

Introduction

Respected Reader,
'assalamu alaykum,

The editor of this work is pleased to announce the release of the "Shia Encyclopedia", which forms itself as the collection of articles that emanated from an intra-faith dialogue, ranging from exploring commonalities, differences and a train of thought specific to the Shia (also known as the school of the Ahlul Bayt).

We are pleased to release a collection of information which addresses inter-school related issues between the school of Ahlul Bayt and the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah. This encyclopedia which covers the most important lines of thought of the Ahlul Bayt, is the contribution of various individuals.

Most of the articles provided in this encyclopedia are original contributions, while the rest are excerpts from the Ahlul Bayt and the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah books.

The information presented in this encyclopedia is based on the understanding and the knowledge of the contributors. The subjects are classified and are divided into several chapters, so that one can get an overhead view of all the major issues.

The approach taken with respect to the sources can be delineated as follows:

1. When an article references both sources from the school of the Ahlul Bayt and the school of the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah it is meant to impress on the reader the common areas of understanding
2. When an article references both sources from the school of the Ahlul Bayt and the school of the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah it is also meant to impress on the reader the areas where the understanding has diverged
3. When an article references both sources from the school of the Ahlul Bayt and the school of the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah it is also meant to impress on the reader the areas where the understanding is common, but whether they school of Ahlul Bayt has more detail to shed light in the subject matter

4. When an article references only sources from the school of the Ahlul Bayt, it is meant to impress on the reader that this subject only finds its mention in this school and not the school of the Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah

5. When an article references only sources from the school of Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah, it is meant to impress that the same beliefs also exist in the school of the Ahlul Bayt but that the former school followers are not privy to

6. When an article references only sources from the school of Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah in detail, it is meant to impress to the reader of the divergence of opinion on that particular matter

This approach ensures that each school of thought is properly represented, for more than often, it is the deliberate misrepresentation, distortion, that is meant not just to villify the other school, but also wilfully misrepresent them, that is the underlying cause of dis-information

We are grateful that in this day and age, when avenues of communication are wide open, access to the primary texts is easily attainable, scholarship is available in the form of written books from both schools, that the need to forge an understanding on the truth becomes critical and even leaves us with the ethical and moral obligation to undertake such an endeavor.

This is the magnificent path which Prophet Muhammad (S) introduced to humanity centuries ago, as mentioned in Qur'an:

"(O' Prophet) Say: 'This is my way: I do invite you unto Allah, on discernment (insight and enlightenment), I and whoever follows me.'"(Qur'an 12: 108)

Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided. (Qur'an, 16: 125)

We hope you'll find this encyclopedia helpful and constructive, and we thank God for giving us this opportunity.

The articles are being modified and improved. We appreciate your comments, improvements and corrections. Your feedback makes this work more insightful. Please do not hesitate to contact us by clicking on the "Contact Us" link.

Blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad and the Members of his House.

Best wishes,

'Ali Abbas

Editor

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