

Introduction

The status quo of the Muslims nowadays is truly pitiful. Nations have assailed them just as hungry people assail a coveted meal following the success of imperialism in disseminating discord and dissension among the members of one and the same nation. These nations have expanded the gap between the Muslims in order to achieve their vicious objectives which cannot be achieved except by Muslims colliding with each other.

It has been very difficult for the enemies of Islam to see the blessed Islamic resurgence overwhelming the hearts of the members of our Islamic nation. There have been efforts to let the Qur'ān and the Sunnah take charge of our countries especially after the success of one such attempts which caused international arrogance to be gravely shocked. Such arrogance remains maintaining its efforts to put an end to such efforts through various methods and means.

During the last few years, these folks have been stirring sectarian differences and schisms among the Shī'ahs and the Sunnis. This task has been vested upon the agents of imperialism in our Islamic world especially the rulers of Hijaz [Saudi Arabia] who dominate the holy places under the pretext of “serving both sacred precincts” .

In turn, they have instructed their hired hands from among the preachers, who are appointed in order to praise their rulers throughout the Arabian Peninsula and abroad, to write and publish various books to attack the beliefs of the Shī'ahs and to charge them with apostasy, accusing them of sharing their beliefs with the Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians.

In addition to such nuances which unfortunately caused many simple-minded people, as well as fanatics, to fall prey to such vicious attacks, having believed, without first researching and verifying the venom with which such books are filled. Millions of copies of such books have been distributed all over the Islamic world...

Like other Muslims, I was exposed to this campaign which was undertaken by some movements the objective of which is only to “protect the Sunnis from the Shī'ite danger,” according to their claims, to “bring them awareness about the beliefs of this sect which stems out of Judaism and Zoroastrianism,” as

they claim.

In the beginning, I resented such a campaign due to the rude and nonsubjective method whereby they describe the Shī'ah faith and which I also noticed to often rely on exaggeration and sensationalism. Although I was born in Palestine for a Sunni Palestinian couple, and although the vast majority of Palestinians are "followers of the Sunnah and Jamā'ah," and despite my belief then that the sect following the "Sunnah and the Jamā'ah" was the right one, yet I could not see how the Shī'ahs could be "unbelievers."

All I knew about them was their high regard for Ali ('a), that they prefer him over all other *sahābah*. But I did not know why other than the status which most Sunnis believe he is worth of, that is, his being no more than the fourth of the "righteous caliphs;" he is simply a *sahābi* whose status they equated with that of other *sahābah*, including Mu'awiyah and 'Amr ibn al-'ās.

But this "exaggeration" in raising the status of Ali ('a), in my view, did not warrant their expulsion from the Islamic creed altogether, despite many of their claims that the Shī'ahs prefer Ali ('a) over the Seal of Prophets (ﷺ), that they believe Gabriel made a mistake in bringing the divine message down, even the claim often put forth that they consider Ali ('a) as a Allāh, that they have a copy of the Qur'ān different from theirs, in addition to other such claims.

But I did not pay attention to any of that because as long as I live, I shall never forget what my theology teacher at the high school once said: "Shī'ahs are many sects some of which do, indeed, regard Ali ('a) as a Allāh. But the Shī'ah Ithna-'Ashari sect, also called the Ja'fari sect, is the closest one to the Sunnis, and those who adhere to it are Muslims." Since these words came from someone whose righteousness, piety, vast knowledge and information acquired, in addition to his moderation and subjectivity when criticizing those whose views differed from those of Islam or from his Sunni sect, these words kept ringing in my ears for many days and years.

Add to this the fact that I was very much influenced by one of my relatives who invited others to the Path of Allāh and I have no doubt in his sincerity and concern about the unity of the Muslims, Sunnis and Shī'ahs. This concept found its firm grounds in my soul till it became a de facto reality especially when I came to know that most Sunni scholars and callers of our time regard the Shī'ahs as Muslims who believe in the Unity of Allāh.

Among them is the martyr Hassan al-Banna, the martyr Sayyid Qutb, 'allāma Mawdoodi, Shaykh Muhammad Kashak, 'allāma Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazālī, Shaykh Muhammad Shaltut, Professor al-Bahansawi, al-Talmasani, Anwar al-Jundi, Hassan Ayyūb, Sa'īd Hawi, Fathi Yakun, Abu Zuhrah, Yousuf al-'Azm, [Prof. Rāshid] al-Ghannūchi and many, many others whose works I have been honored to read and which have filled the shelves of libraries frequented by a generation that is witnessing an Islamic resurgence.

Thus, no doubt ever entertained my mind that the Shī'ahs are Muslims. I did not make any distinction

between a Sunni and a Shī'ah person because I decided to overlook their differences which in no way label one of them as "Muslim" and the other as "non-Muslim", differences the details of which I did not fully know, nor was I ready to even think about them or even research due to my feeling that there was no need to conduct such researches which require digging through history and arriving at mazes which do not get anyone to reach any outcome.

I was convinced at that time that researching these differences was a norm of dissension from which one should stay away or discuss especially since both parties are Muslim. I looked upon the Sunnis and the Shī'ahs in the same light wherein I used to look at both Ali ('a) and Mu'awiyah: that they both were Muslims despite all what went on between them.

My trip to Western lands, in order to pursue my graduate study, coincided in the 1980s when this dissension intensified in heat and when many voices were raised warning against the Shī'ah creed, voices which were accompanied by charges against the Islamic revolution in Iran and against its leader who I believed was the real target of that campaign.

Quite often, I found myself the object of criticism for no reason other than my conviction that the Shī'ahs were in no way apostates. Whenever I wanted to defend myself against one assault, the next assault came more fiercely than its predecessor, so much so that someone once said to me that I had to choose one path, that is, to clearly define my sect, since I could not be both a Sunni and at the same time a sympathizer with the Shī'ahs and a supporter of the Islamic revolution in Iran because this issue, in his view, was an issue of the "doctrine", one which did not permit any compromise.

I cannot hide the fact that some hard and embarrassing moments confronted me because of my lack of knowledge of the details of the Shī'ah sect. I did not know how to respond to the claims of some people that the beliefs held by the Shī'ahs, such as Imāmate, Infallibility, Taqiyya and labeling some *sahābah* as apostates took them out of the creed altogether. I developed a great deal of interest in familiarizing myself with such "beliefs". Thus, I found myself prompted to do what many others flee from: the pursuit of the truth, in an attempt to put an end to lengthy months of doubt and puzzlement.

But how would I do that? Shall I be satisfied with what Sunni writers, who consider the Shī'ahs as apostates, have written? I had by then read many of them and was not convinced by them at all because most of such writers departed from good manners and from the scientific spirit which mandates subjectivity and the providing of evidence.

And should I be satisfied with the views of moderate Sunnis who consider the ideological differences between the Shī'ahs and the Sunnis as an artificial fuss? These include al-Ghazālī, al-Bahansawi, Izzid-Deen Ibrāhīm and others. But these views did not solve the problem. Rather, they keep it suspended where it started.

I had no choice except to seek the truth from books written by the Shī'ahs themselves. But in the beginning I dismissed this option because I thought that in their works, the Shī'ahs would support their

views from traditions narrated through their own venues which, of course, cannot be accepted by us [Sunnis].

But later I came to acquire a book titled *Al-Muraja'at*¹ as a loan from a friend of mine and with which I became familiar. Luckily, that friend, too, was like me: a seeker of the truth. In his turn, he had acquired this book from one of his Shī'ah friends who advised him to read it after my friend had requested him to give him a book that would make him familiar with the beliefs of the Shī'ahs.

Although the writer of this book, *Al-Muraja'at*, is a Shī'ah, yet he, to my great surprise, supports his arguments with regard to Shī'ah beliefs from books of tradition in circulation among Sunnis, especially both *Sahih* books. I actually found in it what encouraged me to seek the truth, the truth which puzzled and divided people.

I always used to participate with my friends in researching and discussing the contents of this book which is comprised of correspondence between a Sunni scholar, namely Shaykh Saleem al-Bishri, [then] rector of al-Azhar, and a Shī'ah Lebanese scholar, namely *imam* Sharafud-Deen Sadr ad-Deen al-'āmilī al-Mūsawī. The said correspondence revolves around the most important issues wherein the Sunnis and the Shī'ahs differ.

I do not hide the fact that what I read in that book was a great surprise to me, and I do not exaggerate when I say that it was the shock of my life. I did not expect at all to find the difference between the Sunnis and the Shī'ahs to be as I saw it depicted in that book. I discovered that I was ignorant of the [Islamic] history and of *hadith*, as is the case with anyone who tackled this subject from among those whom I saw and met, including those who had Ph.D. degrees in Shar'ā as you will see from the details of this research.

Because of the extent of the shock produced by the facts stated in that book, and despite the claim of its writer that he draws his arguments from the Qur'ān and from both *Sahih* books [of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, two of what is called *Al-Sihh al-Sitta*, the six books of authentic traditions held by the Sunnis as the most reliable], some of us started doubting the authenticity of these books, so much so that one of my friends said, "If what this Shī'ah writer claims is true, that is, there are such facts in al-Bukhārī's *Sahih* book, I shall disbelieve in all traditions narrated by al-Bukhārī from this day onward."

But he did not mean what he said. He only meant to say that it was impossible for that Shī'ah writer to be accurate. We all felt that had the contents of his book been true, this would mean a lot for us in as far as our understanding of the truth behind the difference between the Sunnis and the Shī'ahs is concerned.

It became necessary to verify the contents of *Al-Muraja'at* from our own review of al-Bukhārī's *Sahih*. Allāh did, indeed, grant us success, after exerting a great deal of effort, in coming across a copy of al-Bukhārī's *Sahih* book.

I was not at all surprised when I found in al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* all the places to which the Shī'ah writer referred. Some may wonder: "Why such emphasis on al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*?" This is so because the arguments which he derives from the Book of Allāh are often subject to interpretation, and one verse may bear more than one meaning, depending, of course, on one's own interpretation. For example, the verse saying,

***"He frowned and turned away because the blind man came to him..., etc."* (Qur'ān, 80: 1-2).**

These couple of verses do not state the name of the person who frowned, nor that of the blind man, hence the role of tradition in explaining all of that.

Thus, al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh* came to occupy the first position with regard to "authenticity" after the Book of Allāh, according to the Sunnis who held themselves bound to accept all of its contents. This is why tradition solves any differences with regard to interpreting the verses of the Glorious Book of Allāh.

Whenever I read additional books which deal with this topic, the truth kept getting clearer to me till in the end it manifested itself most gloriously in a way which accepts no doubt whatsoever.

But the question which always kept bothering me revolved around the reason behind hiding so many historical events, as well as the traditions of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), despite their authentication in the references which the Sunnis regard as reliable and which may remove a great deal of ambiguity accompanying the issue of the differences between the Sunnis and the Shī'ahs during the past centuries.

Is the method of hiding the facts, or enforcing a blackout in their regard, or creating confusion about them..., etc., can be accepted as a justification for avoiding dissension, as they claim? Is it not dissension when facts are hidden and distorted?!

When I started investigating this sensitive issue, my ultimate goal was to make sure whether the Shī'ahs are Muslims or not. I had no doubt at all that the method [of worship] of the followers of the "Sunnah and Jamī'ah" was the right one.

But after having reviewed, researched and carefully considered this matter, the result which I reached was an amazing contradiction, yet I did not hesitate for one moment to accept the fact which I discovered.

Why should I not accept it so long as there are those who support it with proofs and evidences which all are considered by the Sunnis as accepted arguments, and so long as they agree with reason which Allāh, the most Sublime, the most High, regards as evidence against all creation?

The same fact has been accepted by a good number of our students, something which irritated some fanatics and those who issued verdicts that we [Shī'ahs] are apostates, even saying that it is not permissible to reciprocate the greeting whereby we greet them [Sunnis]. They circulated against us

rumors the lightest of which was the receipt by everyone who becomes Shī'ah of \$300 from the Iranian Embassy as a reward.

As regarding al-Bukhārī's *Sahīh*, which we used as our argument against them, they said that it was a forgery and is not the true *Sahīh* of al-Bukhārī! Facing such ignorance and fanaticism on one hand, and seeing how oppressed the Shī'ahs are on the other, I was of the view to write a summary of my research then present it to every seeker of the truth so that people may review it as well.

As long as there are those who tell lies about the Shī'ahs in order to mislead others, and *there are* some people who tell such lies, that doing so is permissible, the truth is more worthy of being written and published. Despite the pains and the wounds which this book may cause to some fanatics, I ask them: "Who is to blame?!"

As for the book, which presents the views of both parties and the refutation of each with regard to the most significant issues of contention, there is no claim in it except that it is supported by proofs and arguments from what the Sunnis hold in high esteem and in which they believe, such as both *Sahīh* books of al-Bukhārī and Muslim in the first place.

So, why do they *not* blame the ignorance which prohibited them from knowing these facts? Or did their fanatical religious leaders hide such facts deliberately from them? Or why do they *not* blame al-Bukhārī and Muslim and others from among the scholars of *hadīth* with regard to what they wrote in their books, texts which caused them such a shock?! But how can this be since the Sunnis have taken upon themselves to follow everything both *Sahīh* books contain?

The sect of the Imāmīte Shī'ahs, to which we refer in this research, is the one the adherents to which believe in following the caliphate of Ali (‘a) and the rest of the twelve Imāms from among Ahlul Bayt (‘a) after the Prophet (ﷺ). As regarding other sects included under the label of "Shī'a", such as those who believe in the godhead or prophethood of Ali (‘a), or other sects, the Shī'ahs dissociate themselves from them.

So, why do some people insist that these sects are Shī'ah? And why do they and their likes undertake the circulation of such nonsense in order to mislead Muslim commoners and the ignorant ones among them? And why such shameful forgery in the history of the Muslims and in their tolerant creed?!

1. The English translation of Al-Muraja'at titled Al-Muraja'at: A Shī'ite-Sunni Dialogue was completed by Yasin T. al-Jibouri and published in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1415 A.H./1995 A.D. by Imām Hussain Foundation. A larger-size second edition of the same was then published in Qum, Islamic Republic of Iran, by Ansariyan Publications in 1422 A.H./2001 A.D., and the entire translation is available on the Internet on this web site address:

<http://www.al-islam.org/al-murajaat-shii-sunni-dialogue-sharaf-al-din-al...> [1] ___ Tr.

<https://www.al-islam.org/truth-about-shia-ithna-ashari-faith-asad-wahid-al-qasim/introduction#comment-0>

Links

[1] <http://www.al-islam.org/al-murajaat-shii-sunni-dialogue-sharaf-al-din-al-musawi>