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## **Foreword**

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Blessings and peace be on the Messenger of Allah, the best of all creation; on his household, the good and pure, and on all his companions.

Several years ago I wrote a short book "Bayn al—Shi'ah wa Ahl al—Sunna" (Between the Shi'ah and the Sunni) in which I expressed my high hope and burning desire that the Shi'ah and the Sunni would concur on the principles of brotherhood, love and harmony and discard all the agents disunity and discord which have been implanted by the enemies of the two sects. I invited each sect to dispassionately consider the viewpoint of the other, making truth the object of their search while perceiving that it is worthier of being followed. I said: If what has come down to us from our pious predecessors

- (a) emphasizes the necessity of striving for the truth, wherever it may be,
- (b) proclaims that we seek wisdom even if it comes from a disbeliever and
- (c) indicates that a rational person distinguishes the truth through proof and not through people,

then, when once the truth is identified, its followers can be recognized thereby and it becomes incumbent upon us to subject ourselves to its dictates, invite others to it and support it regardless of the identity of the person who proclaims it—a person who must be regarded with respect.

Rational people consider it indisputable that equivocal matters often attract conflicting views, and they take it for granted that every scholar has to respect the viewpoint of others on issues that are susceptible to intellectual disputes. They may disagree in their views but at the same time remain sincere friends. May Allah have mercy on the one who says: "Difference of opinion does not impair affection".

Islam has repeatedly emphasized the importance of tolerance. The Glorious Qur'an says: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good admonition, and argue with them in the best manner possible". Those who insist upon enjoying the freedom of expression must, as a rule, allow everyone else the right to the same freedom.

For the Muslims it's a source of pride that they agree on the fundamentals of their religion and divinity is regarded with utmost sacredness; they believe in resurrection; they believe in prophethood and mankind's need for it and that Muhammad, the son of Abdullah ('a), the lord of the offspring of Adam, is the seal of the prophets; they believe in the veracity of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophet's sound traditions. All these precepts occupy, in the minds of Muslims, a position which other religions do not enjoy among their followers.

I mentioned all this and more in my book *Bayn al–Shi'ah wa Ahl al–Sunnah* (*Between the Shi'ah and the Sunnis*), although I did not entirely pour out my mind in it because of the prevailing circumstances regarding printing. Now I feel glad to have the opportunity to write a preface for this book *Al–Shi'ah wa Funun al–Islam* (*The Shi'ah and Islamic Disciplines*) in which the honorable scholar Sayyid Hasan al–Sadr follows a way that may seem unusual to the Sunnis. I wanted to study the book objectively to ascertain, with proofs and references, the veracity of the subject it is treating, but I realized that it is beyond my ability to do that.

The writer—(may Allah be pleased with him)—is an erudite scholar who, with authority discusses the Islamic and Arabic sciences, the factors responsible for their emergence and the various stages of their development. To study these factors and stages requires a team of experts in different fields so that each scholar deals with his or her area of specialization and finally agrees or disagrees with the author, based on the evidence at hand.

Since I have failed to undertake an objective treatment of this topic because I expected diligent specialists to treat it with the care and seriousness it deserves, I will not miss the chance to add that the author claims that the Shi'ah have precedence over others in founding the sciences of religion and Arabic and he presents evidence to justify his stand. In fact his book is an espousal of this claim and its proofs. In respect to this claim and the reactions it may give rise to, people fall into two groups:

Learners: The members of this group are not much concerned with the identity of the 'founders' of these sciences, what is of interest to them is the disciplines. The founders could be exclusively Shi'ah or Sunni, or from both sects.

Scholars: The members of this group are concerned with the disciplines as well as their origin, development and the stages they underwent, for any given branch of knowledge has a beginning similar to that of great men and a history analogous to theirs.

To the second group, I say: *Al–Shi'ah wa Funun al–Islam* is a meritorious effort by the author–may Allah be pleased with him–as a contribution towards discharging his duty namely, writing the history of Islamic sciences which is one of the duties of a Muslim scholar. So this great work should not be viewed superficially because of indifference and levity. It is not proper to describe this work as an expression of bigotry or a mere challenge and such other terms that are employed as a shield by those who do not want to brave the difficulties of conducting research.

Indeed such judgements are unwarranted for there is no cause for bigotry or challenge because the Shi'ah, like the Sunnis, are Muslims and the differences between the two sects are not on the fundamentals. The lead the Shi'ah enjoy in some disciplines is only to be regarded as a kind of precedence a person has over his brother; it might spur enthusiasm and competition but it should not give rise to dispute or enmity.

There are, hence, only two options before us. We either bow our heads to the author in reverence for his efforts and the conclusions he has reached or endeavour to counter his arguments with conclusions buttressed by sound acceptable proofs.

I earnestly pray to Almighty Allah to cleanse our souls of all blemishes and fill them with love, compassion and brotherly feeling. May He help the Muslims restore their unity, make them comprehend their religion and have a clear view of their destiny. May the Almighty imbue them with Islamic guidance in personal behaviour and in dealing with others and help them propagate Islam to the whole world by demonstrating its beauty and perfection, by adhering to its message and respecting its limits.

Here I would like to mention, with much pleasure, an object of pride for Muslims, namely, the books of Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al–Sadr, the likes of which have never been written under similar conditions. His singular genius produced "Our Philosophy" and "Our Economics" in which the unique presentation of Islamic beliefs and system of human relationships renders the ideas which make western non–believers, atheists and their cohorts among nominal Muslims haughty, no better than fleeting foam.

Let those whose heads are vessels of prattle and spurious imagination purge their souls with the truth so that they regain their lost selves. Let the young Muslims who have been deceived by the glitter of false civilization read these books. Alas, they are preoccupied with jest and falsehood rather than seriousness and truth and find no time to read them!

The former have robbed them of their heads and hearts and left them in slumber. Let the educationists realise the value of these books and, by their aid, set right those crooked minds and barren intellects for which the world has become so mean and meaningless, as to loose all taste and value. The condition of these poor souls has deteriorated, their behaviour has become abnormal, their hopes have been dashed and their situation is so dismal that they need existence renaissance.

I will close this preface with a word of gratitude to the honorable brother al–Murtada al–Ridawi, the director of Al–Najah bookshop in Najaf, Republic of Iraq, for his meritorious efforts in disseminating knowledge and exposing its hidden treasures and for the opportunity he gave me to peruse this invaluable book. I am sure when the new edition reaches the hands of scholars it will be a subject for serious research by the will of Allah.

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