

Prof. Seyed Mohammad Ghari S Fatemi - Al-Mahdi Institute & Shahid Beheshti University



Seyed Fatemi spent thirteen years studying to the highest level in the traditional educational seminaries of Qum under the direct instruction of some of the leading scholars of the present day. Alongside his traditional education Seyed Fatemi was also trained in Public Law at Tehran University, receiving the award of both an LLB and an LLM. In 1999 Seyed Fatemi was awarded with a PhD from the Faculty of Law at the University of Manchester for research engaging with Comparative Human Rights. Seyed Fatemi's teaching and research interests include; the Philosophical foundations of human rights, International and comparative Human rights, Islam and Human Rights, Usul al-Fiqh and Hermeneutics, the History and Development of Fiqh, and Muslim Theology.

Dr Ali Reza Bhojani - University of Nottingham



Dr Ali-Reza Bhojani holds a PhD from Durham University in Islamic Legal theory. His doctoral work was published as a book titled 'Moral Rationalism and Sharī'a: Independent rationality in modern Shī'ī uṣūl al-fiqh' (Routledge, 2015). His PhD research was supported by a scholarship from the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World through which he also read for an MA in Research Methods at Durham. Prior to his time in Durham, Ali-Reza graduated from the Al-Mahdi Institute's Four Year Hawza Programme in Arabic and Islamic studies and has since continued his traditional Islamic studies through sabbaticals to the seminaries of Qum and Mashad, as well as under senior faculty at the Al-Mahdi Institute. Ali-reza is currently teaching a wide range of modules within Islamic Studies at University of Nottingham

ABSTRACT: "Ayat al-Nafr: A Quranic justification for collective *Ijtihād* ? "

The Quran condemns individuals who do not use, nor explore, their own understanding in matters of religion. Yet Quran 9:122, often referred to as *Ayat an-Nafr*, apparently obliges a group of individuals from every community to go forth in pursuit of a deep understanding of religion, so that that they may 'warn' their people when they return to them. This paper will explore the potential of 9:122 to act as justification for emerging notions of collective *ijtihād*.

Muslim legal theorists have long been citing this verse as a potential justification, not for collective *ijtihād*, but for the authority of the isolated tradition (*khbar wāhid*). This has led legal theorists to reject the possibility of the verse suggesting that knowledge acquisition and transmission ought to be collective. The verse has been further employed to advocate a Quranic justification for the authority of scholarly fatwa issued by individual mujtahids and the necessity of non-specialists to follow these opinions. After critically reviewing the exegetical history of the verse amongst Shī'ī legal theorists, the paper will argue that neither the verse itself, nor its apparent context, support the prevalent views. The paper will then move to discuss the potential of the verse to support collective notions of *ijtihād*, and whether the verse is in fact not simply directive (*irshādī*) towards changing non-scripture dependent ideas in epistemology which seem to demand a shift towards collective *ijtihād*.