

Introduction

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Those who listen to the Word and follow the best of it:

those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and

those are the ones with understanding. ¹

The Shi'a and Sunni schools of thought form the two wings of the Islamic nation that allow it to fly and carry out its lofty objectives. A great Muslim scholar once said, "Those who attempt to cause division between the Shi'a and Sunni are neither Shi'a nor Sunni." Written under this premise, the book in hand should clarify some common questions and inquiries about the philosophy and practice of Shi'a Islam. The Shi'a and Sunni schools of thought differ primarily in jurisprudence and have far more similarities than differences. Every school of thought in Islam must be respected because they all can lead people to salvation.

Due to the lack of clear information, the Shi'a *Imamiyyah* school of thought has remained a mystery to many Muslims. Numerous Muslims are relieved to discover the truth about Shi'a Islam from reliable sources. Nevertheless, the enemies of Islam have found that the best way to slander Islam and disturb the peace within the Muslim nation is to encourage division and sectarianism. Thus, a myriad of negative and false rumors with no basis in the authentic books of the Shi'a school of thought have been spread. These rumors have two sources: animosity towards Islam on the part of those who invent them, and ignorance on the part of those who believe and propagate them.

This book is a call to unite the Muslims since true unity stems from an understanding of each other's philosophies, not from keeping them secret. While the majority of Shi'a scholars and even average individuals keep many books belonging to other schools of thought in their libraries, few other Muslims take the time to read the original sources of Shi'a philosophy. I have endeavored in this book to present the most controversial issues that distinguish Shi'a Islam in a simple manner understandable by all people, particularly our youth generation in the Western countries. To make this book accessible to all readers regardless of their school of thought, I have relied mainly on the Noble Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HF) as reported in the books of narration (hadith).

I have endeavored to be as accurate and scientific as possible in presenting what has been recorded in the commonly accepted Islamic sources. I share the aspiration of most Muslims to see the Muslim nation heed to the call of the Noble Qur'an, ***"Truly your nation is one nation, and I am your Lord. Therefore, worship Me."***²

Another aim is to build a strong, cohesive, and cooperative Muslim community around the globe, and for this nation to be respected it must be united. Muslims must understand and accept each other's positions and principles. The best way to disperse the misunderstandings and misconceptions between the schools of thought is through constructive, sincere, and objective dialogue.

If the Noble Qur'an invites the adherents of the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) to share dialogue in a civilized manner³ then certainly the schools of Islamic thought should also come together to discuss their differences based on the Noble Qur'an and the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH&HF). While none can deny that the schools of thought have juristic (*fiqh*) differences, these differences should not prevent adherents to these schools from acknowledging and respecting each other's opinions, for the leaders of these schools of thought acquired their knowledge from one source—the Prophet and ultimately Almighty Allah.

Almighty Allah created human beings with both an inner messenger and an outer messenger. Both, the inner messenger, which is the brain or the reasoning faculty, and the outer messenger, which is the divine revelation, invite a person to exercise his or her own intellectual abilities to search for the truth, and not to take their customs, traditions, or family behavior as sacred beliefs. This call is directed to the followers of all the branches of Islam. All Muslims must research and study their history and not be bound by the customs and traditions of their ancestors which may not rest on solid ground, for the Noble Qur'an condemns the blind following of ancestors as follows:

And when it is said to them, 'Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger.' They say, 'enough for us is that which we found our fathers following,' even though their fathers had no knowledge whatsoever and no guidance.⁴

When it is said to them, 'Follow what Allah has sent down.' They say, 'Nay! We shall follow what we found our fathers following.' Would they do that even though their fathers did not understand anything, nor were they guided?⁵

I ask all who read this book to read it objectively, with open-mindedness and without sectarian biases, and I welcome any suggestions, criticisms, or inquiries.

We ask Allah for guidance and enlightenment in our search for the truth. May Allah open our hearts and minds to it, and may He guide and extend His mercy upon us, for He is the one who grants all things.

"Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate from the truth after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You; truly, You are the Bestower."⁶

We ask Allah for His mercy, grace, and blessings in this endeavor, and I ask the readers for their prayers that we all continue to be humble servants of the religion of Allah on the Earth.

Sayed Moustafa al-Qazwini

August 13, 1999

Orange County, California

-
1. Noble Qur'an, 39: 18
 2. Noble Qur'an, 21:92
 3. Noble Qur'an, 3:64
 4. Noble Qur'an, 5: 104
 5. Noble Qur'an, 2: 170
 6. Noble Qur'an, 3:8

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/inquiries-about-shia-islam-sayyid-moustafa-al-qazwini/introduction>