

# **Common Grounds for Unity between Islamic Schools of Thought**



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In this article, the most important common principles and issues of Islamic schools of thought are examined in order to promote the achievement of Islamic unity, integration, and harmony.

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**Abstract**

One of the main concerns of Muslim intellectuals in recent centuries has been integration among all Muslims. Amid all types of integration, ideological consolidation based on common principles is considered one of the most fundamental strategies for Muslim unity. In this article, the most important common principles and issues of Islamic schools of thought are examined. According to some Qur'anic verses, the authority of the Qur'an, prophetic traditions, love for those close to the Prophet, and the intellectual authority of the Ahlul Bayt are the most common principles of Islamic brotherhood in all areas and times.

# Introduction

The achievement of Islamic unity, integration, and harmony, and bringing about an effective and sustainable cohesion while eliminating existing divisions in the current age requires being considerate of commonalities and issues. Given the close relationship between these elements, the application and realization of each one will have a direct effect on the application of the others. This paper explores common elements accepted by all Islamic schools of thought.

## The Qur'an

One of the most unifying aspects among all Islamic schools is the Holy Qur'an, the eternal miracle of Prophet Muhammad. All sects and groups – with all the differences and contradictions that exist between them – persistently derive their beliefs from the Qur'an. They do not ignore any distinction with the Qur'an in their own system of thought. All Islamic schools regard and insist that their intellectual and ideological thoughts are derived from the verses of the Qur'an.

A unifying and reconciling approach to the Qur'an is studied in two ways.

## The Origins of Islamic schools

The Qur'an is the final divine book sent by God through the Prophet Muhammad for the guidance of humanity. Muslims of all Islamic schools of thought agree that the Qur'an is divine speech immune from any kind of distortion because God is its protector,<sup>1</sup> and includes all that is necessary for people to perfect themselves to eventually attain eternal happiness.

Moreover, monotheistic belief is a strong strand in the Qur'an which is intended to place all monotheists along one strand. By putting each person in his or her proper place, a single, powerful and great nation is created:

***“Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord. So worship Me” (al-Anbiya' 21:92);***

***“Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so be wary of Me.” (Al-Mu'minoon 23:52)***

The Qur'an, or the "*hablullah*" (cord of Allah), is that which the followers of Islamic schools are able to hold fast to. With the centrality of the Qur'an in areas such as culture, politics, and economics, believers can be aligned to each other and interact with one another:

***Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord, and do not be divided [into sects]. And remember Allah's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing. And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, whereat He saved***

***you from it. Thus does Allah clarify His signs for you so that you may be guided. (3: 103)***

Qur'anic commentators agree that one of the meanings of *hablullah* is the Qur'an and that God, in addition to mentioning Islamic unity in this verse, has ordered Muslims to hold fast to the Qur'an. Imam Ali also referred to the Qur'an as *hablullah*: "It is the strong rope of Allah."<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Qurtubi, a prominent Sunni commentator, Ibn Mas'ud, and 'Abdullah, who narrated from the Prophet, also refer to *hablullah* as the Qur'an.

In explaining the meanings of the term *hablullah*, Hasan Tabarsi, a renowned Shi'a exegetist, writes, "Hold fast to *hablullah*" ...and numerous meanings have been given for *hablullah*, one of them is the Qur'an.<sup>3</sup>

## **Approaches to religious discourse**

Since the Qur'an places a special emphasis on Islamic unity, it also lays down logical and correct approaches to Islamic religious dialogue for Muslims, particularly Muslim intellectuals.

## **Necessity of Dialogue between Islamic Schools of Thought**

### **No compulsion in matters of belief**

***"There is no compulsion in religion: rectitude has become distinct from error" (Al-Baqarah 2:256);***

***"And say, [This is] the truth from your Lord: let anyone who wishes believe it, and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it" (Al-Kahf 18:29);***

***"So admonish - for you are only an admonisher, and not a taskmaster over them." (Al-Ghashiyah 88:21-22).***

### **Islam is the religion acceptable to God**

***"Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam" (Ale-Imran 3: 19);***

***"Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter." (Ale-Imran 3:85).***

### **A comprehensive and complete religion**

***"He has prescribed for you the religion which He had enjoined upon Noah and which We have [also] revealed to you, and which We had enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus." (Al-Shura 26: 13).***

## **A religion of peace**

Sayyid Qutb, following the verse of no compulsion, writes about freedom of belief in Islam: "Faith issues in Islam are matters in which their acceptance is due to their expression and understanding and is not due to coercion. Islam has come to address the entire power of human thought and reason."<sup>4</sup> Matters of belief are not part of those matters where imitation is necessary; people are expected to make the effort in dealing with ideological matters. In Shi'a Islam the principles of religion are not imitative although its branches do involve imitation.

Regarding freedom of faith, Ayatullah Mutahhari says, "A summary of the logic of the Qur'an is that there is no compulsion in the matter of religion. The truth is clear; both the straight path and the wrong path are clarified. People are free to make a choice. A series of verses in the Qur'an stipulate that religion should come by correct invitation, and not through force."<sup>5</sup> Thus, the only method of invitation and propagation in Islam to followers of other religions is the way of dialogue. Qur'an emphasizes this point and the methods of interfaith and interdenominational dialogue.

## **The Method of Dialogue between Islamic Schools**

In addition to the Qur'an's emphasis on dialogue, the mental conditions and method of discussion have also been addressed, as God is fully aware of the human condition.

Ayatullah Muhammad Ali Taskhiri writes: "The Qur'an is unsurpassed in its instruction for Muslims to engage in discourse; if the Qur'an becomes our eyes, tongue, ears, we would all be engaging in genuine dialogue."<sup>6</sup> Also, Qadrdan states: "The importance of dialogue in the Qur'an is so much that the use of the term for dialogue (*qul* and its derivatives) takes first place after the word Allah."<sup>7</sup>

## **Religious Commonalities**

One of the matters the Qur'an emphasizes on is religious commonalities. Religious dialogue must take place within a common framework:

***Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah.' But if they turn away, say, 'Be witnesses that we are Muslims.'"***  
**(3:64)**

***And say, 'We believe in that which has been sent down to us and has been sent down to you; our God and your God is one [and the same], and to Him do we submit. (29:46)***

***Say, 'We have faith in Allah, and that which has been sent down to us, and that which was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus were given, and that which the prophets were given from their Lord; we make no distinction between***

***any of them, and to Him do we submit. (2: 136)***

In the case of division among Muslims, the Qur'an refers them to the principles of divine unity, the prophethood of Muhammad and to the Qur'an itself. The basis for unity is commitment to monotheistic belief and respect for the mission of the final messenger of God; and those who initiate conflict should be dealt with seriously.

***If two groups of the faithful fight one another, make peace between them. But if one party of them aggresses against the other, fight the one which aggresses until it returns to Allah's ordinance. Then, if it returns, make peace between them fairly, and do justice. Indeed Allah loves the just." (49:9)***

***O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome." (4:59)***

### **Wise and reasonable dialogue**

The Qur'an as the richest source of reasoning and debate, emphasizes this approach to the internal and external dialogues of Muslims:

***"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best." (16: 125)***

Allamah Tabatabai established that there is no doubt this verse refers to the etiquette of dialogue. The Prophet was appointed to invite in this manner, even though the meaning of dispute, in its narrow sense, does not indicate invitation.<sup>8</sup>

A positive outcome with a suitable framework for collaboration among all Muslims will take place when academic discussions and religious debates are conducted reasonably.

Ayatollah Makarim Shirazi stated in his *Nemuneh* exegesis regarding the above verse: "The first part '*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom*' refers to rational argument; the second part, '*and good advice*' refers to emotional discussions; and '*dispute with them in a manner that is best*' refers to those who were previously misinformed, and through discussion, they rid their biases to accept the truth."<sup>9</sup>

***Do not dispute with the People of the Book except in a manner which is best, barring such of them as are wrongdoers. (29:46)***

According to Tafseer Qummi, '*Do not dispute with the People of the Book*' – refers to the Jews and the Christians, and '*except in a manner which is best*' – refers to the Qur'an."<sup>10</sup> The instruction is to not dispute with the People of the Book and the intent is the Jews and the Christians.

Tafseer *Majma' al-Bayan* refers to *'...except in a manner which is best'* to convince the opponent, and to debate in the best way with kindness and warmth. It refers to the best debate in which both the intellect and human nature will be compelled to accept. The calling of people toward the Lord should be in the best and most beautiful way to alert others of the signs of God's existence and the kindling of their faith in Him should be done in a soft manner.<sup>11</sup> Even Prophets Musa and Harun were also asked to speak softly to Pharaoh:

***"Speak to him in a soft manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear." (20:44)***

The verses above explicitly forbid the Prophet from irrational and unwise propagation and dialogue; moreover, this command is not particular to him as the Qur'anic commentators have stated that these verses were not delivered for a particular occasion or person. They include all Muslims in all areas and times.

### **Respectful and ethics-centered dialogue**

Strategic dialogue is fundamental for relations and exchange of thoughts and ideas; prepares the ground for innovation, spiritual growth, social interaction, and coexistence. The Qur'an discusses the style, methods, and content of dialogue and has commanded Muslims to heed to these influential issues to clarify the truth:

***So give good news to My servants who listen to the word [of Allah] and follow the best [sense] of it. They are the ones whom Allah has guided, and it is they who possess intellect. (39: 17-18)***

***Tell My servants to speak in a manner which is the best. (17:53)***

***...and speak kindly to people (2:83)***

***Speak to him in a soft manner; maybe he will take admonition or fear. (20:44)***

***...and speak to them honourable words. (4:5)***

***Do not abuse those whom they invoke besides Allah, lest they should abuse Allah out of hostility, without any knowledge. (6: 108)***

Thus, Muslims are to engage in a courteous, friendly, and rational manner in dialogue; and in doing so, they are to refrain from shouting, defamation, or instigating violence.

## **Prophetic Tradition**

Another significant source for the proximity of Islamic schools, according to the Qur'an, is the tradition of the Prophet. Ayatullah Mutahhari said, "One of the sources of knowledge that a Muslim must see, correct, and complete his vision through it, is the conduct of the Holy Prophet."<sup>12</sup>

## The Status of the Prophet in the Qur'an

The factors for the immortality of a school and the unity of a society are the provision of objective, certain, verbal and active models, alongside behavioral models. Islam is the only school that, with the provision of perfect models alongside excellent instruction and teaching, has combined speech and action into something eternally harmonious and it has introduced the Holy Prophet as the model of humanity:

***Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him]. (53:3–4)***

***Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you. (59:7)***

The above verses clarify the role and position of the Prophet for all Muslims and shows God's expectation of Muslims: that they should carry out all the Prophet's instructions and avoid anything he has prohibited. The Qur'an clearly states that the speech of the Prophet was revelation: his personal inclinations and intellectual and social presumptions did not affect it.

The Prophet condemned division in the Muslim world and was concerned about – and indeed attempted to achieve – unity of all of Muslims.

In the verse ***"...and remember Allah greatly. In the Apostle of Allah there is certainly for you a good exemplar, for those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day."*** (33:21), God introduces the Prophet as the perfect role model for anything that underlies human perfection: an example in belief, ethics, and social relations, and his sustained focus and effort toward establishing brotherhood among Muslims:

***O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (4:59)***

In the verses ***53:3 & 4: "Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him],"*** the interference of the personal desires of the Prophet and its transmission has been negated in. This includes the Prophet's commands and prohibitions and has no exception.<sup>13</sup> In the verse 33:21, the speech and conduct of the Prophet was also introduced as exemplary for all people. In the verse 4:59, it has been stipulated that in cases of any form of dispute, Muslims should refer to the Prophet.

## The Ahlul Bayt

With all their academic differences and various theological, judicial and narration tendencies, Muslims have always paid special attention to the Ahlul Bayt – the Household of the Prophet – and regarded them as better than the other companions of the Prophet, their successors, and Islamic religious

scholars.

For this reason, this section expounds on the Ahlul Bayt; following the members and authority of the Ahlul Bayt, the importance of love for them, and the Sunni viewpoint.

## The Members of the Ahlul Bayt

One of the fundamental discussions concerning the Ahlul Bayt is on its members. The Shi'a and a group of the Sunnis hold that the Ahlul Bayt is Imam Ali, Fatimah, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, and the Imams succeeding them. However, some Sunnis believe that in addition to these five members, the wives of the Prophet are included.

Considering these two views, and to prove their understandings, the Shi'a and a number of the Sunnis cite verses and narrations existing within Sunni and Shi'i exegeses, narration, and historical sources. The following examines a few:

In the commentaries on verse 33 of the chapter Al-Ahzab, known as the *tat-hir* purification verse (**"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification"-33:33**), many narrations from both the Shi'a and Sunni that introduce the members of the Ahlul Bayt have been related and which regard them as being the Ahl al-Kisa (*People of the Cloak*). The narration below is one of them:

Umar bin Abi Salamah narrates that when the purification verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet in Umm Salamah's home, he called Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn and covered them with a cloak. The Prophet also covered Ali, who was behind him, under the same cloak, and then said, "Oh Allah! These are my Ahlul Bayt (People of the house); keep impurity away from them and purify them with a thorough purification." Umm Salamah said: "Oh Messenger of God, am I also among them?" to which he replied, "You have your own position."<sup>14</sup>

In another narration, the Ahlul Bayt is introduced in which the *Mubahala* verse was explained: **"Say, 'Come! Let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our souls and your souls, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah's curse upon the liars'" (3:61)**. In this narration, Sa'd ibn Abi Waqas says, "When this verse was revealed, the Messenger of God called Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn and then said 'Oh Allah, these are my Ahlul Bayt.'"<sup>15</sup>

In a commentary of the *mawadda* verse – **"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives'" (42:23)**, a number of the Prophet's traditions on the Ahlul Bayt were clearly mentioned. For example, Ibn Abbas says: "When the mawadda verse was revealed, they asked the Prophet, "Oh Messenger of God, who are those kinsfolk of yours whose love became an obligation upon us?" The Prophet answered, 'Ali, Fatimah and their two sons – Hasan and Husayn.'"

In addition to these, numerous traditions are narrated from the Prophet, in which he explicitly stated

Imam Ali, Fatimah al-Zahra, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn to have as the sole members of the Ahlul Bayt. 16

## **The Knowledge Authority of the Ahlul Bayt**

Muslims agree on the Ahlul Bayt as the "Knowledge authority" and contentious issues between Muslims end at this point; particularly in ideological and legal matters, authority reveals the truths of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet. 17

God states in the Qur'an: **"And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle" (Al-Nisa 4:59)** and **"We did not send down the Book to you except [for the purpose] that you may clarify for them what they differ about." (Al-Nahl 16:64)**

## **The Qur'an and the Knowledge Authority of the Ahlul Bayt**

Without doubt, the school of the Ahlul Bayt surpasses other Islamic sects and schools in the fields of commentary, interpretation, and expression of the meanings and concepts of the Qur'an. This distinction is due to their attachment to the Prophet and the connection of their teachings to revelation.

The references *Bihar ul-Anwar* and *Al-Kafi* regard the knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt as "the most knowledgeable in the interpretation of the Qur'an." 18

### **1. The Ahlul Bayt are the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr)**

**"Ask the People of the Reminder if you do not know." (Al-Nahl 16:43)**

In the Tabari tafseer, Jabir al-Ju'fi narrated that when this verse was revealed, Ali said: "We are the People of the Reminder." 19

Likewise, in reply to a question by Harith about this verse **"Ask the People of the Reminder,"** Imam Ali said, "By God, we are the People of the Reminder, we are the People of Knowledge, and We are a mine of interpretation and revelation." 20

### **2. The Ahlul Bayt are firmly grounded in knowledge**

***But no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge; they say, 'We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord.' And none takes admonition except those who possess intellect. (3:7)***

Imam Ali describes **"...those firmly grounded in knowledge"**: "Where are those who falsely and unjustly claimed that they are deeply versed in knowledge, as against us, although Allah raised us in position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them, and entered us (in the fortress of knowledge) but kept them out. With us guidance is to be sought and blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness." 21

### 3. The Ahlul Bayt have the knowledge of the Book

***The faithless say, "You have not been sent [by Allah]. Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.'* (13:43)**

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri said, "I asked the Prophet about this verse, and he said, 'That is my brother, Ali ibn Abi Talib.'"<sup>22</sup> Additionally, there are tens of verses that refer to the knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt.<sup>23</sup>

### **Prophetic Tradition and the Knowledge Authority of the Ahlul Bayt**

Because the Ahlul Bayt are firm in knowledge and learned the interpretation of the Qur'an from the Prophet as they grew up in his house, they thereby have the ability to interpret and thus hold an exclusive position, a position which ordinary people do not attain. From the first days of his open invitation to the religion of Islam, the Prophet of Islam many times mentioned to the Muslims the knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt.

#### **1. The spoken Qur'an**

In the famous Hadith of Thaqalayn, the Prophet stated:

Indeed, I am leaving among you, that which if you hold fast to them, you shall not be misguided after me. One of them is greater than the other: The Book of Allah, which is a rope extended from the sky to the earth, and my family, the people of my house [Ahlul Bayt], and they shall not separate until they meet me at the pool, so be alert as to how you treat them after me.<sup>24</sup>

This hadith, narrated by more than thirty companions of the Prophet, is present within the reliable Sunni hadith books. Many leading Sunni scholars also hold that the Hadith of Thaqalayn affirms the knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt. Shaykh Muhammad Abu Zahra said with regards to his stance on the Hadith of Thaqalayn: "It does not denote their political authority; it denotes their judicial and knowledge authority."<sup>25</sup>

#### **2. Protecting the Islamic Ummah**

The Holy Prophet stated, "The stars protect the inhabitants of the earth from drowning; likewise, my Ahlul Bayt protect my Ummah from division."<sup>26</sup>

#### **3. The most knowledgeable on the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition**

Imam Ali stated, "We are the Ahlul Bayt; we are the most knowledgeable regarding the speech of Allah and His messenger."<sup>27</sup>

There exist many other hadiths on the authority of the Ahlul Bayt within Shi'a and Sunni hadith compilations, such as the hadiths of *Ghadir*, *Kisa'*, *Madinatul 'Ilm*, *Safinah* and *Manzila*.

## **The Knowledge Authority of the Ahlul Bayt and the Islamic Ummah**

The superior and unique role of the Ahlul Bayt in conveying Islamic knowledge, especially the exegesis of the Qur'an and explaining hadiths, is apparent to all fair-minded Muslims who have studied even some religious sciences and Islamic history. To document this, some of the statements of the companions of the Prophet and Islamic scholars regarding the knowledge authority and status of the Ahlul Bayt are quoted as testimony.

On several instances, Umar Farooq pointed out the vital role of Imam Ali in his own life. He said, "Without Ali, Umar would be dead."<sup>28</sup>

Many Sunnis in the past and present admitted to the superiority of the knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt. The following are some examples:

Ibn 'Asakir, quoting Ibn Hazim, writes in description of Imam Sajjad: "I have not found any Hashimi man better than Ali ibn al-Husayn, and I have not seen anyone more knowledgeable in jurisprudence."<sup>29</sup>

'Abdullah 'Ata says, "All scholars in knowledge terms were lower than Imam Baqir."<sup>30</sup>

Fakhr al-Razi in his Qur'anic commentary writes, "Whatever we might forget, this we will not forget, and that is: The speech of Ali has priority over the speech of the other companions, because the Prophet stated, 'Ali is with the truth and the truth is with Ali.'"<sup>31</sup>

Haskani, quoting Mujahid, says, "Verily Ali has seventy virtues which the companions of the Prophet do not have, and there are no virtues they have that Ali does not have."<sup>32</sup>

Ibn Abi al-Hadeed says, "What should I say about a person whom his enemies have confessed to his virtues, not being able to deny them? He [Ali] is the source of all virtues."<sup>33</sup>

Ibn Khaldun regarding the knowledge status of the Ahlul Bayt says:

When extraordinary acts are possible for other people to perform, what can you think about the Ahlul Bayt? With that knowledge and religiosity and effects from prophethood that are within them and the attention that God, the Exalted, had toward the noble root of Holy Prophet and the fact that this attention follows to the pure branches of that holy root.<sup>34</sup>

Muhammad Farid Wajdi Misri writes, "There were traits existing in Ali that did not exist in the other caliphs."<sup>35</sup> Also, Shahrestani discredited the Ash'ari, Mu'tazilah, and other Islamic sects and schools and regards the Ahlul Bayt as the only knowledge reference for Muslims.<sup>36</sup>

Considering that, on the one hand, the status of the Ahlul Bayt has Qur'anic and traditional proofs and, on the other hand, some of the caliphs and leading figures of the Sunnis attest to their status, the question arises as to why throughout Islamic history, the Shi'a have not often viewed the Ahlul Bayt from

this angle and instead have emphasized on their political leadership?

Perhaps the reason for this view of the Shi'a toward the Ahlul Bayt is that, on the one hand, the first point of difference between the Shi'a and Sunni is considered to be the issue of leadership, to which the warning hadiths of *Manzilat* and *Ghadir* refer; on the other hand, these hadiths, from the aspect of issuance, had precedence over the Hadith of *Thaqalayn*, which denotes the knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt, and this itself had influence on the Shi'a view.

## **Love for the Ahlul Bayt**

Friendship and love toward the Ahlul Bayt is one of the principles of Islam and a common base for proximity among Islamic schools that has been emphasized in the Qur'an and Prophetic tradition. All Islamic sects share a love toward the family of the Messenger. The Qur'an has presented love and friendship toward the Ahlul Bayt as reward for the mission of the Prophet:

***"Say, 'I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.'" (Al-Shura 26:23)***

Ibn Abbas says when the verse above was revealed, he said to the Prophet, "Oh Messenger of God, who are those we have been commanded by God to love?" He replied, "Ali, Fatimah, and their two children."<sup>37</sup>

The one meaning this verse requires is that the people establish a relationship with the Prophet's relatives. Distinguished commentators, hadith narrators, and literary scholars have not understood more than one meaning for this verse, which is love for the family of the Prophet.<sup>38</sup>

## **Love for the Ahlul Bayt in the view of Sunni scholars**

Relating the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt in traditional, historical, and theological sources is not limited to Shi'a sources. For centuries, numerous writers of other Islamic schools have also related these virtues. The mentioned authors,<sup>39</sup> as well as hundreds of other writers who wrote about the uncountable virtues of the pure and immaculate family, display the Sunnis' love toward the Ahlul Bayt. Some researchers believe that Sunni references include more than 100 virtues of the Ahlul Bayt, their refined character and competence in Islamic matters, and various issues related to them.

It is important to note that Sunni scholars have written on the virtues of the Ahlul Bayt in their Qur'anic commentaries, hadith references, theology, history, and ethics, and not merely in books primarily about the Ahlul Bayt. There are more than 150 Sunni accounts that mention the virtues of Imam Mahdi and issues related to him and his governance alone; and more than 30 Sunni books are written primarily about the Imam.<sup>40</sup>

Ayatullah Khamenei, with the aim of uniting Muslims, stated at the Ahlul Bayt World Conference:

The issue of the Ahlul Bayt is one of the most important and greatest issues of Islam. Love of the Ahlul

Bayt is an obligation that Muslims of the world from all sects and groups have accepted and take pride in. We, who are honored to follow the jurisprudence of the Ahlul Bayt and who have learnt the principles and practical matters from them, must not imagine that love of the Ahlul Bayt is particular to us; and we must not make the mistake and think that the Ahlul Bayt only belong to us. The Ahlul Bayt belong to the whole of Islam, just as their grandfather, the Holy Prophet belonged to the whole of Islam. The Ahlul Bayt belongs to the world and history, just as their grandfather, the Holy Prophet, belonged to humanity and history.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

With regard to the issues discussed, Islamic schools possess the most fundamental common bases, such as the Holy Qur'an, prophetic tradition, the knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt and love for them.

The Qur'an and prophetic tradition are the two main and basic sources for Islamic law. These two are common among all Islamic schools, and the authority of other sources is subject to them. The knowledge authority of the Ahlul Bayt is in fact a continuation of prophetic tradition. The Qur'an has reiterated the need for all Muslims to love the Prophet's family; all Islamic sects and schools have accepted this command and the experience of history has proven this to be true.

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23. Al-Ahzab 33:33, Al-Ma'idah 5:55, Al-Nisa' 4:59, Al-Tawbah 9:110, Al-Waqi'ah 56:77–79, Al-i 'Imran 3:103, Al-i 'Imran 3:18, Al-Baqarah 2:23, Al-i 'Imran 3:61, Al-Mujadilah 58:12, Al-Bayyinah 98:7, Al-Saffat 37:130, and Al-An'am 6:153
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28. Ibn Abd al-Barr, 1415 AH, vol. 3, p. 1103; Ibn Abi al-Hadeed, vol. 12, p. 179 & 204 and vol. 18, p. 141; Ibn Qutaybah, 1400AH, p. 152; Razandi Hanafi, p. 130 & 132; Iji, 1412AH, vol. 3, p. 636 & 637; Muttaqi al-Hindi (1405AH, vol. 13, p. 584; Mughrami, 1403AH, p. 71; 'Ayyashi, vol. 1, p. 75; Qummi, 1366, vol. 1, p. 407; Baqlani, 1414AH, p. 476 & 502; Sam'ani, 1418AH, vol. 5, p. 154 and Razi, 1398AH, vol. 1, p. 205) He also said: "You (Oh Ali) are the best of judges" (Muttaqi al-Hindi, ibid, vol. 8, p. 600; Muhammad ibn Sa'd, vol. 2, p. 339 and al-Baladhuri, 1974CE, p. 177
29. Dhahabi, 1417AH, vol. 4, p. 3 & 9 and Ibn Abi al-Hadeed, vol. 15, p. 725
30. Hafez Esfahani, 1407AH, vol. 1, p. 68
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38. Sobhani, no. 174, p. 26

39. Ahmad ibn Hanbal (164–241 AH) wrote in Fadhail Amir al-Mu'mineen, Baladhuri (279AH) in Ansab al-Ashraf, Nasa'i (303 AH) in Khasa'is Amir al-Mu'mineen, Mardawiyah (323–410 AH) in Manaqib, Abu Nu'aym Esfahani (334–430AH) in Ma Nazala fi Ali min al-Qur'an, Ibn Mughazili (483 AH) in Munaqib Ali ibn Abi Talib, Haskani (5th century) in Shawahid al-Tanzil, Khwarizmi (568 AH) in Tarikh Dimashq, Ibn al-Jawzi (581–650 AH) in Tadhkirat al-Khawas, Juvayni (644–730 AH) in Fara'id al-Samtayn, Suyuti (910 AH) in Al-Qawl al-Jali fi Fadhail Ali

40. Hakimi, p. 516 & 519

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