A Review and Critique of the Theory of the Speculativeness of the Implication (Ẓannī al-Dilāla) of the Qurʾān

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Abstract

Since the purpose of the Qurʾān is to promote the Worldly and Otherworldly Life of mankind, and nourish the human soul and body in all dimensions, we should consult this holy book in all aspects of our lives. However, some Shia and Sunni scholars believe that the implication of the Qurʾān is speculative. The present study seeks to determine the correct view of the definitive (*qaṭʿī*) and the speculative textual implication of Qurʾān. If we examine and explain the definitiveness of the usage-based intentions of speakers and, in most cases, the definitiveness of real intentions, adopt a holistic view of the verses, consider different sorts of verses (perspicuous (*muhkam*), intricate (*mutashābih*), etc.), and focus on the expressive miracle of the Word of God, then we might conclude that the word of revelation (i.e. the Qurʾān) enjoys a definitive implication, barring the intricate verses the interpretation of which no one knows except those who are firmly grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī l-ʿilm*). There are no doubts about the meanings of Quranic words more often than not.

Keywords: Textual implication, speculative, definitive, speculative implication (*ẓannī al-dilāla*), definitive implication (*qaṭʿī al-dilāla*).

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Introduction

The Qurʾān is the most complete divine book and the most important religious source for Muslims. However, there has been a long debate over the status and implicational value of the Qurʾān as the source of religious knowledge. Muʿtazila as radical rationalists give priority to implications of reason over those of the Qurʾān and, in the case of inconsistencies between the Qurʾān and reason, they tend to justify away Quranic verses. Some have been irrational and subjected to radical traditionalism. The traditionists (akhbāriyyūn) have been divided into two groups. The first group advocates "Qurʾān-adequacy", denying any roles for hadiths and intellect, while the second group values hadiths over the Qurʾān. According to the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh), "Qurʾān's issuance is definitive (qaṭʿī), and its implication is speculative (ẓannī), while the issuance of hadiths is speculative and their implications are definitive". This statement frequently appears in jurisprudential sources and has been taken for granted. However, such a view has unacceptable consequences. The aim of the present study is to explain the objections and criticisms raised against this view and to shed light on the correct view. More, it seeks to identify the criticisms raised against the theory of the speculativeness of the Qurʾān?

Notwithstanding our reference to the best libraries and our search in reliable websites and other digitalized databases, we could not find any independent research on "the speculativeness of the Qurʾān". However, a majority of jurists (fuqahā) and scholars of the principles of jurisprudence (uṣūliyyūn) have debated over this under the issue of "the specification of the book to one single tradition (akhbār)" or that of "valid speculation", or as part of jurisprudential issues, without devoting a specific chapter to it. Of course, a few articles have been written on the theory of the closure of the doors of knowledge (a general issue of which the speculativeness of the Qurʾān is a part) (e.g., Seifi 1995; Zahiri 1995)

Therefore, the present article studies the "speculativeness of the implication (ẓannī al-dilāla) of the Qurʾān" based on religious principles of Islam.

A study of the concepts in question

It is necessary to present literal and figurative definitions of some of the keywords of the present study lest we fall into fallacies.

The Literal Meaning of Dilāla (Implication)

Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 791) says that "dilālah (implication) is the infinitive form of the word dalīl (reason)" (1994, 271). Jawharī (d. 961) holds that "dalīl (reason) is whatever being argued upon" (2007, 1698; Ibn Fāris 1994, 342). Thus, dilāla is a simple three-lettered (thulāthī mujarrad) infinitive and generally applies to anything used to identify something.

The Technical Meaning of Dilāla (Implication)

In logic, everything knowing of which results in knowing another thing is called dilāla such that the former is dāll (signifier) and the latter is madlūl (signified) (al-Jurjanī 1889, 46; Bahābādī, n.d., 39; Muẓaffar 2009, 40).

Literal Meaning of Ẓann (Speculation)

The word ẓann in Arabic sometimes denotes definitiveness or certainty, as in "We know (ẓanannā) that we cannot thwart Allah on the earth, nor can we thwart Him by fleeing" (Quran 72:12), and sometimes it conveys doubtfulness, as in "And among them are the illiterate who know nothing of the Book except hearsay, and they only make conjectures (yaẓunnūn)" (Quran 2:78). Ibn Manẓūr, quoting Ibn Sīdah (1065), says "ẓann means both doubt and definitiveness; it does not imply obvious definitiveness, rather it only means definitiveness based on contemplation" (Ibn Manẓūr 1988, 8: 271).

Accordingly, ẓann, in addition to knowledge, refers to everything which is not reliable and trustworthy (Frāhīdī 1994, 505).

The Technical Meaning of Ẓann (Speculation)

Ẓann means a conjecture; that is, a preferred belief with the possibility of contradiction, which can be strong or weak (Usūl-i fiqh farhang, 2: 1212). However, in jurisprudential terminologies, ẓann (speculation) means an equal doubt between two alternatives in a way that neither is preferred over the other. For skeptic theologians, speculation is the doubt between two alternatives in a way that one is preferred over the other, in which the preferred alternative is called speculative (ẓannī) and the non-preferred is referred to as delusion (wahm), there is no dogma involved in preferring one over the other, it can be

of different degrees (from weak to strong), and the two ends of the continuum are knowledge and ignorance (Usūl-i fiqh farhang, 2: 1212).

The Technical Meanings of Perspicuous, Intricate, Explicit, and Manifest

Mohammad Hadi Maʿrifat states "Perspicuous [muḥkam]—in contrast to intricate [mutashābih]—means stable and decisive; the root of this word is 'ḥakama ḥukaman'… the root of the word tashābuh is the gerund form of 'shibh,' meaning resemblance and similarity, and from the infinitive of shibh, meaning to be alike, which is the cause of speculation since the truth is hidden, the truth and the falsehood are intertwined, and the falsehood is mistaken for the truth (Maʿrifat 2002, 272).

Thus, perspicuous verses are the ones with no doubts about their meanings, and intricate verses are those with speculative meanings, in addition to the clear meaning. If such verses are not turned into perspicuous verses, they will lead to deviations.

It is said that "explicit (naṣṣ) is a text with just one possible meaning and it is said that it cannot be interpreted" (al-Jurjānī 1889, 106). "Manifest (ẓāhir) is a verbal noun the meaning of which is revealed by its conjugation and it can be interpreted and specified" (ibid. 61).

Therefore, explicit is a text with just one meaning; on the other hand, although a manifest text implies one meaning, the speaker may use it to intend something else. There is no doubt about the speculativeness of the meaning of the intricate verses of the Qurʾān, just as there is no doubt about the definitiveness of perspicuous and explicit verses. So the controversy and source of disagreements on the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān rely on its manifests (ẓawāhir), not on its perspicuous, intricate, or explicit verses.

Proponents of the Theory of Speculativeness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī (d. 1210) says that the implication of the meanings of words is speculative since the meanings depend on the wording, diacritical marks

insertion and changes (of the words). Traditions or hadiths are often single-chained (khabar al-wāḥid), which arouses suspicion, and the implications also depend on lack of homonymy, metonymy, narration, brevity, specification, and irrationality. Thus, when they are met, literal words should be rendered as metonymies. There is no doubt that believing in such preliminary meanings, by itself, is pure speculation, and in everything which depends on speculation, the initial state is the existence of a speculation (1999, 1:42).

Indeed, when one of the preliminaries or premises is suspicious, the result will be suspicious as well. Following him, Saʿad al-Dīn al-Taftāẕānī (d. 1391) explicitly focuses on the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān (1989, 5: 278). Mīr Sayyid Sharīf al-Dīn Ījī (1907, 1: 251), Mullā ʿAlī Qārī Māturīdī (2000, 1: 538) as well as contemporary scholars such as Mohammad Sanaullah Mazhari (1992, 1: 219), Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr (n.d. 29:203), Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (1997), and many other Sunni scholars have also focused on the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān.

However, Shia scholars have differing ideas. Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn, known as Ṣāḥib al-Maʿālim, (d. 1603) was the first to pose the issue of the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān and argued for the closure of the doors of knowledge (1983, 141). Then, Wahīd Bihbahānī (d. 1791) pointed out the very rare cases of religious rulings which are based on knowledge. Bihbahānī also maintained that the doors of knowledge were closed (1995, 120). Qummī (d. 1816) divided the words of God into oral and written. He considered the written words as speculative (1959, 1:451). Sayyid Muḥammad Mujāhid (d. 1827) regarded the sources of ijtihad as limited to speculations (ẓunūn) (1879, 571). Mullā Aḥmad Narāqī (d. 1830) did not believe in an absolute closure of the doors of knowledge, rather he argued that the immediate knowledge through sources of religious rulings is closed (2001, 2: 929). Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Iṣfahānī (d. 1933) viewed the doors of knowledge as closed and transition to speculation as certain (n.d. 1:480). Muḥammad Jaʿfar Sharīʿatmadārī Astarābādī (d. 1847) is also an opponent of this idea (1963, 3: 329).

Al-Shaykh al-Ansārī (d. 1865) argued that the implication of the Qurʾān is speculative (1996, 74). By this, he meant, of course, valid speculations (1996, 75) .In addition, among the contemporary scholars, the following have found the implication of the Qurʾān as speculative: Sayyid Ḥusayn Burūjirdī (1995, 1: 365), Muḥammad Riḍā Muẓaffar (2011, 1:163), Sayyid Ḥasan Ḥusaynī

Lawāsānī (2004, 2: 393), Mīrzā Hāshim Āmulī (1975, 5: 10), Sayyid Abu l-Qāsim al- Khuʾi (1981, 401), and Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī al-Hakīm (1997, 234).

Opponents of the Theory of the Speculativeness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

Since the development of the theory of enclosure by Ṣāḥib al-Maʿālim (d. 1559), Muqaddas Ardabīlī (d. 1585) was the first to criticize it (n.d. 657). Then, al-Shahīd al-Thānī's grandson, Muḥammad ibn al-Hassan, (d. 1030) raised objections and claimed that al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī (d. 1068) believed in the definitiveness of the implication (qaṭʿī al-dilāla) of the Qurʾān (Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan 1998, 16-17). Accordingly, the first scholar who believed in the definitiveness of the implication of the Qurʾān was al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, although there is no explicit evidence for this claim in his works.

Among the contemporary proponents of the definitiveness of the implication of the Qurʾān are Sayyid Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Burūjirdī (1987, 4:12), Sādiqī Tihrānī (1998, 67, 437, 517, 529; 1986, 1: 25), Jaʿfar Subḥānī (2011, 2:45), Muḥsin Qirāʾatī (2004, 8:26, and 10:486).

Scholars who believe in Interpreting the Qurʾān according to One's Own Impression

Some scholars believe in interpreting the Qurʾān according to one's own impression. For example, Qummī (d. 1816) suggests that the Qurʾān has two parts: the first part was probably intended to survive and be used throughout the history, just like the works of the writers, and the second one, unlike the former, was only intended to the addressees, although others are also included by its main rulings (Qummī 1959, 1: 451). According to Qummī, the first part is in turn divided into two oral speeches (about which we do not know how they imply their meanings) and written words which are speculative.

Arguments for the Speculativeness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

Proponents of the speculativeness of the Qurʾān have relied on the following arguments:

The Speculativeness of the Implication of the Words

The most important argument for the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān is the discovery or emergence of the words. Proponents of this view have mentioned this in their works (e.g., Fakhr al-Rāzī, 1:42; Ījī, 5:278). Sayyid Muḥammad Mujāhid (d. 1827) says that although the issuance or source of the Qurʾān is definitive, its implication is speculative since the implication of the Qurʾān for religious rulings is only by means of the words, and the implication of the words is speculative (Mujāhid, n.d., 570).

Many scholars have proposed the speculativeness of the implication of the words, but it seems they have meant the implication of the words for the real intention of the speaker since words have two implications when it comes to the intention of the speaker: usage-based (istiʿmālī) intention, and real (jiddī) intention. Usage-based intention is the meaning which comes to the mind when the words are uttered, regardless of whether the speaker is serious or not. But real intention is the meaning the speaker intends to convey (Subḥānī 2011, 45). It is better to say that the implication of the words for the usage-based intention is definite, but their implication for the real intention is often speculative because of the existence of homonymy, metonymy, narration, brevity, specification, irony, and other verbal and semantic features.

The Speculativeness of Oral Addresses for Non-Immediate Audiences

Ṣāḥib al-Maʿālim (d. 1603) says that all the rulings of the Qurʾān are oral addresses, which are specific to those who were present at the time of the utterance, and the words of the Qurʾān are only authoritative for the non-immediate audiences as far as there is consensus (ijmāʿ) and there is commonality between the oral immediate addressees and non-immediate addressees. There may thus be evidence that proves the opposite of the clear meaning, but this possibility is definitely invalid (Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn 1983, 221-222).

Ṣāḥib al-Maʿālim's argument that the Qurʾān consists in written words and that there is a difference between the implication of oral speeches and written words is not true since logicians identify four kinds of existence for objects: a) external or objective existence, like the existence of a table; b) mental

existence, like visualizing a table; c) verbal existence, like words; d) written existence, like pieces of writings (Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn 1983, 221-22).

Muẓaffar (d. 1964) suggests that because of their status and usage, verbal and written existences are valid existences of meanings (Muẓaffar 2009, 45). According to al-Shaykh al-Anṣārī (d. 1865), there is no difference between oral immediate addressees and non-oral non-immediate addressees in terms of the authenticity of apparent meanings or manifestations of the Qurʾān and hadiths (Shaykh al-Anṣārī, n.d., 69-71). Therefore, as logicians put it, both the verbal existence (oral) and the written existence (writings) are valid and there is no difference between their implications (Muẓaffar 2009, 10). Accordingly, the Qurʾān's implication cannot be considered speculative. Moreover, if the implication of oral addresses of the Qurʾān is different for those who were present at the time of the revelation and non-immediate audiences, then how does this square with the Qurʾān's characterization of itself as doubtless and manifest? This idea is not plausible, and the implication of Quranic verses is definitive, except for intricate (mutashābih) verses.

Differences in Scholars' Interpretations of Quranic Verses

Al-Waḥīd al-Bihbahānī (d. 1791) believes that there is a great deal of disagreement and discussion among scholars in interpreting many verses and hadiths, as one scholar's construal may conflict with that of another, although all scholars have a comprehensive understanding (Bihbahānī 1995, 118).

First, the scholars' interpretations differ mostly over the real intention of Quranic verses, not over their usage-based implications. Second, mere differences among scholars over the meanings of Quranic verses cannot be a good reason to say that the implication of Qurʾān is speculative since there are several other factors that should be considered here, including the main meaning of the word, contextual evidence (occasions of revelations of the verses in question), verbal evidence and the context, etc. Therefore, mere disagreements among scholars over the meanings of Quranic verses cannot give us reasons to think that implications of the Qurʾān are speculative.

The Speculativeness of the Seven Recitations (Qarāʾas) of the Qurʾān

Sayyid Muḥammad Mujāhid (d. 1827) argues that it is not possible to be certain about what the seven reciters of the Qurʾān and others disagreed over, since their frequency is not established (Mujāhid, n.d., 570).

Maʿrifat suggests that generally it can be concluded that the frequency of Quranic recitations is rejected since there is no more than one recitation from the Holy Prophet (PBUH) which is common among people; and any other inconsistent recitation is rejected (Maʿrifat 1959, 182).

On this account, the authenticity of the issuance of the Qurʾān does not depend on the recitation of a fourth-century reciter, rather the Qurʾān has been passed down from generation to generation. Now, given that the narratives of none of the Seven Reciters is frequent, and lack of frequency, by itself, means that there is no certainty or knowledge about them and that they are speculative, we should ask if there is any reason for the authenticity of this speculation.

Khūʾī says that these recitations are not authoritative, and accordingly, one cannot take them as religious rulings (Khūʾī 1981, 401). Therefore, some jurists, such as Imam Khomeini, do not consider the recitations of the Seven Reciters in prayer as sufficient (Khomeini 1965, 1:167).

As a result, the famous and common recitation of the Qurʾān is basic and authoritative, and enjoys frequency. However, for many scholars, other recitations are not scientifically valid. So they cannot be used as a basis to prove the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān. Additionally, proponents of the speculativeness of the Qurʾān see its issuance as definite, and the remark by Sayyid Mujāhid indicates the speculativeness of the issuance of Qurʾān, not that of its implication.

The Vagueness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

Muḥammad Taqī Iṣfahānī (d. 1933) says that the Qurʾān is not often used except in vague affairs (Iṣfahānī, n.d., 1:480).

This is because the Qurʾān is viewed only from a religious point of view. However, the Qurʾān is not merely a book of God's rulings, rather it is mostly

concerned with moral principles and doctrines, and there are indeed very few verses that focus on certain jurisprudential sub-rulings. Just because one is not able to make jurisprudential inferences from Quranic verses, it cannot be said that all Quranic verses are vague and its implication is speculative. Given all the epistemological and guiding aspects of the Qurʾān and considering its perspicuous, intricate, explicit, and manifest verses, one should accept the definitiveness of the implication of explicit and manifest verses.

> The Qurʾān says:
>
>> Forbidden to you are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal aunts and your maternal aunts, your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters, your [foster-]mothers who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage, your wives' mothers, and your stepdaughters who are under your care [born] of the wives whom you have gone into —but if you have not gone into them there is no sin upon you— and the wives of your sons who are from your own loins, and that you should marry two sisters at one time —excluding what is already past; indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful. (Quran 4:23).

Now, the question is that while all these explicit and detailed verses, like the above verse, and many other verses are considered manifests (ẓawāhir) of the Qurʾān, how can one claim that the whole Qurʾān is vague? It is difficult to claim that the Qurʾān is vague. Surely the meaning of "eat and drink" (Quran 7:31) is not apparent? Is "So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it" (Quran 99:7) vague? Are the following verses vague: "There is life for you in retribution" (Quran 2:179), "As for the thief, man or woman, cut off their hands as a requital for what they have earned" (Quran 5:38), "As for the fornicatress and the fornicator, strike each of them a hundred lashes" (Quran 24:2)? Yes! It is a big claim to say that the whole Qurʾān is vague while it considers itself manifest, explanatory, and enlightening.

The Consequences and Requirements of the Speculativeness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

Accepting the theory of the speculativeness of the implication of Qurʾān will result in some consequences and requirements including:

Speculativeness of Many Religious Teachings

Every reasoning always requires some sort of preliminaries or premises (Muẓaffar 2009, 1:254). If the Qurʾān were speculative, then minor and major analogies made in proving religious teachings would be speculative, and their results would also be speculative. In that case, many religious beliefs derived from the Qurʾān are speculative. Most proponents of the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān are jurists since works of jurisprudence are concerned with trivial religious arguments, but the Qurʾān does not focus on the details, rather on general teachings. Over time, this has led to the idea that the Qurʾān does not have a definite and clear implication for expressing detailed jurisprudential rulings. Thus, most advocates of the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān are jurists, while theologians and Quranic exegetes who focus on other aspects of the Qurʾān, such as the verses pertaining to beliefs, history, or ethics, do not often believe in the speculativeness of the implication of the Qurʾān.

Oblivion of the Qurʾān

How can the Qurʾān, whose implication is speculative and uncertain, serve as a guide and enable humans to solve their current and future problems? The main consequence of this theory will be the marginalization of the Qurʾān in Islamic teaching circles and in guiding the society. Although some people argue that this speculation is epistemically valid, speculation is just a preferred conjecture and its validity merely means that such speculation can be relied on in certain circumstances. Therefore, one might never consider Quranic teachings as definite principles and indubitable documents.

Preference of Other Sources over the Qurʾān

If the implication of the Qurʾān were speculative, many narratives with exact and implicational chains of issuance would be preferred over the Qurʾān. This is evident in jurisprudence books since the Qurʾān's chain of issuance has been considered definitive and its implication speculative, and those of certain hadiths have been considered speculative and their implications definitive. In such cases, hadiths with definitive chains of issuance and implications would be preferred over the manifests of the Qurʾān.

Quranic Objections to the Theory of Speculation

Inconsistency with the Miracles of the Qurʾān

The main difference between the Qurʾān and other books is the former's miracles. A miraculous dimension of the Qurʾān is its expressive miracle, mainly relevant to its words and expressions (Maʿrifat 1959, 374). Given that the miracle is proved based on certainty (Subḥānī 2005), if one believes in the speculativeness of the words of the Qurʾān, they may reject the miracles of the Qurʾān. Ayatollah Jaʿfar Subḥānī suggests that the speculative account of the implication of the Qurʾān makes the Qurʾān a suspicious source and a speculative miracle, while its expressive miracle is a certainty (Subḥānī 2005, 49). Accordingly, if the implication of Quranic words were speculative, its expressive miracle would be void.

Argument from the Quranic Challenge (Tahaddi)

The Holy Qurʾān challenges (taḥaddī) people to bring a sūra like its sūras (e.g., Quran 17:88; 10:88; 11:13; 52:33; 2:23), but is it possible to challenge something whose implication is unclear and speculative? Is it possible to challenge a book whose readers are not certain about its meaning, and which has challenged its addressees more than once? The Qurʾān says: Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qurʾān, they will not bring even one or ten verses like it. Accordingly, if the implication of the Qurʾān were speculative, then the Qurʾān could not be in a position to challenge its addressees.

Defeat of the Quranic Purpose of Guidance

The Qurʾān describes itself as a guidance for people: "Say … it is a guidance and healing" (Quran 41:44); "These are … guidance and mercy for a people who have certainty" (Quran 45:20). If the purpose of the revelation of a book is to guide human beings, then there should not be any uncertainties about its meanings. Thus, the Qurʾān should have been revealed with the highest degree of eloquence and expressiveness.

Contradiction with the Quranic Clarity

Qirāʾatī holds that it is an injustice to the Qurʾān to say that its issuance is definitive (qaṭʿī al-ṣudūr) and its implication is speculative (Qirāʾatī 2004, 1:486). The Qurʾān introduces itself as a light and as illuminating, and "the Manifest Book!" (Quran 44:2), and a light cannot be speculative. While there are many intricate verses conveying different meanings, their meanings become clear in light of other verses" (Qirāʾatī 2004, 1:486). Obviously, the speculativeness of the implication of Quranic words is inconsistent with its enlightening and guiding character.

Contradiction with Contemplation upon the Qurʾān

"Contemplation" (tadabbur) means to think deeply about things (Farāhīdī 1994, 33). In three verses, the Holy Qurʾān invites people to contemplate the Qurʾān: "Have they not contemplated the discourse or has anything come to them [in it] that did not come to their forefathers?" (Quran 23:68); "Do they not contemplate the Qurʾān, or are there locks on the hearts?" (Quran 47:24); "Do they not contemplate the Qurʾān? Had it been from [someone] other than Allah, they would have surely found much discrepancy in it" (Quran 4:82).

How can one contemplate the Qurʾān if implications its words were speculative? In that case, how can one deeply think about it? Basically, before reading a text, if one knows that he cannot understand its surface meaning for sure, then how should he think deeply about it? It should be noted that the epistemic nature of this speculativeness merely holds about the verses deployed to derive religious rulings, but other verses cannot enjoy such an epistemic character.

Contradiction with the Qurʾān Being Upright

God says that "Indeed this Qurʾān guides to what is most upright" (Quran 17:9). Here, "upright" means a word that is neither vague nor trivial (Ibn al-Manẓūr 1988, 12:505). This feature which the Qurʾān attributes to itself contradicts with the speculativeness of its implication since a speculative word makes the addressees confused because of its verbal and structural ambiguity, irony, and homonymy.

Hadith-Based Objections to the Theory of the Speculativeness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

This theory conflicts with the content of many hadiths, such as the following:

1. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) says:

   … Whenever seditions surround you like a dark night, resort to the Qurʾān since it is an intercessor whose intercession is accepted, and is the informant of the bad deeds, whose words are acknowledged. Whoever chooses it as his guide will be led to heaven, and whoever recesses it will go to hell … (Kulaynī 1987, 2:599).

The book that serves as the refuge of people in dark and gloomy days must be comprehensible and explicit so that it can be consulted under such circumstances. If the implication of the Qurʾān were speculative, it could not be the refuge of people at the time of seditions and doubts.

2. The Messenger of God (PBUH) states in the hadith al-Thaqalayn: "Verily, I am leaving behind two precious things (Thaqalayn) among you: the Book of God and my kindred (ʿitra)."

If the Qurʾān is precious, and Muslims will not get astray by resorting to it, then they should not have doubts about the meaning of each verse they read.

3. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) states:

   The Qurʾān guides people from darkness to the light. It is enlightening, making the blinds sighted, saves people in problems, is a light freeing people from darkness and accidents … and guides people from the world to the afterworld … (Kulaynī 1987, 2:601).

In this hadith, the Holy prophet (PBUH) mentions features of the Qurʾān, including guidance, enlightening, and a light in the darkness, illuminating in the face of problems, keeping from death, a guide helping to avoid slips, and revealing the seditions. It is not possible to attribute such features to the Qurʾān and, at the same time, consider the implication of its meanings speculative.

Philosophical Objections to the Theory of the Speculativeness of the Implication of the Qurʾān

Contradiction with God's Wisdom

A main reason for the definitiveness of the implication of the Qurʾān is the principle of divine wisdom. If the meanings of Quranic words were speculative, if they had several aspects, then the words of God All-Wise would necessarily be objectionable since if a wise person intends to guide people through his words, he should speak in a clearly understandable manner, and not in a way that leaves his audiences in a state of doubt. To respond to this objection, it can be said that epistemic speculation does not conflict with God's wisdom, and the lawgiver himself has confirmed this speculation. The same reasoning is also cited by Ṣāḥib al-Maʿālim (Ḥasan ibn Zayn al-Dīn 1983, 16-17).

Defeat of God's Purpose in Revealing the Qurʾān

If God has sent prophets and revealed the Holy Books to guide people to the right path, then His books should have features that help realize this purpose. If people were not able to understand the definite meaning of God's words and the meaning they reach were merely speculative, this purpose would be defeated, as God says in the Qurʾān: "Indeed conjecture is no substitute for the truth." (Quran 10:36); "They follow nothing but conjectures, and indeed conjecture is no substitute for the truth" (Quran 53:28).

The Correct View

By reflection on the Quranic literature, it becomes clear that the scholars have divided Quranic verses into perspicuous, intricate, explicit and manifest verses (Maʿrifat 1959, 270; Subḥānī 2005, 159). The explicit verses—those with one explicit meaning—are not interpretable (Subḥānī 2011, 45). For example, "Every soul shall taste death" (Quran 3:185). The implication of the real meaning of intricate verses is speculative since one cannot identify their real meanings; for example, "The hand of Allah is above their hands" (Quran 48:10).

Therefore, explicit verses of the Qurʾān are definitive in terms of implications of their usage-based and real intention, while intricate verses are

speculative in terms of their real intentions, although those who are firmly grounded in knowledge (al-rāsikhūn fi l-ʿilm) can render them perspicuous, and understand their real and definite meanings (Quran 3:7). However, an evaluation of the arguments presented in the previous discussions indicates that, in addition to the definitiveness of the implication of explicit verses, manifest verses are also definitive in their implications for usage-based intentions. Moreover, implications of manifest verses for real intentions are definitive and certain as well. In general, apart from intricate verses, the idea of the speculativeness of implications of other verses of the Qurʾān is rejected based on conclusive evidence. In addition, those who are firmly grounded in knowledge and deep thinkers can interpret intricate verses and render them perspicuous.

Conclusion

Quranic verses are divided into three groups: first, explicit verses with one single meanings, which are definitive in terms of their usage-based and real implications; second, intricate verses, which can be interpreted and have meanings other than their literal meanings, and which can only be rendered perspicuous by those who are firmly grounded in knowledge; and third, manifest and other verses of the Qurʾān, which do not belong to the two previous groups. Based on the arguments presented in this article, such as those from God's wisdom, miracles of the Qurʾān, and its manifest character, these verses are definitive in terms of their usage-based intentions as well as their real intentions.

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