To Be Rational or Not to Be

An Explication and Appraisal of the Shīʿī Correlation Principle Controversy

Mohammad Rasekh

Professor of Law and Philosophy, Department of Public Law and Economic Law, Faculty of Law, Shahid-Beheshti University, Teheran, Iran
m-rasekh@sbu.ac.ir

Abstract

Rationalist Imāmī Shīʿī's attempt to deal with problems with which the Muslim society grapples on the basis of the rational potentialities of Shīʿī jurisprudence. It refers to the claim of correlation between rulings dictated by human reason and those commanded by the divine texts. Certain scholars have attempted to offer a partial support of the rationalist stance. They try to show a middle way by which reason and the text may be kept under the same roof. Nevertheless, it does not seem that the partial defence works. Hence, a number of scholars have endeavoured to put forth a theory of identity of *Sharʿ* and reason. In this study, negative and positive arguments shall be introduced and appraised so that a justifiable conclusion on the issue may be offered. Overall, the breakthrough appears to lie in the different field of theories of axiology and religion, rather than jurisprudential reasoning and theology.

Keywords

rationality – *Aql* – *Sharʿ* – Shīʿī jurisprudential reasoning – *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* – correlation principle – identity of *Sharʿ* and *Aql* – Muslim theology – theory of religion

1 Introduction

The Muslim¹ normative system of rules (i.e., *Sharʿ* or *Fiqh*)² has recently encountered diverse problems at all individual, familial, social, and political levels. One remedy to counter these problems is usually sought in a rational approach to the religious sources. *Imāmī Shīʿī* rationalists form one of the major groups among Muslims who assert that they can tackle the problems by materialising the rationalistic potentialities of *Shīʿī* jurisprudence. One such potentiality is supposed to be embedded in the *Shīʿī* principle of rational correlation (*qāʿida al-mulāzama al-ʿaqlīya*). Before embarking on an explication and appraisal of the principle, we need to provide a very brief introduction to the matter by surveying its historical roots, though it should be noted and emphasised at the outset that this work is a theologico-philosophical endeavour to deal with and take a stance on the mentioned principle, rather than a historical one. The emergence of a Muslim community in Medina, situated alongside two other Abrahamic cultures, i.e., those of the Christians and the Jews, drove Muslims to form their own specific identity, in contrast to the two existing rival ones. Muslim identity mainly manifested itself in the body of rules regulating various legal, moral, and ritual aspects of Muslims' individual and collective lives. Nevertheless, as the history of Muslim society unfolded, there appeared various bodies of rules among them. Those kinds indeed embodied diverse religious sects (*madhhabs*) that had taken form within and emerged from diverse Muslim communities and experiences. The sects are divided into

1 I use Muslim, rather than Islamic, to characterise the normative system of rules which has taken shape and evolved among Muslims over centuries. To explain, anything characterised as "Islamic" should logically contain a constitutive element of "Islam" as a religion, namely it has to be "inherently" religious, or (in another word) it should be a part of the "core element" of the religion. In this regard, it may be argued that the normative system of rules existing among Muslims is not of that nature. Hence, it is a non-religious entity and may not be characterised as Islamic. See for instance Rasekh, *Traditional Secularism v. Modern Secularism*.

2 It should be first noted that, in this work, "*Sharʿ*" is used interchangeably with "*fiqh*"; otherwise, the former should be considered as the source of the latter, which is embodied in primary sources of *Qurʿan* and *Sunna* (the Prophetic and non-Prophetic tradition) and secondary sources of consensus and reason. Secondly, *Sharʿ* means the normative system of rules, or the collection of commands, existing among Muslims. As this system includes ritual, moral and legal rules, it may not be called "law", though at times we also use the English current equivalent of "jurisprudence" for *fiqh*. Thirdly, as the rules are inferred from both revelational (i.e., *Qurʿan*) and non-revelational (i.e., tradition, consensus and reason) sources, they cannot be called as revelational or revealed rules, or the revelation. Throughout the work, by *Sharʿ* or *fiqh* we mean "Muslim normative system of rules".

the *Sunnī* and the *Shīʿī* in the first place, while each of them is subdivided into various jurisprudential schools, altogether five major *madhhabs*.³

Each of the *madhhabs* developed its own body of theological arguments and, in consequence, principles of jurisprudential reasoning (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). The latter (i.e., the jurisprudential reasoning system) was necessitated, on the one hand, by the need to put forward appropriate rulings for new cases,⁴ and, on the other, by the need to make the body of existing rulings a consistent one. *Shīʿī uṣūl al-fiqh* has been pursuing the same path. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this reasoning system was a latecomer, at least in terms of production of related systematized and comprehensive works.⁵ At any rate, *Shīʿī* scholars approached the related issues in their own ways. One of the most important issues was, of course, the status of human reason.

As a whole, Muslim scholars, including the *Shīʿīs*, started to grapple with the issue of '*aql*' ("human reason", "reason" or "rationality") soon after the spread of Islam as a new religion. Part of the discussion was theological. It has been revolving around a question on the role of reason in the religion. In other words, the question that has to be answered concerns the relationship between the basics of Islam and '*aql*'. Although there did not exist an agreement among Muslim scholars on this question, the main stream of *Shīʿī* scholars, when the *Shīʿī fiqh* was not well developed yet, considered '*aql*' as the "final authority" upon which the very basic articles of the faith – i.e., those of the faith in the one and only god, the prophet-hood of Muḥammad (*pbuh*), and the after-life – could be established. This is the first major meaning of '*aql*' among *Shīʿī* scholars.⁶ We may call it "*aql* as authority".⁷

In contrast, the issue of rationality had already appeared on the horizon of jurisprudential (*fiqhī*) discussions and arguments in various ways. The arguments were indeed abstracted and presented, mostly by the *Sunnī* scholars, within *uṣūl al-fiqh* discussions under such titles as *qiyās* (analogy), *istiḥṣān* (juristic preference) and *al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala* (public interests). Except few

3 The major *Shīʿī* jurisprudential *madhhab* is, in fact, the Twelver (*Ithnā 'asharī*) and the major Sunni ones are those of *Hanafī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfiʿī* and *Hanbalī*. In this research we are concerned with the heritage of the *ithnā 'asharī* jurisprudence and jurisprudential reasoning, as it stands now.

4 See Gurjī, *Nigāhī bi Taḥawwul 'Ilm-i Uṣūl*, p. 24.

5 See Gurjī, *Nigāhī Bi Taḥawwul 'Ilm-i Uṣūl*, pp. 11, 23 et seq. & 31 et seq.; Bilāji, *Taṭawwur 'Ilm al-Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 57–59.

6 See for instance Mufid/b. Muḥammad, *al-Tadhkira Bi-Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 28; Ṭūsī, *al-Udda fi al-Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 759–762.

7 Later on, '*aql*' assumed another meaning in theological discussions which will be referred to under the third major meaning of '*aql*' (i.e., reason as an independent source) in *Shīʿī uṣūl al-fiqh*.

figures among early *Shīʿī* scholars, most of them tended to disagree with such kinds of rational arguments in the process of inferring religious rulings from the scriptures.⁸

Instead, the *Shīʿī* jurisprudential reasoning used to put the main emphasis on the religious texts or the scriptures.⁹ It took some time until the issue of reason found its way into the *Shīʿī* jurisprudential reasoning system in a particular way. It happened at the age of expansion of *Shīʿī fiqh*, when a number of jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) came up with the idea that a certain kind of rational reasoning could be used in the process of rule-inferring from the scriptures.¹⁰ This was considered a practical or secondary reasoning. It was argued that practical reasoning, i.e., utilising practical principles (such as those of “permissibility of acts” (*ibāḥa*) or “presumption of continuity of the previous state” (*istiṣḥāb*)) in search of the related ruling, began where the scriptural sources ended. As long as a relevant text to the issue at hand could be found, it was not permissible to resort to a practical principle. The practical reasoning was of a secondary and complementary status in the inference process. This is the second major meaning of *ʿaql* in the eyes of *Shīʿī* scholars. We may call it “*ʿaql* as practical reason”.¹¹

Subsequently, the resort to human reason in arguments of the jurisprudential reasoning system gained a new momentum. In this stage, certain *Shīʿī* writers referred to reason as a source, alongside the other three major sources,¹² from which rulings could be derived. We may call it “*ʿaql* as independent source”. The third meaning of *ʿaql* among *Shīʿīs* in its turn gave rise to the question about the relationship between rulings decreed by reason, on the one hand, and those commanded by God, on the other. This debate in turn led

8 See Mūsawī, *Bāz Andīshī Dar Āyīn Istīnāʿ*, ch. 4; Tabatabaʾī, *An Introduction to Shīʿī Law*, ch. 4.

9 *Qurʾān* and *Sunna* (from the *Shīʿī* perspective, i.e., the Tradition of the Prophet and his household).

10 It could be said that Muḥaqqiq Ḥillī (d. 676/1277) was one of the major figures who began to look positively at *ijtihād*. See for instance Bujnurdī, *Maqālāt Uṣūlī*, pp. 38–40; Burjī, *Tārīkh-i ʿIlm-i Uṣūl wa-Fiqh-i Shīʿa*, p. 258.

11 In this regard, see Ḥillī, *al-Muʿtabar fī Sharḥ al-Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 28 & 31 et seq.; b. Idrīs Ḥillī, *al-Sarāʾir*, pp. 46 & 377; Awwal, *Dhikrā al-Shīʿa fī Aḥkām al-Sharʿa*, pp. 44 & 52 et seq.; b. ʿAbdullāh, *al-Tanqīḥ al-Rāʾi Li-Mukhtaṣar al-Sharāʾiʿ*, p. 5 et seq. Baḥrānī’s account of this usage of *ʿaql* by rationalist scholars is interesting. See Baḥrānī, *al-Ḥadāʾiq al-Nādira*, p. 125 et seq.

12 They are *Qurʾān*, *Sunna* and *Ijmāʿ*. *Ijmāʿ* or consensus, of course, has a particular meaning among *Shīʿī* scholars. It is required to include the hidden Imam’s opinion. See for example ʿAlam al-Hudā, *Rasāʾil*, pp. 20 & 313.

to the claim by certain scholars that the two groups of rulings were mutually entailed or correlated.¹³

In what follows I will attempt to explain the *Shīʿī* background to and meaning of the correlation principle. This explanation will be followed with the arguments against and for the principle. Finally, I will conclude on the basis of an appraisal of the competing arguments.

2 The *Shīʿī* Background

Early *Shīʿī fiqh* was in fact a collection based on saying. As most *fiqhī* rulings were determined by sayings of the Prophet and the *Shīʿī Imāms*, the early *Shīʿī fiqh* is usually called a *riwāʿī* (saying based) one. That is, most of jurisprudential works were indeed codifications of *riwāyāt* (sayings) in accordance with the then current *fiqhī* titles and chapters.¹⁴ In the next step, *fuqahāʾ* started to author jurisprudential works, though these works almost completely relied on *riwāyāt*.¹⁵ Later, a number of these works tended, as mentioned above, to embrace non-scriptural elements (materials not derived from the sayings). This consisted of practical reasoning where textual evidence was lacking. Nonetheless, resort to reason in the practical level was just the beginning of a powerful trend. It in fact laid bare a basic outlook on the status of human reason in the moral and jurisprudential realms. The main concern focused on the question whether or not this human capacity can act as an independent source alongside the divine ones. An affirmative answer to this question led to extensive discussions on implications of the belief in such an independent source.

In fact, a number of major scholars conceded the possibility of reason serving as an independent source of rule inference. That is to say, the source was taken to be mainly embedded in such general statements as “justice is good” and “injustice is bad”. These kinds of statements can lead to certain rulings which are also considered divine or *Sharʿī* (commanded by the religious normative system). The resulting ruling is drawn on a syllogism, referred to below, that both of its premises are rational propositions.¹⁶ These rulings were

13 See Ṭūsī, *al-ʿUddafī al-Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 759; Lāhijī, *Gawhar-i Murād*, pp. 343–347; Bū ʿImrān, *Maʿalayi Ikhtiyār*, pp. 277–292.

14 See, for instance Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*; al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Man Lā Yaḥḍaruhu al-Faqī*; Ṭūsī, *al-Istibṣār fīmā Ikhtalafa Min al-Akhbār*.

15 See Tabatabaʾi, *An Introduction to Shīʿī Law*, pp. 32–39.

16 See Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anẓār*, pp. 319–325; Muẓaffar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 180.

later subsumed under the heading of “rational independent propositions” (completely or self-sufficiently rational principles).

The rational trend was both complicated and bolstered with the incorporation of a theological discussion into *uṣūl al-fiqh* contents. To explain, in Muslim theology (*kalām*), one of the controversies went back to the nature of good and evil. It was argued by one group (the *Ash‘arites*) that human reason cannot discern goodness and badness of acts, which have to be determined by God’s commands, whereas another group (the *Mu‘tazilites*) argued for inevitability of recognition of such a capacity for reason.¹⁷ The inevitability derives from the truth that a command by any other source than reason may not be understood and convincingly accepted except via human reason.¹⁸ This was known as the “rational good and evil” (“*ḥusn wa-qubḥ ‘aqlīyān*”) problem¹⁹ which was imported into jurisprudential reasoning discussions with a view to its entailments for the rule inference process.

Evidently, as the relevant adversaries in the field of theology, two camps of proponents and opponents of “rational discerning of good and evil” were also formed in the field of *Shī‘ī* jurisprudence and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The proponents tended to take logical implications of the principle seriously and provide the relevant analytical framework while the opponents feared that an entire collapse of the religion would occur if such a belief were applied to the process of inferring jurisprudential rulings.²⁰

It can be readily seen how the rising trend of rationalism could divide *Shī‘ī* jurisprudents into two major groups. Historically, it did happen. One group of scholars resolutely denied that human reason might act as an independent source in the rule inference process and solely relied on the sacred scriptures to this effect. They were called *Akḥbārīs* (scripturalists), while another group conceded, in a one or another, such a status to human reason, and were called *Uṣūlīs* (literally: principlist, i.e., rationalists).

The *Uṣūlī* trend went so far as to pronounce a “correlation principle” (“*qā‘ida al-mulāzama*”). Some of *Shī‘ī* jurisprudents, of course drawing on the

17 See al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, pp. 111–130; Sabzwārī (a 6th/12th century scholar), *al-Khulāṣa fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*, pp. 183 et seq. & 192.

18 See for example Kāshānī, *al-Uṣūl al-Aṣḥiyā*, p. 149; Muzaffar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 202 et seq.

19 See for instance ‘Alam al-Hudā, *al-Dharī‘a Ilā Uṣūl al-Sharī‘a*, pp. 568–572 & 696–697; ‘Alam al-Hudā, *Tahdhīb al-Uṣūl Ilā ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, pp. 52–56; al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I‘tiqād*, pp. 79–92. See also Zarkashī, *al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 134–174.

20 It seems that the culmination of this trend occurred in 11th Islamic century, a trend that has continued to exist up to this time. Major figures such as Ni‘matullāh Jaz‘arī (d. 1112/1700), Yūsuf Baḥrānī and Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1033/1624) played an important role in clarification of the related ideas.

theological line and discussions presented in earlier *Sunnī uṣūl al-fiqh* works,²¹ came up with the belief that “whatever is commanded by *Sharʿ* (the religious normative system) is ruled by reason, and whatever is commanded by reason is ruled by *Sharʿ*”. The two, it was so argued, were correlated. It can be said that it was Shaykh Murtaḍā Anṣārī, the great *Shīʿī Imāmī* jurisprudent of the 19th century, who put the matter in this form and coined the proposition “*kullu mā ḥakam bihī al-ʿaql ḥakam bihi al-Sharʿ*” (whatever reason rules, *Sharʿ* decrees).²²

Therefore, not only was it accepted that reason can be an independent source of rulings, the implications of such a belief were also embraced. The first implication was that the sources of inference ought not to run counter to each other. The second, more robust, implication indicated that the rational and the textual sources mutually entail each other. How is the mutual entailment, i.e., the correlation, explained?

3 Signification

As seen, the correlation principle consists of two general propositions. It is claimed that the first proposition (i.e., whatever decreed by *Sharʿ* is commanded by *ʿaql*) is a theological matter, whereas the second one (i.e., whatever ruled by *ʿaql* is commanded by *Sharʿ*) is a *fiqhī* reasoning matter (i.e., a matter of *uṣūl al-fiqh*).²³

The first proposition constitutes a theological claim since it presupposes a particular attribute for God. It introduces a “rational” God, since one cannot accept the first proposition unless one assumes that the issuer of decrees does so in accordance with rational principles. In other words, reason commands whatever *Sharʿ* commands because *Sharʿ* is already itself a rational system, which never exceeds rational limits. This is evidently a *Muʿtazilite* principle.²⁴

21 Ibn Barḥān (d. 518/1124), a 6th Islamic century *Sunnī* scholar, who held a *Muʿtazilī* stance in theology and believed in the rational goodness (*ḥusn*) and evilness (*qubḥ*) principle, claimed that, according to the opinion of scholars of his camp, *ḥusn* and *qubḥ* are indeed rational, but any command to do or refrain from doing an action is issued by *Sharʿ*. See b. Barḥān, *al-Wuṣūl Ilā al-Uṣūl*, pp. 57–63. Later, *Zarkashī*, an 8th Islamic century *Sunnī* scholar, also denied a correlation between rational and *Sharʿī* rulings. Rulings (*aḥkām*), he argues, ought to be commanded by the “text” (*khīṭāb*). See Shāfiʿī, *Tashnīf al-Masāmiʿ bi-Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ*, pp. 14–145.

22 Anṣārī, *Maṭariḥ al-Anṣar*, p. 335.

23 See Anṣārī, *al-Fawāʿid al-Uṣūlīya*, p. 591.

24 See al-Isnawī al-Shāfiʿī, *Nihāyat al-Suʿl fī Sharḥ*, p. 82 et seq.; Anṣārī, *Maṭariḥ al-Anṣar*, p. 330 et seq.

The second proposition of the correlation principle is claimed to be a matter of jurisprudential reasoning. This is due to the function of reason in the jurisprudential rule production process, the most important form of which is embedded in a syllogism. It functions as follows. "(1) X is commanded by 'aql. (2) Whatever that is commanded by 'aql is commanded by Shar'. (3) Thus, X is commanded by Shar'." On this account, reason does in fact function as an independent jurisprudential source.²⁵ As seen, the process of deduction is entirely rational, which gives rise to independent rational propositions: normative rulings (including legal and moral).

The question now is whether or not the rational source leaves the *Shar'ī*, i.e., the scriptural, sources intact. It does not seem to do so. This is why the rational correlation principle has met strong negative responses. As mentioned above, the responses were mainly made by the scripturalists (*Akhbārīs*).

4 Critical Responses

In fact, early discussions on the issue of correlation began from a negative perspective. It seems that Fāḍil Tūnī (d. 1071/1660), under the influence of *Sunnī* scholars such as Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, argued against a correlation between the rational and the scriptural rulings.²⁶ Subsequently, it was indeed in response to criticisms raised against the principle that supporting arguments emerged on the horizon.

It is worth noting that *Akhbārī* scholars in general distrust human reason and do not believe in its capacity to perceive rulings approved by God.²⁷ Accordingly, various criticisms which ultimately derive from a text-based approach have been raised against the rational correlation principle. The critiques may be divided into three main lines. On the one hand, the opponents have tried to put forward certain rulings that are not issued on the basis of a benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) or on account of a reason underlying the commanded acts. Therefore, no link can be established between reason and rulings in the first place.²⁸ On the other hand, it has been argued that either the rulings serve

25 See Anṣārī, *Maṭariḥ al-Anṣār*, p. 9 et seq.; Muzaḥḥar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 180–182.

26 Fāḍil Tūnī, for instance, extensively quotes Zarkashī's argument on denying the correlation principle while endeavouring to refute it. See Khurāsānī, *al-Wāfiya fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 175–177.

27 See for instance Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-Nu'māniya*, pp. 87–91; Juwaynī, *al-Irshād Ilā Qawāṭi' al-Adilla fī Uṣūl al-'Itiqād*, pp. 107–110.

28 See al-Qāḍī, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl*, p. 157; b. Barḥān, *al-Wuṣūl Ilā al-Uṣūl*, pp. 57–63; 'Alam al-Hudā, *Rasā'il*, pp. 177–180; Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 148.

no purpose or, even if there are purposes and benefits behind them, human reason cannot discern all of them.²⁹ These two categories indeed point to the separation of concepts of good and evil, on the one hand, and concepts of obligation or prohibition, on the other. Finally, a fundamental criticism has been raised to the effect that if reason can comprehend good and evil and command them, then, reason or causes for sending prophets, by God, would be nullified.³⁰ It indeed becomes absurd.

As mentioned, the first major criticism against the idea of an independent rational understanding of commands is that there are indeed certain religious rulings that cannot be rational.³¹ Since there is no benefit (*maṣlaḥa*) in the acts that are subjects of this kind of rulings they are not rational. In fact, it is argued that the commands are issued without intending the relevant act itself. For instance, all commands for testing (*awāmir imtiḥānīya*), according to which the command *per se* is intended; all commands with the aim of dissimulation (*awāmir taqīya*), by which acting in accordance with the rival sect's rulings are commanded but the commission of the acts are not really intended; and commands in which a particular intention by the faithful is required, i.e., the intention of committing the act for the sake of getting closer to God (*awāmir ta'abbudī*) may be mentioned.³²

The second major group of criticisms can be explained in the following way. It is sometimes argued that reasons for many of *Shar'ī* rulings are unknown. They cannot be discovered. This means that even if people assert that they have reached a rational perception of rulings it does not necessarily mean that they have discovered divine rulings, since, the arguments continue, the divine rule-maker (*Shārī'*) does not make them in conformity with rational criteria. That is why it is mentioned in the Quran that "[...] We never punish until We send a messenger".³³ To support the last claim, it is also contended that divine rulings are general, while rational rulings may differ from case to case. They offer as an example the prohibition of wine. It is forbidden in all cases, whereas if one wishes to base the ruling on a particular cause, say causing drunkenness, one is bound to allow the drinking in those cases in which it does not lead to inebriation. In contrast, it is argued that religious rulings are delimited, in the

29 See al-Qāḍī, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, pp. 17 et seq. & 35 & 42 & 86; Māturīdī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, pp. 136–138.

30 See for instance al-'Allāma al-Ḥillī, *Minhāj al-Yaqīn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, p. 404; Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 146; Iṣfahānī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Gharawīya fī al-Uṣūl al-Fiqhīya*.

31 See Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniya wa-Shawāhid al-Makkīya*, p. 329.

32 See Nā'īnī, *Ajwad al-Taqrīrāt*, pp. 37–40; Iṣfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḥ al-Kifāya*, pp. 354–359; Iṣfahānī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Gharawīya fī al-Uṣūl al-Fiqhīya*, pp. 336–339; Qumī, *Sharḥ Wāfiya*.

33 *Qur'an, Sūra al-'Isrā'* (17), Verse 15.

sense that they are limited to those rulings that are issued by God (i.e., they are *tawqīfī*), hence, they are not prone to a rational discovery or establishment. Eventually, even if one insists on the capacity of human reason in discerning the reasons for rulings, it is alleged that it may grasp some of their underlying reasons, it cannot arrive at all the necessary and sufficient reasons in this regard.³⁴

This is why it is claimed that rational discernment of good and evil – and, respectively, declaring them good (*taḥsīn*) or declaring them evil (*taqbīḥ*) – does not mean that reason has discovered an obligatory or a prohibitive command on them. Praise (*madḥ*) and blame (*dhamm*), the argument goes, are different from rewarding and punishing. The former may, for the sake of argument, be realized by reason, but the latter is determined by the divinity. In order for one to know the *Sharʿī* rulings, one has to know whether or not a certain act will be rewarded or punished by God.³⁵ However, a full-fledged anti-rationality or scripturalism means that both discernment of good and evil and issuance of a command to do/avoid them is *Sharʿī*. This brings us to the third criticism.

The third major criticism rests on a deep theological conviction. If human reason has the capacity to discern good and evil and its determination that something is good or that something is evil are equal to God's commands to those effects and to His, respectively, rewarding and punishing, then, there remains no ground for the prophets' mission. Why should God send a prophet when reason can on its own establish oughts and ought-nots which are supposed to be proclaimed by God's messenger? The aim is accordingly to refute a full-fledged rational good and evil – i.e., the belief that human reason discerns both goodness and badness of actions, on the one hand, and that it commands commission or omission of them, on the other – which supposedly entails the absurdity of sending the Messenger by God.³⁶

On the basis of the aforementioned criticisms levelled against the claim of correlation between rational and scriptural rulings, a number of scholars (as referred to below), in particular certain figures among the scripturalists, have adopted a middle way. Let us turn to this view which, by replying to the criticism, can be considered as a partial defence of the correlation principle.

34 For the explanation and dealing with the criticisms, see Iṣfahānī, *al-Fuṣūl al-Gharawīya fī al-Uṣūl al-Fiqhīya*, pp. 316–346; Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anzār*, pp. 337 & 346–370; Khurāsānī, *al-Wāfiya fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 171–177; Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madanīya wa-Shawāhid al-Makkīya*, pp. 325–332; Qumī, *Sharḥ Wāfiya*, pp. 87–90.

35 See Muzaḥḥar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 117.

36 See Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madanīya wa-Shawāhid al-Makkīya*, p. 330; Baḥrānī, *al-Ḥadā'iq al-Nāḍira*, p. 131; Nā'inī, *Ajwad al-Taqrūrāt*, p. 37.

5 Partial Support

As the partial support position originates in attempts to counter the criticisms against rational correlation, or to be more precise against rationality in the religious normative field, we shall first bring in the main answers to the criticisms mentioned in the previous section.

Replies to the first group of criticisms go as follows. There are in fact particular purposes and reasons for the rulings which are claimed not to require commission of a particular act. It is impossible for a divine command not to have an action as its subject. Take the example of Abraham in Quran.³⁷ It is claimed that he was commanded to slaughter his son, while the command was issued with the aim of testing him. In reply, it is said that the command was in fact directed towards the preliminary actions, rather than the killing itself. Not only is there an action to which the command is related, there is also benefit in taking the related preliminary action. It elevated Abraham's faith. There is a benefit in the related act, even though the benefit is not clear *prima facie*. In another way, it is also argued that in cases like this, there is no real ruling. It is just an utterance of certain words; otherwise there must be an arbitrary system of rule issuance. Thus, there must be an act for the commission/omission of which the apparently testing command was issued, since it is not rational that the divine will relates to something that does not have any benefit. This is why, if one cannot find an action to which the *awāmir imtiḥānīya* are directed, one has to say that there is no command at all, no obligation to follow the apparent command.³⁸ Finally, it may even be said that the very testing itself is a benefit.³⁹ In the same vein, as for *awāmir taqīya*, it is said that here also no real obligation is issued. Hence, they are not a matter of concern here.⁴⁰ Regarding *awāmir ta'abbudī*, it is replied that various commands may be directed to a single act. For instance, one command is about the intention of doing an act, say for getting closer to God, and another command is about doing the act itself. They are not mutually exclusive. Two commands regarding one act are rightly conceivable.⁴¹

37 See *Qur'an, Sūra al-Ṣāffāt* (37), Verses 101–108.

38 See Kharrāzī, *Umdat al-Uṣūl*, pp. 506–509.

39 See Qummī, *al-Qawānīn al-Muḥkama fī al-Uṣūl*, p. 13.

40 See Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anzār*, pp. 335–343; Khurāsānī, *Fawā'id al-Uṣūl*, p. 137.

41 See Nāī'nī, *Ajwad al-Taqrīrāt*, pp. 37–40; Iṣfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḥ al-Kifāya*, pp. 354–359; Tabrizī, *Risāla fī al-Taḥsīn wa al-Taḥbīb al-'Aqlīyayn*, pp. 132–138; Khurāsānī, *Fawā'id al-Uṣūl*, p. 137. In general, see Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anzār*, pp. 346–370 for the exposition and reply to the criticisms.

Concerning the second group of criticisms, it is argued that most of the arguments in this group are sheer claims. They are indeed based on a theological outlook on religious normativity. Is it justifiable at all to claim that the divinity does not rule in a rational way? How does he then expect the addressees of His commands to “understand” and “follow” the commands in the first place? If reason does not understand the rules and rulings, this would lead to the absurdity of sending the Prophet. The reason lies in the fact that, in this case, neither the very words of invitation by the Prophet nor the content of his commands could be understood by the faithful in the first place, nor would they find a reason to follow the commands, in the second.⁴² The latter point is profoundly crucial. Why should the faithful follow a non-rational or irrational command? The last point reveals the importance of the first part of the correlation principle, i.e., whatever *Sharʿ* rules reason also decrees. It means that God commands in a rational way, so that whatever He commands reason decrees as well. Therefore, there is actually a rational basis or purpose for *Sharʿī* rulings. Major writers (during 13th–14th / 19th–20th centuries), such as Anṣārī and Nāʿīnī, have emphasized this point, and indeed this has become one of the principles repeated by all *Shīʿī uṣūlīs* (rationalists) that rulings decreed by God do follow rational purposes (bringing about benefits (*maṣāliḥ*) and preventing harms (*mafasīd*)).⁴³

In addition, the alleged limited nature of the *Sharʿī* rulings is itself a circular claim. That is, it is based on the presupposition that God does not command rationally. Therefore, the answer to the invocation of the verse (“[...] we never punish until we send a messenger”) is that it is about avoidance of worldly punishment before sending a prophet; it does not mean that reason does not discern the commands.⁴⁴ It is about punishment, not discerning good/obligation and evil/prohibition.

On this basis, it should also be said that divine rulings, like any other kind of commands, are issued in a general, rather than particular, form. Therefore, both rational and *Sharʿī* rulings, once issued, have to be generally followed, unless strong justification may be forwarded for their relaxation. Examples put forth in this group of criticisms can readily be dealt with. For instance, it is claimed that the Prophet of Islam did not make tooth brushing obligatory for the community, but it can be explained that it did not happen because

42 See Bihbahānī, *al-Fawā'id al-Hā'iriya*, p. 368 et seq.

43 See al-Hudā, *al-Dhar'ā Ila Uṣūl al-Shar'ī'a*, pp. 568–572 & 696–697; Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anzār*, pp. 375–378; Nāʿīnī, *Ajwad al-Taqrīrāt*, p. 36 et seq.; Mūsawī Bujnurdī, *Maqālāt Uṣūlī*, pp. 41–43; and Kharrāzī, *Umda al-Uṣūl*, pp. 503–509.

44 See Bihbahānī, *al-Fawā'id al-Hā'iriya*, p. 373.

of hardship, rather than for something that cannot be comprehended at all. Therefore, to use a metaphor introduced by some scholars, one may say that any ruling that can be issued by the external messenger, i.e., the prophet, can also be made by the internal messenger, i.e., human reason.⁴⁵ As narrated from *Shī'ī Imāms*, the messengers of God are called outward evidence (*hujja ṣāhira*), while rational rules are called inward evidence (*hujja bāṭina*).⁴⁶ On the basis of this it is argued that *Shar'* is reason from the outside and reason is *Shar'* from the inside.⁴⁷

Having explained these responses, we should mention that one of the claims in the second group is not dealt with in a clear way. Can human reason grasp all underlying reasons of a ruling? Although some *Shī'ī* jurists attempted to deal with the outright denial of rational capacity to issue rulings or of the correlation principle, they did not go so far as to confirm a complete capacity to this effect, i.e., for the principle.

Therefore, a number of scholars, who may call themselves non-scripturalists or rationalists (*uṣūlīs*), have endeavoured to take a middle way regarding this issue. They claim that good and evil can be comprehended by reason, though this human capacity cannot understand and decide on a command to impose or forbid committing an act. That is, the fact that an action is perceived, by human reason, as good or evil does not entail that one is rationally obligated to do it or avoid doing it. The command can only be issued by God in the divine texts. For instance, it is argued that there are actions which are condemned by reason while *Shar'* has not prohibited them, and also their opposites are not obligated by *Shar'*.⁴⁸ According to this view, both good and evil, on the one hand, and the obligatory and the prohibited, on the other hand, are of inherently independent natures. They may not be reduced to each other. The former is inherently rational; while the latter is inherently divine (*Shar'ī*). Correspondingly, a distinction has been made between two kinds of obligatory acts: the rational and the *Shar'ī*. A rational obligatory act, it is argued, amounts to praise or blame, while a *Shar'ī* one brings about rewarding or punishing by

45 See Nā'īnī, *Ajwad al-Taqrīrāt*, pp. 37–40; Isfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḥ al-Kifāya*, pp. 354–359; Tabrizī, *Risāla fī al-Taḥsīn wa al-Taḥbīb al-'Aqlīyayn*, pp. 132–138. In general, see Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anzār*, pp. 346–370 for the exposition and reply to the criticisms.

46 See Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, p. 16.

47 See Kāshānī, *al-Uṣūl al-Aṣḥīya*, p. 150 ("Fa al-shar'u 'aqlu min khārij wa al-'aqlu shar'u min dākhil").

48 See Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madanīya wa-Shawāhid al-Makkīya*, pp. 325–332; Fakhr Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Muḥaṣṣal*, pp. 478–482; 'Aḍud al-Dīn 'Ijī, *al-Mawāqif*, p. 178; Qumī, *Sharḥ Wāfiya*, p. 86; al-Qāḍī, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, pp. 17 et seq. & 35 & 42 & 86 et seq.; al-Qāḍī, *al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl*, pp. 151–172.

God. Therefore, although reason may discern good and evil acts, it is only *Shar'* that can command committing or omitting them.⁴⁹

This stance is exposed in various ways. Subḥānī, considering himself as *uṣūlī*, has argued that although one can concede that whatever reason judges as good or evil is also considered good and evil by God, reason can never fully comprehend the benefits and harms involved in acts. Hence, it cannot be an independent and full source for inferring rules. This is because *Shar'ī* rulings are based on their ensuing benefits and harms which are only fully known to God, and that reward and punishment are related to benefits and harms. Therefore, whatever that is ruled by *Shar'* may not be necessarily ruled by reason. This is what was meant, Subḥānī continues, by Imām Ṣādiq when he said "Verily, the religion of God is not comprehended by reason."⁵⁰

Interestingly, a particular stance is adopted by scholars such as Akhund Khurāsānī, to the effect that although rulings can only be issued by God, but none of them fly in the face of rational normative judgements, that is, none should violate rationality. Akhund Khurāsānī admits that human reason can understand good and evil, but he claims that further incentives are required so that the commission or omission of an act becomes obligatory. Rational praise (*madḥ*) or blame (*dhamm*) is not enough. In other words, the rational good or evil of an act is a necessary, rather than a sufficient, condition for it to become obligatory or prohibited. Therefore, as soon as an act is rationally considered as good or evil, the religious rule-maker (*Shārī'*) does not necessarily issue a decree obligating its commission or omission. But, if a *Shar'ī* ruling is intended to be issued, it cannot run counter to the rational judgement;⁵¹ otherwise the *Shar'ī* ruling would be arbitrary. Indeed, a fine connection, though in a negative way, is built here between the rational good and evil, on the one hand, and the *Shar'ī* obligation and prohibition, on the other.

It should be added that in this analysis, two positions are in fact presumed for God. God is, as the argument goes, both rational (*'āqil*) and ruler (*mawlā*). As the leader of all rational beings (*ra'īs al-'uqalā*), He certainly praises good and blames evil, whereas as the ruler, He himself does not command the commission or omission of any act just because it is rationally, respectively, praised or blamed. That is to say, although the reasons for which God commands do not oppose rationality, they may not be known by reason.⁵² Reason can gain

49 See Khurāsānī, *al-Wāfiya fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 171–177.

50 See Subḥānī Tabrīzī, *Risāla fī al-Taḥsīn wa al-Taḥqīq al-'Aqlīyayn*, pp. 120–122.

51 See Akhund Khurāsānī, *Fawā'id al-Uṣūl*, pp. 123–137; see also Iṣfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḥ al-Kifāya*, p. 344.

52 See Iṣfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḥ al-Kifāya*, pp. 347–349.

a brief knowledge (*‘ilm ‘ijmālī*) of the purpose of the divine rulings. It briefly knows that they are aimed at bringing about certain rational benefits and preventing certain rational harms.⁵³ But it is alleged, no detailed knowledge can be gained by human reason in this regard. Therefore, as it is not possible rationally to establish all underlying reasons for an act, we can only accept those rulings that are the subject of agreement by all rational; rulings as stated in the commonly shared (*mashḥūra*) propositions, as rulings that are divinity decreed as well.⁵⁴

This last explanation seems to contain an answer to the question concerning the capacity of reason to discern all reasons underlying a ruling. It may sound as if it proposes that the divine and the rational sources of rulings are identical.

6 Identity Thesis

It has been seen that many of these responses to criticisms raised against the correlation principle in fact form a half-way defence of it. In a negative way, they intend to show that *Shar‘ī* rulings are not foreign to rationality. In a positive way, they back the idea of a rational ability of understanding good and evil. They, however, make a distinction between comprehending good and evil, on the one hand, and issuing commands to commit or omit certain acts, on the other. They tend to make room for human reason in the former, while keeping it away from the latter.⁵⁵ This might back the belief that any religious ruling does not certainly violate rational rules and beliefs, by which the theological part of the correlation principle is confirmed (i.e. whatever commanded by *Shar‘* is ruled by reason: *kullu mā ḥakam bihi al-shar‘ ḥakam bihi al-‘aql*), but it does not imply that reason may issue rulings, which is the jurisprudential reasoning (or *uṣūlī*) part of the principle (i.e., whatever commanded by reason is ruled by *Shar‘*: *kullu mā ḥakam bihi al-‘aql ḥakam bihi al-Shar‘*). To back the jurisprudential reasoning part, a form of identity thesis is required.

In this line, some scholars have attempted to support an identity between the two kinds of rulings, i.e., *Shar‘ī* and rational, in the following way. It is not the case, it is argued, that reason knows *Shar‘ī* rulings *ab initio*. Rather, here

53 See Hilli, *Ma‘ārij al-Uṣūl*, pp. 257–260; Anṣārī, *al-Fawā'id al-Uṣūlīya*, pp. 612–615.

54 See Iṣfahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḥ al-Kifāya*, pp. 351–354.

55 See Khurāsānī, *al-Wāfiya fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 171–177; Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madanīya wa-Shawāhid al-Makkīya*, pp. 325–332; Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 145 et seq.; Qumī, *Sharḥ Wāfiya*, pp. 86–88.

a “mutual relation” must be shown. Thus, the identity is about transferring a known ruling on a subject (be it *Sharʿī* or rational) to another subject whose ruling is not known. This is done through a syllogism, as mentioned above, the conclusion of which is a *Sharʿī* or rational ruling, depending on the departure point.⁵⁶

Now, a question arises regarding the first premise in the mentioned syllogism, i.e., “X is commanded by ‘*aqī*’”. What does one mean by “commanded by reason”? Certain scholars equate it with those practical judgements agreed upon by all rational beings (*qaḍāyā mashhūra* or *ārāʾ maḥmūda*: commonly shared propositions among the rational or publicly commended opinions). Of course, as the argument goes, these judgements are to be based on public interests, protection of the public order (*hiḡhan li-l-niḡām*), and survival of the humankind, such as the goodness of justice and the evilness of injustice.⁵⁷ At any rate, “rational independent propositions” are all about rulings that are completely issued by reason.⁵⁸ However, as God, the divine rule-maker, is the leader of all rational beings (*raʿīs al-ʿuqalā*), He commands whatsoever reason rules.

The ultimate point is that a ruling by reason or *Sharʿ* is indeed a ruling by the other. As Shaykh Anṣārī puts it, reason is in fact the messenger of *Sharʿ*, and the two sources issue identical rulings, if any. This is what he calls the “real” correlation between *Sharʿī* and rational rulings.⁵⁹ On this basis, one is wrong to consider praise and blame as different from rewarding and punishing; a point that was already stated in a number of theological works. For instance, ʿAllāma Ḥillī, in defence of the prophet-hood, had already explained that prophets emphasize, rather than establish, what reason independently establishes.⁶⁰ Or, as Fayyād Lāhijī explains, there are two kinds of commands: literal and spiritual. The former is embedded in God’s word, and the latter is embodied by reason’s decree. Therefore, an obligation by reason is to be considered as a verbal command by God.⁶¹

56 See Muzaḡḡar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 111–113.

57 See Iṣḡahānī, *Nihāyat al-Dirāya fī Sharḡ al-Kiḡāya*, pp. 22–30.

58 See Muzaḡḡar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 180; Muzaḡḡar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 114; Bujnurdī, *Maḡālāt Uṣūlī*, pp. 47–49.

59 See Anṣārī, *Matāriḡ al-Anṡār*, pp. 345 & 370 et seq.; See also Nāīnī, *Ajwad al-Taḡrīrāt*, pp. 37–40. It is worth mentioning that “real correlation” is in fact claimed in response to the “apparent correlation” idea, according to which “wherever there is no *Sharʿī* ruling contravening a rational one we may believe in correlation.”

60 See al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī, *Minhāj al-Yaqīn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, p. 406.

61 See Lāhijī, *Gawhar-i Murād*, pp. 343–347.

Later, this outlook found its way into *uṣūl al-fiqh* works. For instance, according to Shaykh Anṣārī, there is no difference between obligation by the divine word and that by reason decree.⁶² He believes that reason's judgement on goodness or badness equates with, respectively, a verdict on reward and punishment for the related action.⁶³ In the words of Mirzā Qummī, an entitlement to praise has no other meaning than being entitled to rewarding, and also being deserved to be blamed is in fact the same as being deserved to be punished.⁶⁴ These are not matters of utterance, but rather matters of both utterance and action by the issuer of commands, in particular with regard to the divinity. Therefore, wherever there is a ruling by reason, *Shar'* logically commands the same, and this command is of an "exhortative" (*irshādī*) nature.⁶⁵ They are not established *ab initio*, hence, they cannot be of a "constitutive" (*ta'sīsī*) nature. To establish a ruling which is already established by reason, the argument goes, would be absurd and nonsensical.⁶⁶

Qummī continues that the judgement of reason is in fact another form of God's word; hence, it is a divine command on the related matter. Therefore, the claim that verbal command (*khiṭāb*), by God, is needed so that we can say there is a reward or a punishment for the commission or omission of an act is baseless. The language of reason is the language of God, therefore, it may be said that there exists a verbal command as well. Reason in fact lays bare the intention of God.⁶⁷

It is seen that there is a tendency among a number of *Shī'ī* scholars to unite the divine and the rational sources and their rulings. Nonetheless, a vital question arises at this point: what does this group of scholars mean by rational judgements, i.e., commands by reason? What are the instances of such judgements? How are they going to be identified or attained?

Akhund Khurāsānī requires perception of sufficient, rather than necessary, causes by human reason so that it can issue a ruling. Shaykh Anṣārī stipulates certain conditions for reason. In this field, when he talks about human reason, he in fact thinks of a particular kind of reason or a restrained reason. Those judgements of human reason are acceptable, as Anṣārī argues, that are

62 See Anṣārī, *al-Fawā'id al-Uṣūlīya*, p. 571.

63 See Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-Anzār*, pp. 340–343.

64 See Qummī, *al-Qawānīn al-Muḥkama fī al-Uṣūl*, pp. 7–10.

65 See Bujnurdī, *Maqālāt Uṣūlī*, p. 49.

66 See Iṣfahānī, *Hidāya al-Mustarshidīn fī Sharḥ Ma'ālim al-Dīn*, pp. 431–433; Muẓaffar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 118; Muẓaffar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, p. 207.

67 See Qummī, *al-Qawānīn al-Muḥkama fī al-Uṣūl*, pp. 12–22. In the same regard, see also al-Asnawī al-Shāfi'ī, *Nihāyat al-Su'l fī Sharḥ*, p. 82 et seq.; Subḥānī Tabrizī, *Risāla fī al-Taḥsīn wa al-Taḥqīq al-'Aqlīyayn*, pp. 124–126; Mūsawī Bujnurdī, *Maqālāt Uṣūlī*, p. 42.

based on a “certainty of reason devoid of delusions to the contrary” (*qaṭ‘ al-‘aql al-khālī ‘an shawā’ib al-wahm bi-khilāfihī*). He calls them “decisive rational perceptions” (*idrākāt qat‘īya ‘aqlīya*).⁶⁸ A quite similar point is put forth by Na‘īnī who accepts those rational judgements that include all aspects of good and evil, that is, a full comprehension of all of the conditions.⁶⁹ In contrast, Muṣaffar, while believing in the identity thesis, constrains the rational judgements in another way. As mentioned above, he limits the rational discernments to those shared by all rational beings. He believes independent rational propositions are formed when opinions of all rational beings on a subject completely overlap. These are called “publicly commended opinions” (*ārā’ maḥmūda*) or commonly shared propositions among rational beings (*qaḍāyā mashḥūra*).⁷⁰

The implication of the above exposition of rational judgments is that whenever such a qualified judgement is lacking, we ought to seek the ruling in the scriptures. In other words, if a rational conviction does not embody sufficient reasons, is devoid of delusions, does not embrace all the aspects and conditions of the good act, or lacks unanimity of rational beings on the matter, one is not allowed to rely on it as a rational ruling correlating with the divine one. In these cases, one necessarily refers to scriptural commands.⁷¹

Now, we should assay the last claims in order to see whether or not the kind of identity thesis provided above can stand criticisms. To lay the ground for this, we need to briefly appraise the main two previous claims, i.e., complete opposition and partial support, as well.

7 Appraisal

The flow of the discussions has shown the main flaws of the first two major outlooks, i.e., the outlook belonging to the outright opponents of normative rationality and the rational correlation principle, and that of partial proponents of rationality and the correlation principle.

The first outlook is not defensible, as it finally makes the divine words and commands totally incomprehensible. Their addressees shall not be able to make sense of and, hence, cannot comply with them. In other words, the denial of rationality of rulings and the correlation principle is counter-intuitive and

68 Anṣārī, *Maṭāriḥ al-anzār*, pp. 340 & 344.

69 See Na‘īnī, *Fawā'id al-Uṣūl*, pp. 60–64.

70 Muṣaffar, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, pp. 181 & 195 et seq.

71 See for instance Bujnurdī, *Maqālāt Uṣūli*, p. 51.

will amount to value-anarchism. It is counter-intuitive since it runs counter to the intuition that one has to understand a command and be convinced of justifiability of its content so that one complies with it. Also, the denial leads to value-anarchism, since no rational standard is acceptable in this outlook, in consequence of which any value system is of the same validity as any other. Given this, and assuming that “any value system” includes immoral rules or systems, the denial stance may violate the very core of religiosity, which is spreading the good.

Although the second outlook saves the rulings from incomprehensibility on the part of the addressees and makes room for human reason in discerning good and evil, it still disconnects rational good and evil from the divine obligation to commit and omit. It exclusively allocates the latter to the divine realm. It can be readily seen that this position is indeed forced to be reduced to a scripturalist (*Akhbārī*) viewpoint, accordingly an *Ash'arite* one, in the realm of normativity, since reason has been considered as capable of understanding good and evil, but it is not the determining reason for the issuance of commands. Rulings are issued because of a reason known by God, which might not overlap with the rational judgement concerning good or evil of the acts commanded.⁷²

The third outlook, as put forward by certain *Shī'ī* scholars, also seems to suffer from serious flaws. From this perspective, a “qualified” rational correlation principle is recognized. That is to say, normative discernments of a qualified human reason are taken as embodiments of the divine or *Shar'ī* rulings. As already mentioned, the following qualifications of human reason have been introduced: “sufficient reasons”, “devoid of delusions”, “embracing all conditions”, and “unanimity of the rational”. The question is now whether the qualifications are attainable by reason. If not, then the independent rational propositions are confined to few general propositions such as “justice is good” and “injustice is evil”, and most, if not all, of the normative rulings are left to the scriptures to be defined. This is undoubtedly a scripturalist (*Akhbārī*) position (as a jurisprudential reasoning matter) and by implication an *Ash'arite* one (as a theological matter), a position which is almost the same as the second outlook. However, as already shown, this position will also make the prophetic mission ineffective and absurd.

Further, if the answer is in the affirmative, then the qualification has to be clearly and precisely defined. Even the “unanimity” criterion does not work, since it is in fact relying on a crude and naïve conventionalist approach on

⁷² See Astarābādī, *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniya wa-Shawāhid al-Makkīya*, p. 329.

normative matters. This approach should finally be able to justify rationally the unanimity as a basis for issuing rulings (i.e., conventionalism is still in need of justification: why does common conviction on a matter make it justified?). If the qualifications can be defined, then, reason leaves no doubt about the capacity to perceive any and all rulings. Nevertheless, as explained above, this position, according to the anti-correlation position, will make the prophet-hood absurd. They have rightly sensed that acceptance of the correlation principle, which entails an identity of the divine and the rational normative systems, takes away originality from the religious rulings and makes them either totally redundant or at most exhortative (*irshādī*). This can explain why even the rationalist *Shīʿī* scholars have shrewdly endeavoured to avoid the logical implications of such a situation by making reason inert in issuing commands.

Therefore, it is worth mentioning that both the opponents and the proponents of the rational comprehension of rulings and the correlation principle are somehow bound to relate the issue with the very concept of prophet-hood. As seen, the opponents, i.e., the *Akhbārīs*, have argued that if human reason has the capacity to understand and to issue rulings, then there will remain no reason for God to send a messenger in order to establish them again. At most, religious commands may confirm the rational rulings. In contrast, the proponents have argued that if reason does not understand the rulings, it will be impossible for the addressees to understand and follow them. Evidently, there is a dilemma here. Either way, the two groups of scholars see a clash between the issue of rational normative thinking and the very concept and institution of prophet-hood.

8 Conclusion

The last point that both opponents and proponents of the correlation principle relate to prophet-hood, sheds more light on the status and implications of this principle. The theological aspect of the issue seems weightier. That is, it appears that both parts of the principle are actually of a theological nature. It has already been conceded that the first part, i.e., “whatever is commanded by *Sharʿ* is ruled by reason”, is a theological matter. It presupposes rationality of God’s commands, that is, as the rationalist *Shīʿī* scholars put it, there are rationales for God’s decrees. They are aimed at bringing about real benefits and preventing real harms. In contrast, the controversy over the second part, i.e., “whatever is commanded by reason is ruled by *Sharʿ*”, boils down to theological debates. We shall return to this point soon, but at this point we need to emphasize the necessary and important connection between a fundamental

analytical dealing with religious normative claims, on the one hand, and theology, on the other.

Let us turn to the substantive part of the previous point. It should be said that in order for one to avoid confusion and fallacious claims, one must remain loyal to the theological, indeed philosophical, basis of the correlation principle. This is the principle of “rational good and evil” (*‘ḥusn wa-qubḥ ‘aqlīyān*). How is this possible? Let us recall that one of the main claims of the opponents of the correlation principle. They have argued that if one believes in the identity of rational and divine rulings, the prophet-hood mission will become absurd. This seems to be the heart of the matter. The opponents are on the right track. If God’s commands are exactly what reason commands and *vice versa*, and if God is the leader of all rational beings (*raʿīs al-‘uqalā*), in the sense that He does not take any absurd measure in this regard, then, why should He ever want to constitute (*taʿsīs*) rules which reason is already capable of establishing? Is not human reason itself one of God’s own creatures? Given this fact, divine rule-making will undoubtedly become more absurd. Unless one claims that the divine just plays an exhortative (*irshādī*) role herein. This position has never been acceptable to *Shīʿī* scholars of all schools of thought. The reason is that they basically presuppose a normative task for the divinity, through His religion. It is determining normative rules and rulings. Apart from the metaphysical beliefs in the one God, the Prophet and the existence of the after-life, they have never doubted that the aim of religion is to establish law and morality.

But, a genuine identity thesis makes the divine or *Sharʿī* rulings either redundant or at most approbatory or exhortative, i.e., of a secondary nature or importance. It seems that this entailment has been the prime (conscious or unconscious) force behind the exhausting, though useless, efforts by them to avoid a full-fledged role for human reason in the normative realm; whereas, a *Muʿtazilite* (i.e., rationalist) position, taken to its logical extent in this regard, takes away an inherently and primarily normative task from the religion.

The question then goes back to the nature of the religion. Is it primarily at work to set up normative rulings? The controversy over the rational correlation principle cannot find a way out of the deadlock unless and until a justifiable answer, in the form of a theory, is put forth as to the nature and main function or purpose of the religion. Neither theology, in the conventional sense that endeavours to defend predominant religious beliefs and presuppositions, nor principles of jurisprudence can provide us with an answer in this regard. The philosophy of religion, in the form of a theory of inherent nature and primary function or purpose of religion, is the field we need to dwell on in order to achieve a breakthrough regarding issues such as the one under debate here.

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Biography

Dr. Mohammad Rasekh is Professor of Law and Philosophy at the Shahid-Beheshti University (formerly the National University of Iran), Tehran. He has also been a fellow of and worked with various European research and educational institutes. His main areas of interest include legal theory and jurisprudence, philosophy of rights, Islamic law and theology, comparative constitutional law, biomedical law and ethics, law and religion, and theory of justice. He is currently working on philosophy of Muslim normative reasoning.

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