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Translator's Preface

In 1994, our friend and colleague Hector Manzolillo, a prolific professional translator, presented us with two volumes of the academic journal *Epiemelia* which contained the article "El Islām Šhi'ita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?" [Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?]. He asked us to read the article and wondered whether we could translate it from Spanish into English.

At the time we had recently completed our Honors B.A. at the University of Toronto, and were starting graduate school. While we were impressed with the arguments made by the author Luis Alberto Vittor, and we appreciated the scholarly contribution of his work, we declined the request to translate the article due to lack of time. We assured Hector Manzolillo and Luis Alberto Vittor that we would translate the book at some time in the future.

It was only in the summer of 2004 that we were able to devote our time to the translation of the article in question. We had completed our M.A. and Ph.D. in in 2000, and found a position as an Assistant Professor at Park University in Kansas City in 2001. It took us several years to get settled in, both academically and financially, before we could devote our time to translating the article. It was thus, in the summer of 2004, that we informed Luis Alberto Vittor, now a close friend and colleague, a spiritual advisor and academic mentor, that we were ready to get to work.

Due to the specialized nature of the work, we felt it necessary to add extensive notes to make it more accessible to non-experts. While a scholar of Islām, a Muslim philosopher or an intellectual might comprehend the allusions being made by the author, most of them would escape the average reader as many of his sentences could be a paragraph, many of his paragraphs could be a chapter, and many of his chapters could be a book. What was supposed to be a small summer project turned into a major two year endeavor as we found ourselves continuously expounding upon his arguments to the point that the article gradually turned into a full-fledged book.

The final product, a critically annotated translation of Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy*, was thus finally completed. Reviewed by several Islāmic scholars, including Dr. Liyakat 'Alī Takīm, Shaykh Feisal Morhell, Professor Hasan 'Abd al-'Alī Bize and Sayyid Muhammad Rizvī, the book was embraced by Mr. Muhammad Taqī Ansariyan. As most academics who read the book have

acknowledged, the value of the work resides in the fact that it is the first scholarly study to deal with Sunn-Sh polemics from an esoteric and metaphysical perspective while providing a general criticism of Western Orientalism.

Luis Alberto Vittor's criticism of Western Orientalism is amply justified and is certainly not the first. As is well-known, Edward Sa'd condemned Orientalism categorically, claiming that it served political ends. It is indeed correct that Orientalism was used to justify European imperialism in colonial times. It is equally correct that Orientalism is used to support American and Zionist interests in the Muslim world in contemporary times. While there is truth in Sa'd's statement, it remains an over-generalization. The mistakes made by some Orientalists are not necessarily malicious. Many merely have a limited view because they never release their own history when looking at another's. As Barbara Castleton explains,

It should be remembered that people can only look at something from a perspective they have experienced. While de Toqueville managed a brilliant analysis of America after being here a mere six months, this is not the norm. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he wrote as an observer. An Orientalist, Arabist or Islmicist, can never bring real veracity and authenticity to a subject that they are merely observing.

For some scholars, Islm is like an ocean which they explore from the shoreline.They can dip their toes in it, they can wade in it, and kick their legs up forcefully, but they never really learn to let go and swim in the sea. They never let go of the edge to feel the swirl of their topic ebbing and flowing all around them.

Despite their shortcomings, many of these Orientalists have made contributions to the field of Islmic Studies. Others, however, are arrogant, insolent and openly hostile to the Muslim faith. These scholars have never approached the ocean of Islm. Rather than revel in its riches and drink from its pristine purity, they stand firmly on its shoreline, pouring pollutants into its waters, vainly seeking to cloud its clarity.

While the English version of Luis Alberto's book is sure to be embraced by Sh'ite scholars and open-minded individuals, it might be criticized or conveniently ignored by some Western Orientalists who will allege a lack of objectivity on the part of the author. Ironically, they may accuse him of their own single greatest shortcoming: subjectivity. They might claim to see a mote in his eye while being blind to the beam that veils their own vision (Matthew 7:5).

They might complain that the author is writing from a Sh'ite perspective and has not remained impartial, a rule which apparently applies only to Muslim scholars since most Christian scholars rarely detach themselves from their own religious and ideological points of view. In the worst of cases, Christian scholars do not even pretend to remove themselves from their own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, and other professional vices.

After calling into question his objectivity, this sector of Orientalists might move on to their second line of attack: Vittor's approach and methodology. Despite the author's expressed aim to present the Sh'ite

position–in all of its esoteric and metaphysical dimensions–he might be criticized for writing from a religious perspective. To be succinct, this would be a polite way of saying he is subjective, biased, and partial.

They might argue that the book is directed to English-speaking Muslims, rather than recognizing it as a scholarly work aimed at an academic audience. If Luis Alberto Vittor had said that Shī'ite Islām was a Persian creation, that the Qur'ān was the work of Muhammad which was copied from Jews and Christians, and that the corpora of prophetic traditions were mere legends, he would be embraced like a brother, cited incessantly, invited to conferences, and given generous grants.

Eventually he might even be appointed to a prestigious Chair of Islāmic Studies or counsel the American President regarding policies in the Muslim world. While some Orientalists are eager to attack scholars who study Islām objectively, they rarely dare to criticize the pro-Christian perspectives of some of their most distinguished colleagues.

Rather than dealing with concrete facts and responding with sound, solidly-based arguments, some Orientalists might dismiss the author's scholarship as subjective. These are the same scholars, however, who have shown little concern for the subjectivity of their own colleagues. There almost seems to be a consensus that Islām must only be studied by non-Muslims. If this is the case, it is certainly a strange double-standard as most scholars of Judaism are Jewish, and most scholars of Christianity are Christians, yet one rarely hears any of them being criticized for being biased.

It does not require much effort to find Orientalists responsible for reductionist readings of the Islāmic faith. Take, for example, the attitude of the Islāmologist Félix María Pareja who argued that "Islām is the religion of the sword." If a Muslim academic said that Christianity was a religion of Crusades, Inquisitions, and genocide, Western scholars would never let their roar of outrage recede.

God forbid if a Muslim academic dared to say that Judaism was the religion of Zionism, Jewish imperialism, Palestinian concentration camps, Dayr Yāsīn, Sabrā and Shātīlā, as well as the mass expulsion of Muslims. The words of Father Pareja, however, are not denounced by Western religious scholars. On the contrary, they are cited, and passed from textbook to textbook without the author's objectivity being called into question. As a priest who wrote from a Catholic perspective, can he be truly objective?

Rather than questioning the scholarship produced by Muslim scholars, Western Orientalists might consider criticizing the likes of Asín Palacios. Many Spanish Orientalists and Arabists now openly admit that he was slanted. Paradoxically, they continue to use his work as standard reference material despite his claims that Sūfism was merely a Christianized form of Islām.

If the thesis is wrong, the entire argument leading up to it is equally erroneous and needs to be discarded. The inconsistencies of Western philosophers are so widespread that Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont have spoken of "intellectual imposters" who rely on verbosity to cover their argumentative

deficiencies. Unfortunately, there are some Western Orientalists who remain “slaves of old ideas,” unable to appreciate the value of works written with academic freedom.

Despite their allegations of subjectivity with regards to the author, Western Orientalists would be hard–pressed to present a concrete criticism of the present work as its content is objective and scientific, both methodologically and epistemologically. While the work may have its shortcomings–for example, focusing only on certain aspects of the topic due to limitations of time and space–this certainly does not invalidate the text as a whole.

That would be like discarding an Armani suit because the sewing–lady overlooked a tiny detail in the lining. Finally, what some Orientalists will find the most annoying about the current work of Luis Alberto Vittor is that it is a scientific study completed within the framework of the Islamic faith, without succumbing to bias or attempts to proselytize.

While their criticism may seem harsh to some, scholars like Edward Sa'id, Ahmad Ghurab, and Luis Alberto Vittor, are neither “assassins of Orientalists” nor propagandists for the Islamist cause. They are not out to destroy Western Orientalism nor do they have any missionary agenda. On the contrary, their comprehensive criticism addresses important methodological mistakes.

It is a call for true scholarship at the service of science rather than political and economic ambitions. For Edward Sa'id, Ahmad Ghurab, and Luis Alberto Vittor, Orientalism should be a means of *rapprochement*, a means of knowing others, not turning them into alter–egos, not demonizing them, not exoticizing them, not eroticizing them, and certainly not undermining them.

According to Sa'id, Ghurab, and Vittor, certain subjects are sacred, and while they can be studied scientifically and critically, this must always be done with an attitude of respect and tolerance. Whether it is Hinduism, Taoism or Buddhism, whether it is Judaism, Christianity or Islam, all religious traditions merit to be studied without being slighted, tarnished or disrespected.

This applies equally to any discussions of Sh'ite Islam which, due to Orientalist opinion, has been stigmatized as sectarian. Showing a blatant disregard for etymology, many Orientalists have equated Sh'ism with the schism, claiming that the very word *sh'ah* signifies “sect” when it merely means “followers.” This misrepresentation of the Arabic language and Islamic reality was opposed by J. Spencer Trimingham almost forty years ago when he explained that:

In Western thought a 'sect' is regarded as a group which has broken away from the parent religious community because of differing views. On such criteria Sh'ism is not a sect in its origins, since it springs directly from the main stream of Islamic development, which branched into two streams, following different interpretations, hardening into doctrines, about the origins and ordering of Islamic society. (79)

Clearly, Islam is not composed of a single Sunna stream, from which heretical sects flow out as rivulets,

drying out in the sands of infidelity and heresy rather than reaching the sea of eternity. If anything, Islām is an eternal tree. Its roots are the pillars of Islām; its trunk is the *sharī'ah*; its branches are its interpretations; and the fleeting leaves are its followers, coming and going with each revisited season. The dialogue between Shī'ism and Sunnism, however, has been far less poetic, ecumenical, and fraternal.

As experts in the field are aware, the debate between Sunnism and Shī'ism has provided a large body of polemical literature. The Shī'ite scholarship on the subject tends to be characterized by a scholarly approach. The Sunnī and most particularly Salafī work, however, tends to be characterized by an attitude which is both divisive and destructive. In the best of cases, the authors are misinformed and misrepresent the teachings of Twelve Imām Shī'ite Islām. In the worst of cases, they lance allegations against Shī'ites based on dubious documents, fabrications and fantasy, in order to accuse them of heresy.

The classical Sunnī heresiographers and polemicists include Abū al-Hasan al-Ash'arī (d. 935-6), Abū al-Muzaffar al-Isfarā'inī (d. 1078-9), Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Wāhid b. Ahmad al-Kirmānī (d. before 1131), Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Alī ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1201), Shahrastānī (d. 1135) and Mu'īn al-Dīn Mīzrī Makhdūm (d. 1587). More modern authors include Ahmad b. Zaynī Dahlān (d. 1886), a Shāfi'ī *muftī* from Makkah, and Mūsa Jār Allāh (d. 1949). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Salafīs, rather than Sunnis, have been at the forefront in producing polemical anti-Shī'ite tracts.

The most notorious of these authors include Ahmad al-Afghānī, Sayyid Abū al-Hasan Nadvī, Abū Amīnah Bilāl Philips, Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahmān Dimashqūī, Shaykh Yahyā Silmī al-Saylanī, and Shaykh Faisal. Some of these people, like Bilal Philips, a Canadian convert of Jamaican origin, have been supported by the Saudi establishment and represent the pro-Saudi Salafīs.

Others, like Shaykh 'Abdullāh al-Faisal, a Jamaican convert formerly known as Trevor William Forrest, represent the anti-Saudi Salafīs. Shaykh Faisal is presently in prison in the U.K, convicted to a nine year term in 2003 for incitement to murder. In his defense, he explained that the teachings he was given were “in accordance with the same at Imām Muhammad ibn Sa'ūd Islāmic University in Saudi Arabia” and that “all my teachings are from the Koran and Saudi Arabia” (Gillan).

To accuse Shī'ite Muslims of “heresy,” as many Salafīs do, is to play judge and executioner. It is well-known among Muslims that Islāmic Law prescribes the death penalty for heretics and apostates. Of course, not all authors are so subtle as to call Shī'ites heretics and then drop the issue. There are those like Ahmad Shāh Mas'ūd from the Afghan *Mujāhidīn* and Northern Alliance, Gulbuddīn Hekmatyār, founder of the *Hezb-i Islāmi*, Mullā 'Omar from the *Tālibān,* and Usāmah ben Laden, Ayman al-Zawāhirī and the recently deceased Abū Mus'ab al-Zarqāwī from *al-Qā'idah*, who have openly advocated murder, declaring Shī'ites to be worse than infidels, and claiming their blood was *halāl*.

Books like *Talbīs Iblīs*, [*The Devil's Deception of the Shī'ites*], extremist websites, and anti-Shī'ite pamphlets are often all it takes to incite ignorant fanatics to vigilante violence. The massacres of Shī'ite Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are partly the result of anti-Shī'ah propaganda. The individuals responsible for encouraging and committing these atrocities are true terrorists with innocent blood on their hands.

In many Western nations, like Canada, there are laws against hate literature. It is time for all supporters of human rights to demand their application, put a halt to anti-Shī'ī hate propaganda, prohibit its dissemination, and press for the prosecution of those who produce it, distribute it, and profit from it. If Canada, the United States and other nations can ban David Irving, the Holocaust revisionist, from entering their countries, then surely they can ban extremist Salafīs.

In the past fifty years, the ruling family and government of Saudi Arabia has indoctrinated millions of Muslims into the Wahhābī ideology through its Islāmic universities at home and affiliated institutions abroad, through its publishing houses, and through its network of Islāmic organizations, mosques and associations.

The vast majority of mosques in North America are controlled by ISNA, the Islāmic Society of North America, which is the "official organ" of Saudi Salafism in the Western World. Frank Gaffney, founder and President of the Center for Security Policy in Washington and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy under President Ronald Reagan, reveals that:

[T]he Islāmic Society of North America is a front for the promotion of Saudi Arabia's Wahhābī political, doctrinal, and theological infrastructure in the United States and Canada. Established by the Saudi-funded Muslim Students Association, ISNA has for years sought to marginalize leaders of the Muslim faith who do not support the Wahhābists' strain of 'Islāmofascism,' and, through sponsorship of propaganda and mosques, is pursuing a strategic goal of eventually dominating Islām in America.

ISNA provides indoctrination materials to about 1,100 of an estimated 2,500 mosques in the North American continent. Through its affiliate, the North American Islāmic Trust (NAIT)–a Saudi government-based organization created to fund Islāmist enterprises in North America–it reportedly holds the mortgages of between 50-79 percent of those mosques. Through this device, ISNA exerts ideological as well as theological influence over what is preached and taught in these institutions and schools.

Saudi oil money has spread Salafism to such an extent that, for a great part, Sunnism has morphed into Salafīsm. The "Muslim fundamentalist" menace has now hit home and Saudi Arabia is facing the return of their prodigal sons. Surely, Saudi dollars would best be spent delivering humanitarian aid to Muslim countries, supporting economic development, and encouraging Islāmic unity, rather than encouraging Islāmic extremism.

On December 7-8, 2005, a symbolic step towards Islāmic unity was taken with the "Makkah al-Mukarramah Declaration" of the Third Session of the Extraordinary Islāmic Summit Conference in which

member states, including Saudi Arabia, reaffirmed their “unwavering rejection of terrorism, and all forms of extremism and violence.” As Saudi King 'Abd All□h bin 'Abd al-'Az□z declared: “Isl□mic unity would not be reached through bloodshed as claimed by the deviants” (“Moderation and Tolerance Urged at OIC Summit: Stress on Combating Extremism,” *The Dawn*, Dec. 8, 2005: Internet: http://66.201.122.226/2005/12/08/top1.htm [1]).

Considering the rise of sectarian violence in Iraq and the threat it poses to the entire region, Saudi Arabia should reassess its state-sponsored Salafism and decide to work towards Isl□mic unity. As Mustaf□ R□fi'□, Dr. Kal□m Siddiqu□, Zafar Bangash, Shaykh Ahmad Deedat, Im□m Muhammad al-As□, Im□m 'Abdul-'Al□m M□s□, Am□r 'Abdul M□lik 'Al□, 'Abd al-Malik Mujahid, Dr. Shah□d Athar, and other mainstream Sunn□ Muslims have impressed, the fundamental beliefs which Muslims have in common far outweighs the historical differences which emerged after the passing of the Prophet.1

Regardless of whether they are Sunn□, Sh□'□ or S□f□, regardless of the school of jurisprudence they follow, Muslims are Muslims first and foremost and should pose a united, non-sectarian front when confronting the enemies of Isl□m. Opinions regarding the succession of the Prophet and interpretations of Isl□mic law are primarily personal convictions belonging in the private domain. They can be addressed in the proper academic context, to increase knowledge, and to develop an appreciation for the various expressions of the Isl□mic faith. There is no place, however, for divisive argumentation in Isl□m.

In contrast to the Sunn□ side, where calls for unity remain voices in the wilderness, the Sh□'ite side has a long history of scholarship with a fraternal foundation. With rare exception, it has been the general consensus of Sh□'ite scholars that the followers of *ahl al-sunnah* are bona fide believers; the only heretics being the Kharijites, the earliest Isl□mic sect which traces its beginning to a religio-political controversy over the Caliphate and which holds that 'Al□ and his followers became infidels; the *naw□sib*, those who profess hatred towards the Prophet's Family and the *ghul□t*, the extremists who deify 'Al□.

Among the first Sh□'ite scholars to formulate the fundamentals of faith of the Twelver Sh□'ites from a polemicist perspective was Shaykh Sad□q, one of the scholarly pillars of Sh□'ism, in his famous *I'tiq□d□t*, translated loosely as *A Sh□'ite Creed*. He lived during intolerant times, a period of rampant *takf□r* [or accusations of infidelity] when tensions ran high between the various schools of thought in Isl□m, each one vying for supremacy.

Although he was a deeply-committed Sh□'ite, he was forthcoming in presenting Sh□'ite beliefs clearly and concisely in comparison with other currents in Isl□mic thought. Shaykh Sad□q's *I'tiq□d□t* was commented upon by one of his students, Shaykh al-Muf□d, under the title of *Sharh 'aq□'id al-Sad□q*, and remains a popular theological text to this date. Numerous other Sh□'ite scholars wrote valuable books in which they contrasted Sunn□ and Sh□'□ beliefs, including Shaykh Ab□ Ja'far al-Tus□ (d. 1067-8) and 'Abd al-Jal□l al-Qazw□n□ (d. c. 1190), who put forth some strikingly moderate view, as well as 'All□mah al-Hill□ (d. 1325).

In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the leading figures of inter-Islāmic ecumenism have included Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Kāshif al-Ghitā, Ayātullāh Muhammad Husayn Burujerdī–who worked to unite the various schools of Islāmic jurisprudence–'Allāmah Muhammad Jawād Mughniyyah, Ayātullāh Shariatmadarī, Ayātullāh Hasan al-Shirāzī, Imām Mūsā al-Sadr, and Ayātullāh Marashī-Najafī–who had the unique distinction of having *ijāzah* [permission] of *riwāyah* [to teach Islām] from nearly 400 Shā'ī, Sunnī and Zaydī scholars–as well as Ayātullāhs Behesht, Muntazerī, Mutahharī, among many others, all of whom defended the cause of Muslim unity.

In recent years, Ayātullāh al-Uzmā Sayyid 'Alī al-Husaynī al-Sistānī, has repeatedly called for calm between both communities in the most trying of circumstances. The greatest advocate of Islāmic unity in recent history was none other that Imām Khumaynī. In fact, the late founder of the Islāmic Republic ruled that:

Muslims should be awake, Muslims should be alert that if a dispute takes place among Sunnī and Shā'ite brothers, it is harmful to all of us; it is harmful to all Muslims. Those who want to sow discord are neither Sunnī nor Shā'ite, they are agents of the superpowers and work for them. Those who attempt to cause discord among our Sunnī and Shā'ite brothers are people who conspire for the enemies of Islām, and want the enemies of Islām to triumph over Muslims. Muslim brothers and sisters will not be segregated by the pseudo-propaganda sponsored by corrupt elements.

The source of this matter–that Shā'ites should be on one side and Sunnī on the other–is on the one hand ignorance and, on the other hand, foreign propaganda. If Islāmic brotherhood comes to the fore among Islāmic countries, they will become such a great power that none of the global powers will be able to contend with them. Shā'ite and Sunnī brothers should avoid every kind of dispute.

Today, discord among us will only benefit those who follow neither Shā'ah nor Hanafī. They neither want this nor that to exist, and know the way to sow dispute between you and us. We must pay attention that we are all Muslims and we all believe in the Qur'ān; we all believe in *tawhīd*, and must work to serve the Qur'ān and *tawhīd*.

This message of Islāmic unity is one that all Muslims, be they Sunnī, Shā'ī, or Sūfī, should remember, as many of them seem to have forgotten it. While Imām Khumaynī worked tirelessly towards Islāmic unity, some Shā'ite scholars have failed to follow in his footsteps and have promoted proselytism and sectarianism, rather than Islāmic pluralism. Fortunately, for those interested in Islāmic unity within diversity, there exists an excellent body of literature.

While there are many excellent books on Sunnī-Shā'ah dialogue, perhaps the finest work of scholarship on the subject was produced by the Lebanese erudite 'Abd al-Husayn Sharāf al-Dīn al-Mūsawī in his legendary *Murāja'āt* or *The Evidence*, a discussion by correspondence which took place between the Shā'ite sage and his Sunnī counterpart, Shaykh Shaltūt, the Dean of the University of al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt.

In fact, the debate was so productive in increasing Sunn□-Sh□'ite understanding that it resulted in Shaykh Shalt□t issuing a historic *fatw□* recognizing the Ja'far□ Ithn□ 'Ashar□ *madhhab* as a legitimate school of jurisprudence inIsl□m which all Muslims are permitted to follow freely. The work is a model of the proper Muslim mores which are to be observed in any and all debates.

Another well-known polemical work is *Peshawar Nights*. While claims have been made that the book is of dubious origin, perhaps produced for propaganda purposes as part of Sh□'ite missionary activities, this does not debilitate the arguments it contains. In recent years, the Tunisian Muhammad al-T□j□n□, has written several valuable books including *Then I was Guided*, *The Sh□'ah: The True Followers of the Sunnah*, *Ask Those Who Know*, and *With the Truthful*, all of which have been translated into numerous languages.

On the positive side, these books present a wealth of information and documentation supporting Sh□'ism and have served to bring many Sunnis closer to and even into Sh□'ism. On the negative side, the author is neither an academic nor a traditional scholar of Isl□m, as he readily admits. As a result, his books are not always free from error, contradiction, value judgments, and unbridled enthusiasm. At times, his arguments are expressed in terms which seem abrasive to some Sunnis, sometimes accentuating division rather than attenuating it.

This applies even more to websites like *answering-ansar.org* and certain articles published on *shianews.com*. While both of these websites are informative, they fight fire with fire when they should be fighting fire with water. In the Preface of *Devil's Deception of the Nas□b□ Wahh□bis* which appears on answering-ansar.org, 'Abdul Hakeem Orano clearly explains that "This book takes the method of attack." Evidently, this is an inappropriate approach. As Almighty All□h instructs,

***"Invite* (*all*) *to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance"* (*16:125*).**

As can be observed from the previous survey, the most serious shortcoming of scholarship in the area of Sh□'ite-Sunn□ dialogue is that it centers on the exoteric aspects of the religion. It deals with concrete, down to earth doctrines, as opposed to matters of spirituality, mysticism and metaphysics. The present study, Luis Alberto Vittor's *Sh□'ite Isl□m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* takes the debate between Sh□'ism and Sunnism to a higher plateau elevating arguments to the spiritual sphere in his profound philosophical tract.

In closing, we would like to thank Professor Luis Alberto Vittor for trusting us with this translation. We have remained as faithful to the text as possible and attempted to render it into a scholarly yet idiomatic English. We would like to thank Mr. Ab□ Dharr Manzolillo, a true friend and father figure, who has stood by our side for almost two decades.

We would like to thank all the scholars who shared their knowledge with us, from Sayyid Muhammad

Zak□ B□qr□ and Sayyid Muhammad Rizv□ in Canada, to the Grand Ay□tull□hs in Qum and Najaf. We are equally indebted to our early guides and mentors, Ahmad Haneef, Khalid Haneef-Jabari, and 'Al□ Muhammad Shaheed Has□b.

We would like to thank our wife, Rach□da Bejja, for repeatedly reviewing, correcting, and editing the Arabic transliteration, as well as our son, Yas□n al-Am□n Morrow. They both served as a constant source of support and solace and this work could never have been completed without them.

We would also like to send a special thanks to Mr. Muhammad Taq□ Ansariyan for graciously supporting this scholarly endeavor and commend him for his inestimable contributions to the field of Sh□'ite studies through the publication and distribution of academic titles.

We hope and pray that the following translation will be a welcomed contribution to scholarship in the field of Isl□mic Studies, will benefit both scholars and students of Isl□m, serve as a wake-up call to Western Orientalists, and bring about a greater degree of understanding and appreciation for the unity within the diversity of Isl□mic orthodoxy. Finally, as the translator and Editor of the following work, we accept full responsibility for its content and commit ourselves to correcting any shortcomings that it may contain in future editions.

Jum□d□ II 1427 / July 2006

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1. Editor's Note: Mustaf□ R□fi'□'s Isl□mun□ is one of the first efforts of a Sunn□ scholar to understand Sh□'□ Isl□m from within. Although the distinguished expert on Isl□mic law does not always fully understand the Sh□'ite views on certain subjects, his contribution to Isl□mic unity and Isl□mic reconciliation are significant.

Dr. Kal□m Sidd□qu□ was one of the leading intellectuals and Isl□mic movement activists of the modern era. Founder and director of the Muslim Institute, London, he helped forge the philosophy of the contemporary Isl□mic movement. He was a staunch defender of Isl□mic unity.

Zafar Bangash, a close colleague and associate of Dr. Kal□m Sidd□qu□, is currently the director of the Institute of Contemporary Isl□mic Thought. He is the former Editor of Crescent International, the leading publication of the international Isl□mic movement.

Shaykh Ahmad Deedat was a famous South African scholar specializing in Comparative Religion. A transcript of his speech on Sunn□-Sh□'ah unity can be found on the following web page:
http://islam-usa.com/e114.htm [2]

Im□m Muhammad al-Asi is the elected Im□m of Washington D.C.'s Isl□mic Center, a regular contributor to Crescent International, and a leading activist in the Isl□mic movement. He is a staunch opponent of sectarianism.

Im□m 'Abdul-'Al□m M□s□ is a Muslim activist and director of Masjid al-Isl□m in Washington, D.C. He is also the founder and director of the al-Sabiq□n movement which provides social and spiritual services to urban America. A supporter of the

Isl□mic Revolution of Iran and Im□m Khumayn□, he made several visits to Iran as a representative of American Muslims and a supporter of the Isl□mic revival.

Im□m M□s□ has spent the past two decades bridging the gaps between Muslims and stresses that the success of the Isl□mic movement depends upon Sunn□ and Sh□'ah unity. Am□r 'Abd al-Malik 'Al□ is one of the leaders of al-Sabiq□n. His speech opposing the present Sh□'ah-Sunn□ fitnah and encouraging Isl□mic unity is widely distributed on the internet through various podcasts.

'Abd al-Malik Muj□hid, is President and director of the Sound Vision Foundation and an Im□m in the Chicago area. His "Call for Sh□'ah Sunn□ Dialogue" and "Resolution" to be distributed to Im□ms, preachers, mosques, Muslim organization, and opinion leaders, can be found on the following web page:http://soundvision.com/info/muslims/shiaSunn [3]□.asp

Dr. Shah□d Athar is a Muslim activist from Indianapolis, Illinois. A Sunn□ by creed, Dr. Athar is an advocate of Isl□mic unity. His writings, many of which demonstrate his appreciation for Isl□m in all of its dimensions, can be found on the following web page: http://www.Isl [4]□m-usa.com/

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/shiite-islam-orthodoxy-or-heterodoxy-luis-alberto-vittor/translators-preface#comment-0

Links

[1] http://66.201.122.226/2005/12/08/top1.htm

[2] http://islam-usa.com/e114.htm

[3] http://soundvision.com/info/muslims/shiaSunn

[4] http://www.Isl