

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > Leading The Ummah > Chapter 1: The Philosophy Of Recognizing The Imams (as)

Chapter 1: The Philosophy Of Recognizing The Imams (as)

Unity of Muslims is a recognized fact and no wise scholar would ever doubt its significance since Muslims, who follow one divine book and share a common understanding of Islamic laws, do not have to be enemies of one another.

In the past, this unity was not considered crucial, whereas now, that the satanic troops of universal oppression and colonialism have entered the Islamic territories to expand their domination over Muslims, no wise man ever would undermine the need for this unity.

Which brave Muslim could ever look at the Muslims' calamity in Palestine, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kashmir, Chechnya or other parts of the world and remain silent and indifferent?

The Muslims of the world make up one fourth of the world's population. They are among the richest populations of the world in the areas of manpower, mineral deposits and rich Islamic culture. Such a population, rich in material and spiritual resources, could play a significant role in the world politically and can help other nations financially disregarding geographical boundaries which have been set up by the opponents of the Islamic unit. They could better their conditions through cultural and economic exchanges and could, in this way, resume their previous supremacy. However, the issue of recognition of the Imams must not hinder this unity.

At times, deceived or gullible youth severely criticize attempts by devoted scholars in the study of Islamic unity by saying:

"The discussion over whether caliphate belonged to Abu Bakr or Ali (as) is a useless issue, for neither we can turn back time, nor will the Prophet's true, genuine successor be brought back to life to receive what he deserved and rise to the throne of Caliphate. So it would be better to bring this debate to an end and concentrate on other issues!"

The holders of such a view have ignored the brilliant consequences of such discussions, contending that

they are absurd and act as obstacles which complicate Islamic unity. We think that such a view is deeply rooted in the lack of recognition of the Imams and stems from a tendency towards Sunnism or Wahabism. If we aimed at identifying the Prophet's successor vis-à-vis a false substitute, then such discussions could rightly be considered as unproductive and obstacles in the way of Islamic unity.

In Shi'ite ideology, where Imamate is considered as the continuation of Prophethood, such discussions are of utmost significance. According to this ideology, an Imam's tasks would not encompass only the above affairs; rather, an Imam would be able to elucidate divine rules and Quranic issues. He has the knowledge required to classify between matters Islamically acceptable or unacceptable after the Prophet's death.

Who can be an Islamic authority? Who can teach us the Islamically recommended tasks and the prohibited ones? Who can we resort to when we are faced with an issue which was not been brought up during the Prophet's time? Whose judgment can we rely on? 1Who should the Islamic Ummah refer to when they are faced with difficulty in interpretating the Quran? Who should they follow as their guide? 2

This is where the question of the Prophet's successor becomes a burning and urgent issue, because under such circumstances an Imam guides the Ummah on issues of Islamic knowledge, principles, and Islamic commands. We would never reach a desired result unless we identify the true Imam with valid reasoning.

If Muslims shared all the Islamic principles and practical laws, the need for an Imam would never present itself so urgently. However, there are disagreements among Muslims in nearly every Islamic issue.

Now what is our task? We who have appeared on the face of the earth fourteen centuries after the Prophet (S)? Do we have to refer to this or that Sahabi (for instance Abu Hanifah or Shafei) when we want to settle an Islamic issue or do we refer and resort to Imam Ali and his dearest offspring's who are, in the belief of Shiites, the most sacred, learned and honorable ones and who are appointed to their positions by the Prophet (S).

Answers to such questions are presented in the discussions on the issues of Welayat (the Imam's successors) and the recognition of Imams. The results of such investigations would put an end to our confusion and bewilderment.

Even if we put aside the question of the caliphate and the issue of government and leadership of the Innocent Imams, which was their natural right, only an investigation into the true identity of the Prophet's successor is of utmost significance, and is related to the Muslims` prosperity.

For this reason, we have to sum up the issues which we will take up in the next chapters: suppose we were to put aside the issues of caliphate and the Islamic leadership, we can firmly assert that in accordance with the Prophet's explicit confirmations and according to the Holy Quran, after the Prophet's passing the only scientific and religious sources for Muslims are the Innocent ones.

This is because the Prophet at different junctures had referred to the unbreakable bond between the holy Quran and the Innocent ones:

"O People! I will soon join God. I will leave with you two valuable things: one is the Book of God and the other one is my kinfolk. The Book of God is the divine inspiration and the cord of salvation which has stretched to the Earth from the sky and my kinfolk are my family members and my God has informed me that the two will never separate"

On the days of Arafah and Ghadir the great Prophet, who was unwell at the time, announced in front of a huge crowd of his sahabah (close followers)

"Ali is with Quran and the Quran is with Ali the two will never separate"3

Documents for narration of Thaqalain are too numerous to be listed here. The cleric Allamah Mir Hamed Husain, in the twelfth volume of his book, called "Abaghat Al-Anwar", which was printed in India, has presented these documents. This book was reprinted in six volumes in Isfahan several years ago.

A pamphlet has also been published on this issue by Darol Taqrib of Egypt. In this regard, Sheikh Shaltut, the religious leader of Al-Azhar, has nulled the necessity of following any of the four religions and has issued the verdict that every Muslim could follow any of the four.

Here is his Islamic verdict:

He was asked: some believe that every Muslim has to follow one of the four religions in his prayers and transactions; however, Shi'ites of twelve Imams and Zaidies are not among the four. Your honor, do you believe in such a segregation and do you advise people not to follow Shi'ism?

Concerning this, he answered:

- 1. Islam has not deemed it compulsory for its followers to follow a specific religion (in minor issues). We believe every Muslim can follow any religion which is authentic. Any follower of the four religions can change his or her religion freely. There is no prohibition in this regard.
- 2. The Ja'fari religion, known as the 12-ers the base of Shi'ism, is one of the religions which can easily be adopted like other religions of Islam.

Thus, it is appropriate for all Muslims to be aware of this fact and stop showing prejudice against a specific religion. This is because God's religion and tradition is not dependent on a specific religion. The Islamic leaders are highly capable of deducing Islamic commandments on tradition (Ijtihad). All of them are loved by God. Those who are not well–informed in religious issues are allowed to follow learned authorities and carry out what they have stipulated in their book; and in this regard there is no difference between prayers and transactions4.

- 1. Details of such topics will be dealt with in the second section.
- 2. Idem
- 3. .Al-Savaeq Al-Mohraga, Ibn Hajar, second section chapter nine, the narration 42, p. 57.
- 4. Resalat Al-Islam, printed in Egypt, no 3 eleventh tear.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/leading-ummah-jafar-subhani/chapter-1-philosophy-recognizing-imams#comment-0