guidance in the Holy Quran and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) would not be correct. And if there was a way other than the

Imamate of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them), it should have been mentioned alongside the Holy Quran. Based on this, if the Ummah does not gather around the axis of the Imams and their words and actions, incorrect desires and false whims will enter the religion, and differences will increase by the day, and religious unity will never be achieved.

In addition to the previous discussions, many Sunni scholars believe that the tradition of Thaqalain indicates the authority of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them)³². Their authority is the best criterion for the centrality of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) and their words and deeds in rapprochement and unity. This means that if the entire Ummah refers to them and considers their statements as guidelines, disputes and differences will be reduced, and reconciliation followed by unity will be achieved. In this regard, many Sunni scholars have explicitly stated that:

“The jinn and mankind are only called the 'two weighty things' ... and the Book and the Progeny (Ahlul Bait peace be upon him) have been likened to them in that the religion is rectified and made prosperous by them, just as the world is made prosperous by the two weighty things.”³³

The Tradition of Safinah

In a well-known tradition from the Prophet, it is narrated that he said: “The similitude of my Ahlul Bait is like the ark of Nuh. Whoever embarks upon it is saved, and whoever stays away from it is drowned.” This tradition has been quoted in many Shiite and Sunni sources and valuable research have been carried out around it.³⁴ Allamah Mir Hamid Husain has

³² Ibid., Nafhat al-Azhar, 270-272/2

³³Zamakhshari, Mahmud, al-Fa'iq, 170/1; Qari Ali Mirqat al-Mafatih, 593/5.

³⁴ For example, see: Kanturi, Mir Hamid Husain, 'Abaqat al-Anwar - Tradition al-Thaqalain, 705/2 onwards. Also see: Hosseini Milani, Ali, Nafhat al-Azhar, vol. 4

conducted valuable research on it, examining the narrations of around one hundred traditionalists.³⁵ Among them are individuals such as Ibn Idrees Shafi'i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj (the author of Sahih Muslim), Abu Ya'la al-Mawsili, Tabari, Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Hakim al-Nishapuri, Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tabarani, Tha'labi, Ibn Abdul Barr, Shahrdaylami, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, and others. Al-Hakim al-Nishapuri has cited this tradition with two chains of transmission and initially stated that this tradition is authentic according to the criteria of Sahih Muslim.³⁶ Shams al-Din al-Sakhawi collected several traditions from the Sahifa that were narrated through various chains of transmission from companions such as Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Abdullah ibn Zubayr, and Ibn Abbas. He also mentioned the names of those who recorded these traditions in their works under each tradition. Sakhawi shows that the chains of transmission of these traditions strengthen each other. Ibn Hajar Makki has called the chains of transmission of this tradition numerous and, like Sakhawi, has considered some of them to strengthen others.³⁷

This tradition has also been narrated abundantly in Shia sources. Allamah Majlisi has dedicated a chapter on the virtues of Ahl -al-Bayt (peace be upon him)³⁸ in which he has narrated these traditions from sources such as Ihtijaj al-Tabarsi, Amali of Shaykh Tusi, Kamal al-Din of Shaykh Saduq, and other tradition sources.

The understanding of the tradition and its meaning will be revealed by considering the story of Hazrat Nuh (peace be upon him)'s ark and the event of the flood of chastisement. Therefore, it is appropriate to review the characteristics and history of the ark before explaining the similarity of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) of the

³⁵ Refer Kanturi, Mir Hamid Husain, Ibid 705-708

³⁶ al-Hakim al-Nishapuri, Muhammad, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn, 343/2 and 15."

³⁷ Ibn Hajar, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, p. 152. For the authenticity and validity of this tradition, see also: the same author, al-Manah al-Makkiyyah, p. 535; Badakhshani, Muhammad, Nuzul al-Abrar, p. 33.

³⁸ 1. Majlii, Mohammad Baqir, Bihar Al-Anwar, 23/104

Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) to Hazrat Nuh (peace be upon him)'s ark:

1. Hazrat Nuh (peace be upon him)'s ark was built according to the divine command and under the guidance of Hazrat Jibrael (peace be upon him). Therefore, all its specifications were calculated according to the events, and any error or mistake was ruled out, and it flawlessly brought everyone to the shore of salvation:

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا

And make the ark before Our eyes and (according to) Our revelation...³⁹

أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا

So, We revealed to him, saying: Make the ark before Our eyes and (according to) Our revelation⁴⁰

2. Ignoring Noah's ark and mocking it had an unpleasant consequence, and God Almighty avenged it:

وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرْءٌ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ ۗ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُونَ مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ

And he began to make the ark; and whenever the chiefs from among his people passed by him they laughed at him. He said: If you laugh at us, surely, we too laugh at you as you laugh (at us).⁴¹

3. This ship was directly managed by the command of the Lord of the Universe, and its every movement and stillness was with the name and permission of Allah, by the command of the Almighty, and under Divine supervision. Therefore, it did not need any other factor to bring its companions to the shore of salvation:

³⁹ Surah Hud, verse 37

⁴⁰ Surah Muminoon, verse 27

⁴¹ Surah Hud, verse 38

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا

In the name of Allah be its sailing and its anchoring⁴²

تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا

Sailing, before our eyes.⁴³

4. Hazrat Nuh's (peace be upon him) ark was the only way to salvation for the nation, and those who rebelled against it did not get anywhere. Even Hazrat Nuh's (peace be upon him) son, who ignored his father's warnings and ridiculed the call to "Embark with us"⁴⁴ with "I will seek refuge on a mountain,"⁴⁵ had no fate but destruction; because the Divine Will was to follow Hazrat Nuh (peace be upon him), and the only way to salvation was in his ark as He said:

قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَجَمَ ۖ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ

“Nuh said: There is no protector today from Allah's punishment but He Who has mercy; and a wave intervened between them, so he was of the drowned.”⁴⁶

From the comparison of the mentioned characteristics with the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny), it can be concluded that the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) also, with the divine command and will, without any error or mistake, hold the helm of the guidance of mankind and they are the only way to salvation of the nation.

Therefore, whoever ignores them or chooses another way to be saved and freed from corruption will undoubtedly go astray and drown in the storms of his time.

⁴² Surah Hud, verse 41

⁴³ Surah Qamar, verse 14

⁴⁴ Surah Hud, verse 42

⁴⁵ Surah Hud, verse 43

⁴⁶ Surah Hud, verse 43

From comparing the two traditions of 'Ifteraq al-Ummah' (breaking up of the nation) and "Safinah," the leadership of the Imams of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) for the salvation of the nation from division can be derived. The tradition of Safinah correctly identifies the unity of the nation around the Imams of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) as the only way to salvation and invalidates any other path.

Sibt ibn Jawzi narrated from Ameerul Momeneen (peace be upon him): "We are the lights of the heavens and the earth, the arks of salvation, and in us is hidden the knowledge. To us is the destination of all matters, and with our Mahdi (a.t.f.s.), the arguments are cut off. He is the Seal of the Imams and the Saviour of the Nation."⁴⁷

The Tradition of Safety

The centrality of Imamate in preventing division is very clear and evident in the tradition "My Ahlul Bait are safety for my nation" or "My Ahlul Bait are safety for the people of the earth." This tradition, on which Shia and Sunni agree, has been narrated from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) with various chains of transmission and wordings, which indicates the frequency of its transmission. Al-Hakim al-Nishapuri, in a tradition that he also acknowledged as authentic, narrates from Ibn Abbas that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

"The stars are a safety for the people of the earth from drowning, and my Ahlul Bait are a safety for my nation from division. So, if a tribe from the Arabs contradicts them, they will differ and become the party of Satan. This is a tradition with a sahih chain of transmission, and they did not come out of it."⁴⁸

Shams al-Din al-Sakhawi, in his book "Istijalab Irtiqa' al-Ghuruf", dedicated a chapter entitled "The Chapter of Safety in Their (the Ahlul Bait's) Remaining and Salvation in Following Them" to these traditions, and he mentioned some of them, including the narration of al-Hakim.⁴⁹ Ibn Hajar al-Makki considered this category of traditions to be numerous, and then he mentioned four narrations, including the

⁴⁷ Sibt ibn Jauzi, Yusuf, Tazkira al-Khwass 130

⁴⁸ Hakim al-Nishapuri, Muhammad, al-Mustadrak Ali al-Sahiheen, 149/3

⁴⁹ Sakhawi, Muhammad, Istijalab Irtiqa' al-Ghuruf, p. 4

narration of al-Hakim.⁵⁰ Allamah Mir Hamid Hussain has collected a large number of these traditions, along with evidence from the sayings of the Companions and Sunni scholars about them, and Allamah Amini has also collected a part of it in his book "Siratuna wa Sunnatuna".⁵¹

4. Tabari, Ibn Athir, Ibn Abi al-Hadid, and others have narrated in another tradition that Ameerul Momeneen (peace be upon him) introduced himself and the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) as the security of the Ummah on the day of the Shura, and in a brilliant sermon he said:

Praise be to Allah who sent Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) as a prophet from among us and sent him as a messenger to us. We are the family of Prophethood, the source of wisdom, the security of the people of the earth, and the salvation of those who seek it. We have a right if it is given to us, we will take it, and if it is restricted from us, we will ride the camels' rumps even if the journey is long⁵²

Shia tradition scholars have also collected these traditions in their tradition corpus; to the extent that Allama Majlisi has dedicated a chapter to these traditions.⁵³ Shaykh Saduq has narrated this tradition with multiple chains of transmission.⁵⁴ He narrates in Uyun Akhbar al-Reza from Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and his pure ancestors that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "The stars are a security for the people of the sky and my progeny is a security for my Ummah."⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ibn Hajar, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad, al-Sawa'iq al-Muharqa, p. 152

⁵¹ Refer: Amini, Abdul Husain, Siratuna and Sunnatuna, p. 38-45

⁵² 1. See: Tabari, Muhammad bin Jarir, dated 4/236; Ibn Athir, Ali Ibn Muhammad, Al Kamal, 3/74; Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Abdul Hamid bin Hibatullah, Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah, 1/195 and 19/134 and...

⁵³ Refer: Majlisi, Mohammad Baqir, Bihar Anwar, 310-27-308. It should be mentioned that some of these traditions were issued to express the authority of the Infallible Imams (peace be upon him) and that if there is no authority among the ummah, the world will be destroyed; Some also refer to his formative guardianship, and others to the aspect of Imams' guidance and protection of the Ummah from deviance difference

⁵⁴ Refer: Saduq, Muhammad bin Ali Al-Ala al-Sharia, p. 174; Ibid, Kamaluddin, 205/1-206 and other cases.

⁵⁵ Ibid; Akhbar ar-Reza 2/27

Sheikh Tusi also narrated two traditions with two chains in his *Amali*, in which the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "The stars are a security for the people of the sky and my family is a security for my Ummah."⁵⁶ Similarly, in another narration from Ameerul Momeneen (peace be upon him), it has been narrated that the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said: "My family is a security for my Ummah from misguidance."⁵⁷ In some traditions, the guardianship of the Imams of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) is also considered a security from the fire of Hell.⁵⁸

The content of this tradition is also found in many other authentic Shia traditions, which on the one hand is a testimony to the tradition of Amaan, and on the other hand, clearly introduces the Imamate of the Ahlul Bait as the solution to the problem of division. For example, Hazrat Fatimah (s.a) says in the sermon of Fadak: "Allah has made our obedience a system for the religion and our leadership a security from division."⁵⁹ Also, in Ziyarat of Jamea Kabeerah⁶⁰, "With your guardianship, the word is complete, the blessing is great, and the division is turned into unity and oneness..."⁶¹. That is, with your guardianship, the unity of the word was completed, the great blessing was perfected, and the separation was transformed into unity and

⁵⁶ Tusi, Muhammad bin Hassan *Amali*, 1/265 and 388.

⁵⁷ Majlisi, Mohammad Baqir, *ibid.*, 23/123.

⁵⁸ Refer:- Saduq, Muhammad ibn Ali, *Amali*, p. 560. - Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 27, p. 88: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his progeny) said, "My Ahlul Bait are a security from the fire (of Hell)."

⁵⁹ Tabarsi, Muhammad ibn Ali. *Al-Ihtejaj* 1/99, Muhammad Baqir Majlisi *ibid.*, 29/233. In the version of *al-Ehtejaj* 'protection from division' is mentioned, but in *Bihar al-Anwar* and many other sources that he also narrated from *al-Ihtejaj* 'protection from division' is recorded. In some narrations of the sermon, it is said: "the imamate is a means of preventing division" (Muhammad ibn Ali Saduq, *Man La Yahzarul Faqih*, 3/568; *ibid.*, *Elalus Sharae*, 1/314

⁶⁰ Marhoom Allamah Majlisi considered this Ziyarat to be the most authentic in terms of chains and to include all of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them). He also considered it to have the most eloquent words, the most eloquent meanings, and the highest rank and status. Refer: *Bihar al-Anwar*, 144/99. For more information about the authenticity of this Ziyarat, see: Hosseini Milani, *Ali, Ba Pishvayane Hidayatgar*, 72-45.

⁶¹ Al-Saduq, Muhammad ibn Ali, *Man La Yahzarul al-Faqih*, 616/2; al-Tusi, Muhammad ibn Hasan, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, 100/6; al-Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, the same, 132/9 and other sources.

harmony. "In some other Ziyarats, a similar phrase is mentioned: "With you, the blessing is complete, the division is gathered, and the word is united."⁶²

In a report from Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) about the events of the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his progeny) martyrdom and the mourning of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them), it is said that Allah sent an angel to them. After greeting and praising the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) and reminding them of some of their virtues and merits, the angel gave this message:

“Then you are the people of Allah, for whom the blessing is perfected, the factions are united, and the word is united. You are His vicegerents...”⁶³

The evidence of these traditions on the centrality of the Imamate for rapprochement and unity is so clear that no fair researcher can doubt it and deny the criterion of the Imamate. According to these traditions, just as the stars are the guides of the sky, the Imams of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) are also the guides of the earth. And it is in the context of accepting their guidance that deviation and disagreement will be eliminated.

This collection of traditions presents the solution for guiding humanity and protecting them from deviation and division. It also introduces the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) the axis of security and refuge from division and misguidance. "Therefore, in order to create reconciliation, we must raise their names in society and call everyone to them.

Without a doubt, if Muslims act in accordance with these shared traditions and their religious leaders adhere to this Prophetic tradition, the project of reconciliation will find its true path.

In conclusion, it must be known that just as the Imamate was the first point of disagreement in Islam, the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his progeny) decree in

⁶²Ibn Qulway, Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Kamil al-Ziyarat, p. 527; al-Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir, the same, 99/17 and other sources.

⁶³Kulayni, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub, al-Kafi, 445-446/1

this regard is also the only way to resolve the disagreement. Referring to this tradition is the most important path to reconciliation of religious sects and unity of the Muslim nation. Throughout history, great figures have strived to bring Muslims closer together by adhering to this tradition and have left behind valuable legacies of reconciliation.

A figure like Ayatollah Boroujerdi, in the role of the religious authority, took the first step by proposing the intellectual religious authority of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) based on the tradition of Taqleed. Scholars and leaders from the Ahle Sunnah such as Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout, Sheikh Muhammad Fadhel, and others did not deny this proposal, but rather accepted the religious authority of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) in line with it.⁶⁴ Sayyid Sharaf al-Din, who is always considered one of the pioneers of reconciliation, also accepted this proposal. The path of approximation was taken in the discussions centred around Imamate, which garnered admiration from scholars like Sheikh Salim Beshara.⁶⁵

4. Imamate-based Rapprochementstrategy

Achieving any long-term goal requires a macro plan and a structure, a detailed operational and continuous plan that considers opportunities and threats and introduces a comprehensive plan to achieve the goal. This grand plan is the strategy that measures the complexities, obstacles and developments and finally specifies the

⁶⁴ 1. The official fatwa issued by Sheikh Shaltout regarding the permissibility of adhering to the Shia school of thought was in line with this, as it was publicly discussed in a session attended by Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Mohammad Hadi Milani, along with other scholars and intellectuals. Two years later, Sheikh Al-Azhar, Mohammed Faham, emphasized this in a letter; see: Qummi, Mohammad Taqi, "Qissat al-Taqrīb Ummah Wahidah," Introduction by Sayyid Hadi Khosroshah, pp. 29, 70-69.

⁶⁵ 1. As an example, after Sayyid Sharaf al-Din addressed the discussion of Tradition Thaqaalain, Tradition Safinah, Tradition Aman, and others in his ninth visit, Sheikh Salim passionately expressed his indescribable description. "Your evidences and clear proofs have invigorated my efforts and released me from the restraint of stagnation. Your eloquent words and profound wisdom have increased me from the reins of self-restraint. Indeed, I seek in your speech the rays of wisdom, which trickle upon my heart like the purest water." "Your reasons and proofs have made me more vibrant and freed me from fatigue. Tell me more of your comprehensive words and precious wisdom, for I long for the lost pearls of wisdom in your speech; for they are clearer than pure water." (Sharaf al-Din Ameli, Abd al-Husayn, Al-Muraja'at, p. 19)

roadmap to achieve the goal. The importance of the strategy is that it prevents deviation and confusion in the approach and creates the necessary coordination between decision makers and leaders.

It seems that in the passage of time unity and rapprochement has faced various factors and variables so that it has suffered a theoretical crisis and has lost its ability and effectiveness in facing the increasing challenges of the Islamic world. In order to get out of this crisis, strategies must be drawn so that the goals and how to achieve them are brought out of ambiguity and confusion. What can be seen in this short speech is only a reference to the instrumental and interpretive strategies of unity and rapprochement that deal with the conditions and complexities. It has measured and analysed the failure factors and finally, it presents the proposed model. Of course, these patterns themselves require serious and extensive research and thinking. Now four basic strategies are mentioned in this theory:

4. 1- Returning to the roots of the conflict:

As evidenced by history, the root of all Muslim conflicts from Saqifah to Jamal and from Jamal to Safin, as well as the major religious, political and social conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis to this day, originated from differences in Imamate. So as long as this is not the main focus of the conversation, the rapprochement will not be completed.

The way of righteous predecessors (Salaf al-Saalih), the companions of the pure Imams (peace be upon them) and religious scholars was also the same, and they focused on the points of difference in order to bring the sects together and started discussions in the area of Imamate. The Nobakhti family focused more on the issues of Imamate in the confrontation with the Mu'tazilites.⁶⁶ In Baghdad, great Shiites such as Sheikh Mufid and Sayyad Morteza followed the same path in contrast to people such as Romani and Qazi Abdul Jabbar. Sheikh Mufid attended academic meetings with Abu Abdullah Jal, Ali Ibn Isa Rumani and others and had discussions with Mu'tazila men and Ahl al-Hadith about Imamate.⁶⁷ Seyyed Morteza also wrote

⁶⁶ His works in this regard are the proof of this claim; For example, see Najashi Ahmad bin Ali, Rijaal, Page 31-32; Amin Mohsin, Ayan Al-Shia, 1/134-135

⁶⁷ See: Al-Hasan Abdallah Al-Munazirat, 3/270-305 and 4/135-136.

al-Shafi'i Fil Imamah in the same direction and criticized the topics of Imamate in Kitab al-Mughni by Qazi Abdul Jabbar. According to the report of Majlisi, the first, these discussions continued until the time of Sheikh Tusi, and he would organize large meetings and hold discussions about Imamate and other principles and branches.⁶⁸ The success of Sheikh Tusi's strategy was so great that some Shafeis accepted him and brought his name in Tabaqat al-Shafei.⁶⁹ The effect of this strategy can be found in the convergence of the Mu'tazila of Baghdad with the Imamiyyah, who set aside baseless differences in many beliefs and created real convergence; as some Mu'tazila elders like this Qaba Razi, Ibn Mamlak, Ibn Rawandi, Abu Isa Warraq and Abu Hossein Sosangardi etc....

They converted to the idea of Shi'ite Imamate and tried to defend it⁷⁰, and all the Mu'tazilites of Baghdad and a large number of Mu'tazilites of Basra agreed with the Shi'ites in Favor of Ameerul Mumineen (peace be upon him)⁷¹. On the issue of compulsion (Jabr) and freewill (Tafveez), both sects, inspired by the speech of the Imams, turned to divine justice, and such a convergence was created that the movement of Etezaal, like Shia, was known as "Adliyah". So, as can be seen, the dialogue strategy had such an effect on the axis of differences that it turned the tensions between Shiites and Sunnis into a field of discussion and academic debates, and the differences gave way to common thinking and convergence in ideas.

This strategy is also found in the Hillah school. A personality like Allamah Hasan bin Youssef bin Motahhar al-Hilli⁷², who was a scholar of the topics of Imamate, always interacted and corresponded with Sunni scholars. Far from any tension and

⁶⁸ Muhammad Taqi Majlisi, Rauzah al-Muttaqeen: 14/405

⁶⁹ Abdul Wahhab Sabaki, Tabaqat al-Shafei al-Kubra: 4/126

⁷⁰ See: Najashi, Abmad bin Ali, Haman, Page 226, 375-376; Amin, Mohsin, Haman, Hamaan, 1/134-135. Also in this regard, see a group of researchers under the supervision of Mohammad Taqi Subhani, Essays in Baghdad Theological School, Page 92-94, 99-103, and 105-110 and 132-133 etc...

⁷¹ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Abd al-Hamid ibn Hibtullah, Commentary on Nahj al-Balagha, 1/7-9, Nashi Akbar, Abdullah, Problems of Imamate, Page 210-211.

⁷² It should be mentioned that the Andisheh magazine, Al-Taqarib, affiliated with the World Forum of Al-Karim Islamic Religions, has opened a file titled Pioneers of convergence and introduces one of the personalities of convergence in each publication. In its 11th edition Allama Hilli has been introduced in the topic of pioneer of convergence

conflict, he put the strategy of dialogue at the root of the dispute, i.e. Imamate, on the agenda, and in this way, he took steps to reduce the conflicts. Allamah's debate with Khwaja Nizam al-Din Abd al-Malik - the great Shafi'i scholar - in the gathering of Sultan Muhammad Khodabandeh, as well as his conversation with Sayyad Mosuli on the issue of Imamate, shows his precise strategy in resolving differences by focusing on the root of differences.

It seems that even today the convergence assemblies and unity conferences should follow the same strategy and by creating dialogues and holding conferences and academic gatherings on the issue of Imamate and other controversial topics among Islamic religions, they should find the horizon of true unity and by thinking together at the root, identify the differences between the factors of division and remove pessimism and misunderstanding from the Muslim Ummah.

4. 2- Paying attention to the Stages and Paths of Rapprochement and Unity:

Undoubtedly, Imamate has wide dimensions. Dimension as wide as all beliefs, religious laws, morals, social and political issues. Similarly, the same amount of differences and divisions in Imamate, have expanded over time and today it has reached more detailed and objective areas. It is natural that the resolution of all differences is out of our control in a short period of time, and perhaps no one will be able to eliminate all divisions until the age of reappearance. The ideal unity will be achieved only under the shadow of the government of the saviour of humanity. But reducing the differences to the extent that saves the Islamic Ummah from the fierce divisions is not only possible, but an undeniable necessity. Therefore, one should not think that deep historical and religious problems can be solved all at once. The problems that started after Saqifah have gradually developed deeper layers and have been transformed into multiple sects with the theories of various events. Rather, it is necessary to remove the areas of division step by step, taking into account the layers of differences and identifying the issues that have a direct impact on the Shia-Sunni conflicts.

The experience of the past and the performance of compassionate religious scholars also show the same. Considering the controversial issues, they identified the passages of convergence and unity and in this way, they experienced successful

results. An example of these experiences was the Ahl al-Bayt scientific authority project, which, regardless of castes, took a big step in the rapprochement of sects by identifying one of the passages of unity and rapprochement. Similar to all macro-social projects, it depends on social and historical opportunities and circumstances, and it is only by identifying the developments and taking advantage of these political, cultural and social opportunities that it is possible to open the arenas of dialogues of convergence.,

Managers and leaders of Islamic groups, especially those responsible for the rapprochement project between Shiites and Sunnis, should first of all rely on the intellectual foundations of intelligent elites in theological and jurisprudential fields and by using the brains of strategists and social science researchers, try for any opportunity to open constructive scientific dialogues regarding Imamate issues and effective religious ideas.

Choosing appropriate topics and selecting scientific literature and attractive and entertaining approaches, along with creating a moral and friendly atmosphere, can help these conversations flourish.

4. 3- Clarifying about the truth of Shia and Sunni beliefs and solving ambiguities and doubts:

The reasons for the persistence of Shia and Sunni differences can be found in two elements, one is ignorance of the facts, and the other is prejudice and unwise envy. It must be said with regret that after the collapse of the Imamate institution and the disintegration of the Islamic Ummah, evil and opportunistic agents took advantage of this chaos and in order to achieve their sinister goals, they tried to hide the facts as well as resorted to conspiracy and forgery. On the one hand, the illegitimate rulers, including the Umayyads, as well as namesake Muslims who never believed in Islam or harboured hatred for the Prophet's household, made many efforts in this direction. On the other hand, the Ghali ideologies also polluted the robe of Shiism with their lies by weaving some divine positions for the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). These factors caused the general Sunni community to not have a correct understanding of Shia and Shiism and to accuse Shia of incorrect beliefs with baseless slanders.

Many of these slanders were formed about Imamate and how the Shia religion came about and caused a lot of damage to the body of Islam.

As an example, it is said that the Shia religion originated from the personal thoughts of a Jew named "Abdullah Ibn Saba". He is the one who founded Shiism and his goal was to destroy Islam.⁷³ Books, articles and dissertations are always written about this; while this claim has never been proven and no Imami Shia recognizes Abdullah bin Saba.

In another example, it is often said that the Shiites believe that Jibrail betrayed the revelation and instead of conveying it to Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him), he conveyed it to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny); therefore, Shiites raise their hands after the Salaam of every prayer and repeat the phrase "Khan Al-Amin" (The Trustworthy betrayed) three times. This slander is so great that hearing it always brings surprise to the Shiites.

Great slanders about the Shiite belief in the distortion of the Qur'an, as well as misconceptions about the conditions and characteristics of the Imam and the like, are other topics that should be discussed carefully and patiently in academic discussions.

One of the most important strategies for approaching Imamate is to resolve these misunderstandings and prevent the spread of lies and slanders; the slanders that have divided religions and torn Muslims apart. Therefore, the introduction of the truth of Shia and the beliefs of Shiites in Imamate, as well as their loyalty to the tradition of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and the expression of the truth of Imamate, should be on the agenda of the organization, so that with this rational strategy, the roots of accusations and the causes of ambiguity can be removed. After quoting some accusations and publishing falsehoods, Kashif al-Ghita writes against Shia:

⁷³ As an example, refer to Ibn Taymiyyah, Ahmad Ibn Abdul Halim, Minhaj Sunnah al-Nabawiya, 8/478-479; Qafari, Nasir, Principles of the Shiite Religion, 1/71-72 and 78; Shusri, Abd al-Rahman, Aqeed al-Shi'a al-Athna al-Ashriya, Page 18 and other sources.

“If Muslims knew the truth about the Shiite doctrine, and were fair to themselves and their brothers, they would kill the spirit of those malicious publications that arouse anger and sow hatred.”⁷⁴

On the other hand, there are various views related to Imamate in Sunni school of thought that should be discussed. Among these views is the identification of the line of successors and those who insult the character of the Ahl al-Bayt as and their insulting reports, which Sunni sources, despite specifying their enmity and hatred towards the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) have ruled as reliable.⁷⁵ also exposing the dirty hands that have fuelled Shia-Sunni division with obscenities with titles such as: “Raafiza Slanderers, Jews of this nation, Rafida Calamity, Jewish Calamity”, “Raafiza are not Muslims”. As Allamah Amini, in a detailed discussion titled *Criticism and Reformation of the Book of Al-Mazoura*, introduced works such as *Al-Aqd al-Farid al-Intisar*, *Al-Fasal fi al-Milal* and *Al-Nahl*, *Minhaj Sunnah Shia and Sunnah*, and criticized their accusations that they fuelled division among Muslims.⁷⁶ Also, identifying those who started the grounds of this enmity and division by insulting and cursing the Ameerul Mumineen (peace be upon him), which led to the genocide and looting of the Shia and the descendants of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny).⁷⁷ Examining these action so as to shed some light on the historical facts and provide the basis for the closeness of the lovers of Ahl al-Bayt (a.s.) from among Shiites and Sunnis.

Among other examples, we can refer to the literature of the Sunnis in supporting unjust and corrupt rulers and their legitimizing oppression and aggression in the core of the administration of the Islamic nation, or the viewpoint of Tughlab.⁷⁸ Accepting the theory of Tughlab as the basic model of the caliphate in history of Islam. It has

⁷⁴ 1. Kashif al-Ghita, Mohammad Hussain, *Asl al-Shia wa Osooloha*, Page 139.

⁷⁵ Ameen, Abd al Husain Al-Ghadir, 5/470-475.

⁷⁶ Ibid: 3/453

⁷⁷ The Book *Maqaatil Al-Talibiyeen* by Abu Al Faraj Esfahani is only an example of the killing and looting of the descendants of Abu Talib (a.s.) and his son Amirul Momineen (a.s.).

⁷⁸ For example, refer to *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* by Muhammad Abu Ya’ala: pg 23, 24; Muhammad Ghazzali in *Al-Ekhtisad fil Al-Etiqad*, Page 508-509, Ibn Taymiyya, Ahmad bin Abdul Halim, *Minhaj Al-Sunnah Al-Nabawiyya*, 1/528-529, Taftazani, Masoud Sharh al-Maqasid, 5/233 and other sources.

depicted the face of Islamic civilization in history in an ugly and black way and has kept the basic principles of Quranic culture hidden. Criticizing false theories and approaching the Qur'anic conditions in government and imamate will reduce the gaps between the theory of imamate and caliphate and make the discussion about the true conditions of imamate more ready.

4. 4- The separation of political and social unity from religious unity and closeness:

Earlier in the concept, it was stated that the interaction between the followers of religions and the leaders of Muslim nations is defined in three categories, which include: the unity of Islamic nations or the cooperation of the Islamic world, Muslim social coexistence, and finally, the field of mutual understanding and closeness. The importance of political unity and social coexistence is not hidden from anyone, but mixing it with religious unity has always been a problem and not only slows down the process of social political unity, but also seriously harms religious unity and religious teachings.

First: Each of these three areas of policies and models has its own methods and trustees, and the mixing of these three areas with each other causes the audience, the trustees of the methods and goals to be unclear. Those in charge of politics pursue issues other than religious beliefs and religious tensions. Except in case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where religion and politics are defined side by side, this is not the case in most Islamic countries, and politicians do not allow scholars to enter political issues.

In many governments, politics is in the hands of seculars and non-religious movements, and basically, there is no defined place for scholars. Are the secular governments in countries such as Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan, which have a Muslim majority, and even Islamic countries such as Egypt, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, ready to make decisions based on the wishes of scholars? Basically, do the scholars themselves have an interest in this matter?

It can be said that in the national arena, it is these governments that make decisions to maintain the unity of Shiites and Sunnis or the division between them; as we have

seen, some Sunni governments, such as Saudi Arabia, have put the followers of other religions in a tight spot and have the most severe dealings with them, even if they are supposed to be able to play a role in the national field of scholars. As we can see, despite the great efforts of the Assembly on Palestine, it is still these governments that decide whether to have relations with Israel or not.

Therefore, the conferences that are held with the presence of scholars from different countries do not achieve much in this sector, despite the large expenses, and all the scholarly assemblies, conferences and activities of the political alliance without the presence of governments and politicians are ceremonial and do not have much effect.

Of course, the opposite of this story is correct; that is, political decisions and equations may affect projects of rapprochement, and perhaps a government may make a decision to enter into special relations that will facilitate the way of rapprochement between religions in the international arena, and perhaps the decisions of governments may cause a disconnect and destroy the basis of the rapprochement project or create obstacles in its path. Therefore, it is better for religious scholars to recognize the importance of religious rapprochement by distinguishing their specific tasks and put this importance on the agenda and pursue their goals in this manner.

Secondly, the simultaneous advancement and amalgamation of political unity and peaceful coexistence of Muslims with doctrinal rapprochement between sects has always led to confusion and misunderstanding among each other. For example, for socio-political interactions, the existence of integrity of beliefs and rulings is invoked to the extent that some activists in this field have considered Shia and Sunni beliefs and rulings to be ninety-five percent common.⁷⁹ While it should be noted that the strengthening of political and social harmony should not mean covering up the facts and claiming the similarity in beliefs and denying religious differences or not needing to discuss ideological and jurisprudential differences. Dependence of social coexistence and political unity on the sharing of beliefs and concealment of

⁷⁹ Al-Wahdat al-Islamiyyah, Ma'alimha va Alamaha" by Muhammad Waizzadeh Khurasani: 11/21; "Guftar Piramun Wahdate Islami wa Taqreebe Mazaahib" by Muhammad Ali Taskhiri, The Idea of Rapprochement: 8/17

differences, not only does not have an effect on the advancement of social goals and the unity of Muslim nations, rather, it gradually provides grounds for conspiracies by the enemies and causes them to forget the teachings of the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) and the historical facts of Islam.

It is clear that no wise and conscientious person opposes the principle of unity among Islamic societies. Also, no scholar and intellectual dismisses the peaceful coexistence of Muslims; rather, they consider it their duty. But why is the issue of unity sometimes met with serious warnings from religious scholars? When a prominent scholar at the highest level of Shiite leadership asserts, "All this talk of unity! But they do not understand that unity between light and darkness is impossible. Unity between Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr is impossible." There is a need to investigate and study to clarify what he means by unity. This is despite the fact that he, in his answer to the inquiry, talks about good association with the opposing sect.

Anyone who testifies to the oneness of Almighty God and the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him and his progeny) is a Muslim. Their life, honour and property are to be respected, just like those of a follower of the Jafri school of thought. It is your religious duty to behave kindly towards them, even if they consider you an unbeliever. If they treat you unfairly, do not deviate from the path of truth and justice. If any of them falls ill, visit them, and if they pass away, participate in their funeral procession. If they need your help, fulfil their need and accept the command of Allah (Glorified and Exalted be He) which states.

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا ۗ اَعْدِلُوْا هُوَ اَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوٰى

“And let not the hatred of a people force you not to be just. Be just, for it is closer to piety.”

And act according to the divine order which states:

وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَلْقٰى اِلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا

“And do not say to the one who greets you, “You are not a believer.”

It seems that the main reason for the opposition of some scholars to the projects of unity or rapprochement is the deviation in the meaning of Islamic unity and cordial relations, and its intermingling with the unity of belief and epistemological discussions, as well as undue expediency in religious affairs. It is natural for a religious scholar to be concerned when they see that under the name of Islamic unity, statements are made in which the fundamental differences in beliefs are portrayed as insignificant or the beliefs of opponents are acknowledged without any scientific basis solely based on personal interests. Considering the mission entrusted to them they may feel threatened and oppose such forms of unity. In the name of unity and rapprochement, a movement like the Umayyads is called the foundation of Islamic civilization,⁸⁰ or doctrinal facts are refuted like Tabari⁸¹ or differences are considered insignificant⁸² or individuals like Abu Hanifa, who is famous for his enmity towards Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him)⁸³, are purified and recognized as the greatest Imam and symbol of resistance against oppression, as well as the great teacher of humanity and rationality.⁸⁴ Every sympathetic scholar will feel the need for opposing the basis of such an rapprochement. It should be clarified that such a unity is defined in the framework of politics and social framework of the nation and with which religious foundations and Islamic evidences is this rapprochement compatible with?! The biographies of scholars and elders have never been aimed at purging deviants or recognizing deviations or denying facts for the sake of unity and rapprochement rather they have always pursued the path of religious rapprochement within the framework of realities.

⁸⁰ Interview with Ayatullah Ustad Haajj Shaikh Muhammad Waizzadeh Khorasani, part 24/141

⁸¹ As an example, see: "Perspective of rapprochement of Islamic religions in a conversation with Ayatollah Waizzadeh Khorasani", Haftasman, 9/10/29.

⁸² Al-Wahdat al-Islamiyyah, Ma'alimha va Alamaha" by Muhammad Waizzadeh Khurasani: 11/21; "Guftar Piramun Wahdate Islami wa Taqreebe Mazaahib" by Muhammad Ali Taskhiri, The Idea of Rapprochement: 8/17

⁸³ Abu Hanifa's hatred and opposition to Imam Ali bin Abi Talib () is reflected in Shia and Sunni sources. There are authentic hadiths about this in Shiite sources; See: Al-Kafi by Muhammad bin Yaqub al-Kulaini: 1/56-57. The story is so famous in Sunni sources that it is said that Muhammad bin Nasr Maruzi wrote a book about his opposition to Ali bin Abi Talib; See: Dhahabi, Muhammad, Seyar Aalaam al-Nubala, 38/143; Sabaki, Abdul Wahab, Tabaqat al-Shafa'iyyah al-Kubra, 2/2

⁸⁴ In this regard, refer to: Nawab, Abul Hasan, "Speech of the Honourable President of the University of Religions and Sects at the 2nd Graduation Ceremony of Dar Uloom Zahedan Graduates on June 16, 2013

Allamah Sayyad Sharafuddin, one of the greatest advocates of rapprochement, has always considered the cause of Shia distance from Sunnis to be blasphemy, contempt, insults and hypocrisy, as well as the turning away of Sunnis from the religion of Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) and disregarding their statements on the principles and branches of religion.⁸⁵ And by focusing on reviving the position of Imams of Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) and referring to the texts of Imamate and Mastership in his book “Al-Muraje’aat” he has fought against any form of blasphemy, humiliation and insults, not to confirm uniformity of belief and turn a blind eye to deviations. A contemporary jurist, who is more familiar with and devoted to unity and solidarity than anyone else, emphasizes the reference to the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) works in criticizing divisive ideologies and follows the path of rapprochement by citing traditions such as Tradition of Saqlain, Tradition of Safinah, and Tradition of Amaan⁸⁶, and not negating religious doctrines. Additionally, the late Shahid Motahhari, another advocate of rapprochement discovers the path of unity and rapprochement in his research on Al-Ghadir and Islamic unity. After quoting from Allama Amini, he discusses the topic and says:

In the preface of the eighth volume, under the title "Ghadir Unites the Ranks in the Islamic Nations", Allamah Amini begins directly discussing the role of Ghadir in Islamic unity. He strongly refutes and proves false the accusations of those who claim that Ghadir leads to further division among Muslims. On the contrary, he asserts that Ghadir eliminates many misunderstandings and brings Muslims closer to one another.⁸⁷

The Supreme Leader of the Revolution, who has always been deeply concerned about the unity of Muslims, considered the love of Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) (peace be upon him) as the centre of unity not the purification of their enemies. He has stated in his statements that the love of Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) and even the issue of Ghadeer can be a focal point for the unity of Islamic sects. Of

⁸⁵ Sharaf al-Din Ameli, Abdul Hossein, al-Fusul al-Muhimmah, p. 16

⁸⁶ Lamhaat Fil Kitaab Wal Hadith Wal Mazhab” by Lutfullah Safi Gulpaigani; “Amaan al-Ummah Min al-Zalaal wal-Ikhlaaf”

⁸⁷ Motahhari, Morteza, collection of works (Al-Ghadir and Islamic Unity), 25/3

course, unity does not mean giving up religious beliefs and accepting beliefs of other sects.⁸⁸

Summary and Conclusion

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) always warned against the occurrence of discord among the Ummah and provided solutions to avoid it. The prophetic tradition "The division of the Ummah" warned against discord and predicted near future events. Hadees such as "Tradition of Thaqalain" "Tradition of Safinah" "Tradition of Amaan" and other traditions introduced the meaning and solution for unity.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) knew very well that the beginning of division and separation would be conflicts and disagreements in the Caliphate and Imamate, and therefore he (peace be upon him and his progeny) pinpointed this issue and by focusing on the root of the division and by clarifying and expressing the truth in this matter, he gave his orders and solutions around the axis of Imamate.

It is clear that despite the Prophet's (peace be upon him and his progeny) luminous words for liberation from discord and setting goals and directions, failure to pay attention to them will lead to striving against the divine text making achieving the goal complicated and difficult. Therefore, achieving unity and creating rapprochement must be done by referring to the prophetic teachings.

The theory of unity and rapprochement with Imamate as the central axis of creating the ultimate scientific discourse in Imamate believes that it leads to the elimination of religious misunderstandings and enlightenment in religious truths. It is believed that the discovery of truths and elimination of misunderstandings at the root of differences will have desirable effects on social and political life and can also neutralize social and political conflicts.

Of course, it is clear that achieving ideal unity is unattainable until the era of reappearance. However, to the extent of religious commitments and within the limits

⁸⁸ Khosropanah, Abdul Hossein, The intellectual system of Ayatollah Uzma Khamenei, 1/44

of abilities and financial resources, striving to overcome the turmoil in the Islamic world today is essential. At the very least, preventing strategies that mislead believers and cause confusion in distinguishing between right and wrong and addressing religious misunderstandings, seems necessary.

The imamate-oriented approach to closeness is not limited to general recommendations, but it is based on the belief that with the consensus of caring scholars of different Islamic religions, we can move forward and lay a clear plan for following the foundation of closeness. Undoubtedly, clear policies and consistent and sincere actions in the light of the Quran and Ahlul Bait (peace be upon them) will untie the ties of the Islamic Ummah's differences and will make the horizon of cooperation and coexistence of Muslims more open.

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