

Part 1: Al-Ghadir and Islamic Unity

The noble book "Al-Ghadir" has raised a great wave in the Islamic world, and Islamic thinkers have paid a deep attention to it from various angles: literary, historical, theological, traditional, social, and analytical. What interests us from the social angle is Islamic unity. Islamic reformers and enlightened scholars of our era consider the unity and adherence of Islamic nations and sects as the most urgent of Islamic need, particularly under the present conditions when they are being assaulted by the enemy from every side, who is constantly employing all kinds of means to develop old offenses and invent new ones.

As we know, Islamic unity and brotherhood have principally been an important objective of Islam and of the deepest interest to the holy lawgiver of Islam, as testified by the Qur'an, and Islamic traditions and history.

For this reason, a question is raised by some as to whether or not the writing and publication of a book like "Al-Ghadir" the contents of which are anyhow the oldest of Muslim ethical topics, will not create an obstacle in the way of achieving the sacred goal and noble ideal of Islamic unity.

We consider it necessary first to clarify the main topic, that is, the meaning and scope of Islamic unity, and then explain the role of the fine book "Al-Ghadir" and its noble writer, scholar Amini (May God grant him Heaven).

[Islamic Unity](#)

What is meant by Islamic Unity? Does it mean that one religion should be chosen from among its different sects, and the rest be put aside? Or does it mean that what is held in common in all of them should be adopted, and the differences ignored, thus creating a new faith which would not resemble any of them? Or again, does it mean that Islamic unity has no relationship whatever with the unity of religions, and the meaning of Muslim unity is the union of the followers of various sects against Non-believers in spite of all their religious differences.

Those who are opposed to Muslim unity, in order to give the word «Islamic unity» an illogical and impracticable sense, call it a religious unity to defeat it at the very beginning.

Obviously the purpose of the enlightened and learned men of Islam in coining this phrase is not limiting all the sects to one religion, or adopting the common points and laying aside differences which is neither reasonable, and logical, nor desirable and practicable. Their purpose is the unification of Muslims in one line against their common enemy.

These learned men say that the Muslims have sufficient sources of conformity which could be used as a basis of a solid unity. All Muslims worship the unique God, and believe in the prophethood of the holy Prophet. Their Book is the Qur'an, and the direction of prayers is Kaaba. They perform the rites of pilgrimage together and in the same way, their prayer and fast are similar, their making of a family, their dealings, their bringing up of children and the burial of their dead are all alike. There are no differences between them in these matters except in details.

All Muslims possess a universal perspective; they have a common culture, and share a great and magnificent civilization of longstanding. The unity of perception, culture, record of civilization, perspicacity, religious beliefs, worship and devotion, and social customs and traditions, can easily make a single nation of them and create a great power before which all the world's great powers may feel humble, especially as this point has been affirmed in the context of Islam.

According to the explicit text of the Qur'an, all Muslims are brothers. and are related by means of special rights and duties. In the face of such a situation, why should the Muslims not benefit from all these wide possibilities bestowed on them by the blessings of Islam?

From the viewpoint of this group of Islamic scholars there is no necessity for the Muslims to seek reconciliation, compromise or forgiveness in their major and minor points of religious differences for the sake of Islamic unity. Similarly, there is no necessity that they should avoid discussing their differences about major and minor matters or writing books concerning them.

The only thing that is required by Islamic unity in this respect, is that they should be self-possessed enough to prevent being provoked and inflamed by hostility, or accuse one another to give the lie to each other, to scoff at one another's logic. to blame each other, or to hurt each other's feelings and go beyond the bounds of logic and reason. In fact, they should at least observe for themselves the limits that Islam has considered necessary in inviting a non-Muslim to Islam.

Some people have supposed that only the sects that differ on minor points, such as the Shafe'i and Hanafi sects can be like brothers and stand together in one line while those which differ on major points can never be like brothers at all. In the opinion of this group religious principles are an inter-related collection, or in the words of Methodists they are of the kind of minimum and maximum relationship.

The injury of one is the same as the injury of all, so, when the principle of the leadership of the Imam receives a set back and is sacrificed, the question of unity and brotherhood is negated, according to the supporters of this principle. For this reason the Shiites and Sunnis cannot shake each other's hands as brothers and stand in one line against an enemy, whoever he may be.

The answer is given to this group by the first group is: We have no reason to consider the major points as an inter-related collection or 10 follow the principle of "either all or nothing." Here the rules of "What is facilitated does not render null what is difficult", and "Not securing all does not mean abandoning all" holds true, and the way of Ali, Commander of the Faithful, is for us the best and the most instructive example. He adopted the most logical and reasonable way which was worth by his exalted position.

He left no stone unturned in order to secure what was his right. He did all that was possible to revive the principle of the «Imamate», but he never followed the motto of "either all or nothing". On the contrary, he used the motto of "not securing all, does not mean abandoning all" as the basis of his actions.

Ali did not rise against those who deprived him of his right, and his refraining from rising was not due to compulsion, but a well-considered and voluntary step. He had no fear of death, so why did he not rise? The worst was that he would be killed. Being killed in God's way was his utmost wish. He was always longing for martyrdom, and he was more familiar with it than a child is with the mother's breast. In his correct reckoning, Ali had reached this conclusion that the interest of Islam in those circumstances was to abandon the idea of rising and resort to co-operation. He himself repeatedly clarifies this point.

In one of his letters to Malek Ashtar (letter 62 of Nahjul Balaghah) he writes: «At first I withdrew my hand until I saw that some people turned back from Islam, and invited men to annihilate the religion of Muhammed. I feared then that if I did not rise to aid Islam and Muslims, I would witness a split or destruction in Islam the calamity of which would be far greater than foregoing a short period of caliphate.»

In the Council of Six, after Othman was nominated and selected by Abdo-Rahman-ben-Owf, Ali explained his protest as well as his readiness for co-operation in the following words (Nahjul Balaghah Sermon 72):

"You yourselves know that I have more merit for the Caliphate than all others. And now I swear to God that as long as the affairs of the Muslims are in order, and my rivals are content with leaving me aside and only I am being treated unfairly, I will show no opposition and will submit."

These are the evidences that Ali rejected the principle of "either all or nothing" in this case. There is no need to elaborate Ali's way and method any further. This matter is abundantly testified by history.

Scholar Amini

Now is the time to see to which group Scholar Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini, the noble writer of Al-Ghadir belongs, and what he thinks. Did he consider the unity of Muslims acceptable only within the circle of the Shiite sect, or did he think that the circle of Islamic brotherhood should be more extensive? Did he believe that Islam which is verified with the confession of the creed of the two Muslim testimonies, willy-nilly creates certain rights of Muslims in connection with other Muslims, and preserves the bond of

brotherhood between all Muslims, as affirmed explicitly in the Qur'an?

Scholar Amini himself has given thorough consideration to this point that he must clarify this question and also whether the role of "Al-Ghadir" in Islamic unity is affirmative or negative. And in order not to be misjudged by critics, including those who appear for the opposite side, and those who pretend to belong to the group favoring the idea, he has repeatedly offered explanations and clarified the matter.

Scholar Amini is an adherent of Islamic unity, which he regards with broad-mindedness and enlightenment. He has expounded this idea on various occasions within the covers of Al-Ghadir, parts of which are quoted below:

In the preface to volume one, he makes a brief reference to the role that Al-Ghadir will have in the Islamic World, and says: "We consider all this as a service to the religion and to the elevation of the word truth, and revival of the Islamic community."

In vol. 3, page 77, after quoting the falsehoods of Ibn Timieh, Alussi and Ghassimi to the effect that the Shiite look upon some members of the Prophet's household such as Zaid-bin-Ali-bin-Hussein as enemy, says under the heading "criticism and amendment" These lies and accusations sow the seeds of depravity and rouse hostility between Muslim communities, producing disunity and dispersion, contrary to the interests of all Muslims...

In Vol. 3 page 268 he quotes the accusation of Sayed Rashid Reza against the Shia sect to the effect that the Shias are pleased at any defeat that the Muslims suffer, so much so that they in Iran celebrated the victory of Russia against the Muslims and says: These lies are forged by people like Sayed Muhammed Rashid Reza. The Shias of Iran and Iraq who are apparently accused, as well as the Orientalists, explorers and foreign representatives in Islamic countries etc. who have frequented Iran and Iraq, know nothing at all of this happening.

The Shias without exception have a respect for the population, blood, honour and property of all Muslims, both the Shiite and Sunnis, and whenever and wherever a calamity has befallen the Islamic world, irrespective of any sect, they have shared its sorrow. The Shia has never limited Islamic brotherhood which has been affirmed by the Qur'an and traditions, to the Shiite world and has not believed in a difference between the Shias and Sunnis.

Again at the end of Vol. 3, after criticising some books of older writers such as Aghd-el-Farid of Ebn-Abd Raba; Al-Entessar of Abol-Hossein Khayat Mo'tazeli, Al-Fargh-Beyn -Al-Fargh of Abu Monsoor Bagbdadi, Al-Fasl of Ebn-Hazm Andolessi, Al-Melat-van-Nahl of Muhammed-ben-Ab-el-Karim Shahrestani, Menhaga-Sana of Ebn-Timia, and Al-Bedyavan-Nahaya of Ebn-Kathir, as well as several books of modern writers such as the History of Islamic Nations of Sheikh Muhammed Khezri, the Dawn of Islam of Ahmad Amin, Al-Jowlat-Fi-Robu-e-Shargh-el-Adna of Mohammad Sabet Mesri, As-Sera'e beynel-Islam-val Vathina of Ghassimi and Al-Vashia of Mussa Jar-oLah, he says:

"Our aim in criticizing these books is to warn the Islamic Community, and awaken them to the great dangers that these books create for them. For, they constitute a primary factor endangering Islamic unity and disperse the rank of Muslims.,,

In the preface to Vol. 5, Scholar Amini explains his view very clearly about this matter entitled "A generous opinion, in connection with a letter of appreciation received from Egypt about Al-Ghadir, and leaves no room for doubt.

He says: "Opinions and views are free about religions, and never break the tie of Islamic brotherhood which has been affirmed by the Qur'an in the sentence: "Truly believers are brethren." However heated scholarly religious discussions and theological arguments, the way of the predecessors and above all that of the Prophet's Companions and followers has been unanimously accepted.

We writers in various parts of the Islamic world, inspirer of our differences on major and minor points, have a common bond and that is belief in God and His Prophet. In all our bodies reigns one spirit and one feeling, and that is the spirit of Islam and the word "devotion."

We Islamic writers live under the banner of truth and perform our duty with the guidance of the Qur'an and the mission of the Holy Prophet. The message of us all is: "Islam is truly the religion before God," and our motto is "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet." Yes, we are of God's party and upholders of His religion."

Scholar Amini in the preface to Vol. 8 entitled "Al Ghadir united the ranks of the Islamic Nations" enters a direct discussion of the role of Al-Ghadir in Islamic unity. He strongly refutes the charges of those who say Al-Ghadir causes a greater dispersion of Muslims, and proves that on the contrary, Al-Ghadir removes many of the misunderstandings and brings the Muslims closer together. He then offers as evidence of this, the confessions of Islamic scholars and in conclusion, he quotes the letter of Sheikh Muhammad Sa'id Dahdooh in this connection.

To avoid a lengthy explanation, we dispense with the quotation and translation of all his discourse on Islamic unity, for, what we have already quoted is sufficient to prove our point.

The positive role of Al-Ghadir in Islamic unity lies in this that firstly it clarifies the reasoned Shiite logic and proves that the inclination of a hundred million Muslims towards Shiism contrary to the poisonous propaganda of some people, has not been due to political, racial or other circumstances, but rather to a strong logic based on the Qur'an and traditions.

Secondly it proves that a number of the charges leveled against the Shia which have led other Muslims to keep some distance from the Shia, such as the claim that the Shia prefers a non-Muslim and is pleased at the defeat of non-Shia Muslims by non-Muslims, or that the Shia makes pilgrimage to the Shrines of Imams instead of pilgrimage to Mecca ,or performs certain rites in prayer, or observes special rules in temporary marriage, are all false and without foundation. Thirdly in introduces to the Islamic

world Ali, the Commander of the Faithful himself who is the most injured and the least appreciated personality in Islam, who can be the leader of all Muslims, to be imitated, as well as his chaste progeny.

Others' View of Al-Ghadir

What others think of Al-Ghadir is what we have explained Muhammed Abdol-Ghani Hassan Mesri in his Commendation of Al-Ghadir in his preface of Vol. I , Second edition, says: "I pray God to make your limpid water (Ghadir in Arabic means 'a pool') the means of peace and delight of the two brothers, Shias and Sunnis, so that they join hands and build up the Islamic nation.

Adel Ghaaban editor of the journal Al-Kerab, in his preface of Vol.3 says: "This book clarifies the Shia logic which enables the Sunni sect to know the Shias truly. This knowledge will bring the two sects closer together to form a united rank."

Dr. Muhammad Ghallab, professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Religious Principles of Al-Azhar, writes in his commendation of Al-Ghadir, printed in the preface to Vol. 4: "I received your book at an opportune moment, for I am now engaged in the collection of materials for writing a book on Muslim life from different angles. Therefore, I greatly desire to obtain reliable information concerning the Imamia Shiite. Your book will help me much, and I shall not be misled like others about the Shia sect."

Dr. Abd-ar-Rahman Kiali Halabi in his commendation, printed in the preface of Vol. 4, after a reference to the Muslim decline in contemporary times and discussing the factors that can save the Muslims, and after suggesting that a proper understanding of the holy Prophet's administrator may be considered one of these factors, says:

"The book Al-Ghadir and its rich contents is something worthy of being known to every Muslim, to inform them how far historians have shown negligence and where the truth lies. We should by this means make up for the past, in order to receive heavenly reward for our effort in the way of Islamic unity.

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That was the view of Scholar Amini concerning the important social question of our time, and this is its fine reaction in the world of Islam. May God grant him heaven.

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