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The Primary Discourse

All praise belongs to Allah; we glorify Him and from Him we seek help and beg forgiveness; in Him we take refuge from the evils of our soul and wrongdoings of our behavior; anyone who is guided by Allah will never go astray; and anyone whom God lets go astray will have no patron beyond Him.

I testify that there is no god except Allah, the One, the Unique, and that Muhammad is His faithful servant.

“O you who believed! Observe your duty to Allah with right observance, and die not save as those who have surrendered unto Him.” (3: 102)

“O People! Be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same kind and spread from these two, many men and women; and be careful of your duty to Allah, by whom you demand one of another (your rights), and the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you.”(4: 1)

I believe that it is impossible to reach an understanding and maintain a peaceful symbiosis among Muslims unless a fair dialogue is conducted in the best manner. The earlier manners of argument, if not framed scientifically, will not produce a mutual understanding, but will widen the split still the further.

The scopes of the dialogue among the religious schools of thought that need to be developed are:

- 1) A strife-free discussion is the only correct manner to an understanding among the Islamic sects. It can solve many of the Muslims' problems.
- 2) The dialogue prevents divisions of the Islamic *ummah*.

The present book is, in fact, an attempt to remedy the negative outcomes of improper talks among the religious schools. My twelve-year-long discussions with the Wahhabis, my previous experience of this sect, the instructions I received from eminent Wahhabis in Yemen, my trip to Saudi Arabia where I became so biased that I wrote a book “*Al-Sillatu bayn al-lthna ‘Ashariyyah wa Firqat al-Ghulat*”^{[1](#)}

accusing the Shi'ahs of heresy, and my later conversion to the Ithna 'Ashariyyah School of thought and the book "*Rihlati min al-Wahhabi ila al-Ithna 'Ashariyyah*"² which I wrote to explain the facts and distinguishing factors of the latter school of thought, all justify my assertion that I know the best manner of argument, for I am familiar with the Wahhabi community, of which I was formerly one of the most biased members.

Important points to bear in mind

1) We should bring the Wahhabi interlocutor around to understand that the point being discussed is not the whole religious system, but merely one verse of the Qur'an, one tradition, *hadith*, or even a single part of it, since a Wahhabi's mind is unable to grasp all of the facts regarding the Imamiyyah School of thought at one time. We should, therefore, take gradual steps and move from one Qur'anic verse and tradition to the next. We should also clarify the need to observe a systematic procedure.

The systematic approach mentioned above is applied to university discussions in which a limited point, not a general one, is raised and scrutinized. A Wahhabi's mind will be unable to grasp all facts and realities of the Shi'ah, if we aim at extensive questions.

2) It will be a mistake if we begin with anything other than the *thaqalayn hadith*, because if you begin mentioning the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ('a), they will also do the same for others. This will bring the discussion to a standstill.

The Wahhabis should come to understand that when they mention virtues for people other than the Commander of the Faithful ('a), they themselves do not consider these virtues as something that compels them to stick to the words and follow the deeds of those people, but the *thaqalayn* tradition indicates the need to follow the Commander of the Faithful ('a).

If the Wahhabi interlocutor refers to the Qur'an, you should begin with the *tathir* verse and not with the issue of *wilayah* because there is a close connection between the *tathir* and the *thaqalayn* verses. You will see no Muslim raising the *tathir* and *kasa* points, unless he sees the two as interlinked. Also, there is no Muslim who will repudiate or ignore the link between the *thaqalayn hadith* and the *hadith-e kasa*. The discussion on the *tathir* verse will lead to the *kasa* and *thaqalayn* traditions respectively.

I insist that the dialogue should begin with the *thaqalayn* verse before attempting anything else because the Holy Prophet (S) himself greatly emphasised this *hadith*. He (S) himself said that if you hold onto the *thaqalayn* you will not be misguided; this is the point he (S) stressed until the last moments of his life, a trust he (S) placed with his *ummah* before he departed.

I have recognized through experience that the *thaqalayn* tradition is the fundamental factor that brings the change in the mind of a Wahhabi and converts him to Shi'ism. This is why I believe it is a good starting point, since any other conversation will be fruitless, if it does not follow this trend. Our aim in

these dialogues is nothing except bringing Wahhabis round to follow the Ahl al-Bayt's ('a) law. There is no doubt Wahhabis will do so once they have recognized the truth.

In my discussions I have never viewed the Wahhabi interlocutor with distrust, and I never consider him as hostile, but as one in need of a doctor. I always remember my own case when I was a Wahhabi, but became a follower of truth when I came to know it. The present book is also based on a sense of trust in Wahhabis, a presupposition quite effective in bringing the dialogue to a desired conclusion.

During the twelve years of debate with Wahhabis, I have always felt an unprecedented sharpness prevailing in the discussions. There have always been differences (of opinion) between the Shi'ahs and Sunnis, but these have never been as extensive as the disagreements between the Shi'ahs and Wahhabis. These disagreements have been so vehemently intensified by the advent of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, that we feel we are put in a fire of sedition by the extremist hands of Wahhabis, who became the cause of this tension which had initially been instigated by non-Muslim foreigners. The resulting disorder, the lack of understanding and the tension within the Muslim society are, of course, all grist to the enemies' mill. We should, therefore, base our discussions on a scientific and logical basis in order to reduce the bleak mood prevailing in the discussions and bring the barren arguments to fruition.

3) In your discussions you should try to unveil the role which the Umayyads and the Hypocrites played in creating divisions among Muslims so the interlocutors will understand how distant Wahhabis are from the *thaqalayn*, the two precious constituents.

Ever since I deserted Wahhabism and adhered to *Ithna 'Ashariyyah* Shi'ism, I have been doing my best to establish a correct manner for conducting discussions with the Islamic sects, and I believe that talks will not be productive unless they are based on a proper foundation.

Based on the fundamentals of sociology and psychology, I have proposed a three-stage scheme that ought to be followed as it is ordered.

One of the problems arising during religious discussions is a different and even dissimilar word connotation that each of the interlocutors has in mind. For example, a Wahhabi's interpretation of the words *'ismah* [infallibility] or *taqiyyah* [dissimulation] is quite different from that of an Imamiyyah. I believe that proper interpretation and explication of the sense of religious words plays an important part in advancing the dialogues.

Also, the Wahhabi interlocutor should certainly recognize the Imamiyyah as one of the Islamic sects, just as the Sunnis have done, and remember that they are two Muslim schools that are exchanging ideas. However, if the interlocutor calls the Shi'ah apostates, and insists on this application, he should then be made to understand that he is not following the usual Sunni approach in dealing with the Shi'ah. It is useless to talk to such a person.

"I entrust my affair to Allah, surely Allah sees the servants." (40:44)

‘Isam ‘Ali Yahya al-‘Imad

1412 AH

- [1.](#) Undetachable Link between the Shu‘ahs and the Ghulāt.
- [2.](#) My Departure from the Wahhābīsm to the Imāmiyyah.

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