



## Criticism of Classical Divine Command Ethics: A comparative study between Wainwright's objections and the objections of Muslim rationalist theologians

Mohsen Javadi\*

Received: 2022-08-06 | Revision: 2022-09-20 | Accepted: 2022-09-28

Research Article



### Abstract

This article first explains the classical version of the Divine command ethics in both Christian and Islamic traditions, and then by pointing out its coherency, at least in appearance, with Divine sovereignty and absolute power, it tries to show why this idea is not accepted by a significant number of the Christian and Muslim theologians. William Wainwright answers this question by using Ralph Cudworth's objections to Divine command ethics. In total, he considers seven objections and criticisms as the main reasons for Christian theologians' turning away from the theory. By presenting these seven objections, which are mainly taken from Ralph Cudworth's book, we try to find similar examples in the Islamic tradition and compare them with Wainwright's arguments. Some of these objections can be seen in both Christian and Islamic traditions of moral rationalism. But some of them, despite the similarity in content, have different formulations. Also, some objections are specific to Christian or Islamic theology. Last but not least, there are intra-religious objections based on revelations in Islam and Christianity against the theory of Divine command, which is not the subject of my discussion in this article.

### Key Words:

William Wainwright, Divine command ethics, Ralph Cudworth, moral rationalism, Muslim rationalist theologians.

\* Professor, Department of Philosophy of Ethics, University of Qom, Qom, Iran.  
javadi-m@qom.ac.ir

▣ Javadi, M. (2022) Criticism of Classical Divine Command Ethics: A comparative study between Wainwright's objections and the objections of Muslim rationalist theologians. *Journal of Philosophical Theological Research*, (Special Issue on "Theology, Philosophy, and Ethics: In Memory of William J. Wainwright"), 24(93), 77-92.  
doi: 10.22091/JPTR.2022.8895.2817

▣ Copyright © the authors



## Introduction

Last year, the news of the death of Professor William Wainwright caused much regret. For many years, I had chosen his book 'Religion and Morality' (2005) as the main text of a course with the same title at the master's level. In my opinion, this book has briefly but accurately discussed almost all the issues related to the relationship between religion and morality.

When the esteemed editor of The **Journal of Philosophical Theological Research** said that they have dedicated an issue of this quarterly in honor of Professor Wainwright (1935-2020) who was a member of the editorial board of Journal to publish articles related to his views, I also decided to explain the objections to the theory of Divine command ethics as reported and explained in Wainwright's book, and compare them with the objections in the tradition of moral rationalism of Muslim theologians and thereby declare my appreciation for the late William Wainwright.

In the first chapter of the second part of Religion and Morality, (2005, pp.73-84) Wainwright examines Ralph Cudworth's criticisms of the Divine Command Theory".

As an introduction, he proposes a classic version of the Divine Command Theory and considers the main reason for its acceptance to be the belief in God's absolute sovereignty and His absolute power. Since this belief is one of the main beliefs of believers, it raises the question of why some believers do not accept it.

In response, he deals with the objections to the theory from the language of Ralph Cudworth. With these objections, he wants to provide a justification for denying Divine command ethics. Then, he deals with new versions such as Philip Quinn's causal interpretation of Divine command and Robert Adams' modified version of the theory, and even Zagzebski's Divine Motivation to show that some of the problems proposed against the classical theory of Divine command ethics do not apply to these interpretations.

However, the topic of this article is only to compare the objections to the classic version of Divine command ethics as narrated by Wainwright in this book or in other articles with the objections that the Shia and Mu'tazilite theologians have brought to the same version of the theory in the history of Islamic thought.

The interesting point in both Islamic and Christian theological rationalism is that these objections to the theory of Divine command have been considered as reasons for the opposite theory, that is, moral rationalism.

In general, although Wainwright does not add any specific objections and criticisms to the collection of criticisms of others, the new and interesting explanation he gives of the traditional problems of this theory in the history of

Christian theological rationalism is well articulated and attractive

In this article, firstly, the classical version of the Divine command ethics from two theological texts, Christian and Islamic, is provided in order to clarify what the criticisms of the rationalists are addressing.

Following that, the series of criticisms that Wainwright brings with direct use or inspiration from Ralph Cudworth, a Christian rationalist theologian, is reported.

And finally, a comparison is made between the objections raised in the Christian and Islamic traditions in order to determine the specific reasons of each tradition.

### **The classical theory of the Divine ethics**

Wainwright considers the origin of the discussion of the Divine command in ethics to be the historical dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro, which apparently happened without prior planning and by chance when the two met in the court of Athens. It is clear that Socrates considers the principle to be true moral attributes and considers divine command to be dependent on it, but with the advent of Christianity, the tendency towards the other side of Euthyphro's dilemma, namely, the dependence of moral properties on the Divine command, which later became known as the "Theory of Divine Command Ethics" and found many defenders.

Referring to the various statements of Christian theologians about the traditional interpretation of the theory, Wainwright quotes the words of Martin Luther as follows:

"He is God, and for his will there is no cause or reason that can be laid down as a rule or measure for it, since there is nothing equal or superior to it, but it is itself the rule of all things (Wainwright, 2005, p.74).

In the Islamic world, the definition of 'Aḍod al-Dīn Ījī (1281-1356) can be cited as a classic version of this theory, which says:

The ugly thing is that which God has forbidden, and the right and good thing is that which is not forbidden. The intellect has no judgment about the goodness and badness (moral) of things because this matter is not related to anything in reality to be understood by reason. Rather, this is the divine law and command, which is both positive and indicative of it, so that if God's command is reversed, an ugly deed becomes good, and a good deed becomes bad. (Ījī, n.d., p. 323)

In this way, it can be seen that Christian and Islamic traditions have the same definition of Divine command ethics. Based on this definition, I will

examine its problems which are reported in Wainwright's works, and also the same problems in the works of Muslim rationalist theologians.

Although there have been new interpretations of the Theory of Divine Command Ethics in both traditions, their analysis is not the subject of this article.

Of course, it is clear that some of the new interpretations in the West, which is more influenced by analytical philosophy, have fewer examples in the Islamic world. Although we can still talk about some similarities between the new Christian and Islamic interpretations.

But before dealing with the objections, it is good to point out the main reason or reasons of the proponents of Divine command ethics.

Quoting the continuation of Luther's statement, Wainwright says that one of the main reasons is what he says, that is, the belief of the believers in the absolute sovereignty of God, which the Divine command ethics is compatible with. According to them, commitment to the truth and rationality of moral rules is a violation of Divine absolute sovereignty.

For if there were any rule or standard for it, either as cause or reason, it could no longer be the will of God. For it is not because he is or was obliged so to will that what he wills is right, but on the contrary, because he himself so wills, therefore what happens [or is commanded] must be right. Cause and reason can be assigned for a creature's will, but not for the will of the Creator, unless you set up over him another creator (Wainwright, 2005, p.74)

Traces of this reason can be seen in the writings of the founder of the Ash'arite, who are known in the Islamic world for defending Divine command ethics.

For example, Abul Hasan Ash'ari says:

The reason that whatever God does is permissible is that He is the owner and sovereign, and He is not owned or controlled, and there is no one beyond Him who can make something permissible or obligatory or forbidden for Him, and no one can set limits and boundaries. Such a matter doesn't exist for him. It is clear that if someone is like that, nothing is abominable for him anymore, because the abomination is when someone goes beyond the set limit. Such a thing is excluded in the case of God. (Ash'ari, 1955, p. 115)

The Quranic root of this reason is the verses of the Holy Quran that emphasize the absolute sovereignty of God, such as:

"He will not be questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned." [21:23]

William Wainwright mentions two related but independent reasons in explaining the tendency towards Divine command ethics, but he does not clearly specify what the second reason is. Of course, according to his explanations, it can be seen that he considers Divine absolute power to be an independent reason for Divine command ethics, apart from His absolute sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> In this view, Divine absolute power requires that there is no necessity in the world and everything is only a possibility that is subject to change. He quotes from Descartes that this meaning is true even for mathematical and logical truths (Wainwright, 2005, p. 75).

This is a good point and it seems that Wainwright is right because apart from the discussion of sovereignty in its legal sense, absolute power in its existential sense requires the possibility of changing anything, including the possibility of murder and torture becoming good after Divine command.

I think this separation can be seen in the Qur'anic verses and the discussion of Divine power as an existential matter is separated from the discussion of His sovereignty in the field of values and norms. In addition to the previous verse that expresses God's absolute sovereignty, the Qur'an also speaks of His absolute power or ability to do everything:

“God is He Who created the seven heavens, and their like of earth. The command descends through them, so that you may know that God is capable of everything, and that God encompasses everything in knowledge.” [65: 12]

Of course, in chapter eight of his book, Wainwright gives many reasons in addition to the two points mentioned above in defense of Divine command ethics<sup>2</sup> but since the topic of my discussion is to examine the objections to the traditional Theory of the Divine Command, I will refrain from further dealing with the reasons of the Divine Command Theory.

In light of these basic religious beliefs about God, it seems that the Theory of Divine Command is more compatible with the God of religions, and therefore the serious question is why a significant number of Christian and Muslim theologians and believers in Abrahamic religions do not accept it. Instead, they have given a theory about morality that accepts essential moral

---

1. “Let us suppose, however, that attempts to show that perfect or unlimited *power* doesn't entail theological voluntarism are successful. Isn't it nonetheless true that voluntarism is a necessary consequence of God's *sovereignty*? Cudworth, and like-minded philosophers and theologians, think that it is not.” (Wainwright, 2005, p. 79)

2. In this chapter, in addition to the previous reasons, he also uses religious texts and, for example, considers religious orders that seem immoral to be among these reasons. In addition, the concept of worship in the sense of unconditional submission to God is also a confirmation of this theory. See (Wainwright, 2005, p.75)

issues and does not consider them to be changeable even by Divine command. Wainwright says:

“To answer this question, let us turn to one of the most thorough attempts to respond to theological voluntarism”. (Ralph Cudworth, 1731 quoted from Wainwright, 2005, p. 75)

### **Wainwright’s objections to the Divine command ethics**

Wainwright’s major objections to the Divine Command Theory are inspired by Ralph Cudworth. He is a 17<sup>th</sup>-century English philosopher and theologian. He was strongly opposed to this theory and even considered it similar to Hobbes’s theory of human voluntarism. According to him, the problem in any voluntarist theory is that they do not consider the moral principle to be rooted in the context of reality and existence. For this reason, they do not believe in eternal and immutable morality. Instead, these theories consider moral affairs to be something dependent on human legislation (Hobbes) or divine legislation (Divine command Theory). He rejects any voluntarist theory, both religious and non-religious and says:

“no positive commands whatsoever do make anything morally good and evil, just or unjust, which nature had not made such before. For indifferent things commanded, considered materially in themselves, remain still what they were before in their own nature, that is, indifferent, because (as Aristotle speaks) will cannot change nature” (Cudworth, quoted from Stratton-Lake, 2013, p.339).

Wainwright tries to show why many theologians refuse to accept it even though it seems more compatible with belief in the God of religions.

In this section, Wainwright points out the three impossible implications of Divine command ethics from the viewpoint of Ralph Cudworth.

1. The first one can be seen as the **baselessness of morality** and its being subject to change:

That there is nothing absolutely, intrinsically and naturally good and evil, just and unjust, antecedently to any positive command or prohibition of God; but that the arbitrary will and pleasure of God ... by its commands and prohibitions, is the first and only rule and measure thereof (Cudworth, 1976, p.9).

Cudworth seems to say in this brief statement that by accepting the theory of Divine command, three important characteristics of morality are ruled out, one being absoluteness, the other being a priori (even compared to revelation) and the third being natural or rational. But Wainwright has gathered them all

in the form of an objection. In fact, Wainwright considers the result of the rejection of these three moral characteristics in the theory of Divine command to be the fact that it makes it possible for moral judgments to be replaced. In the sense that the negation of the absolute, a priori and rationality of moral judgments ultimately leads to the possibility of changing the rightness of helping with the wrongness of killing an innocent person. Of course, it seems that each of these false consequences can be a separate objection to the theory of Divine command, as is the case in Islamic theology.

So, we can conclude that:

“Nothing can be imagined so grossly wicked ... but if it were supposed to be commanded by this omnipotent deity, must needs ... forthwith become holy, just and righteous” (Cudworth, 1976, p. 10).

Or as Wainwright says:

“If God were to command us to blaspheme, for example, or to torture an innocent child, doing so would be morally obligatory.” (Wainwright, 2005, p.76)

2. The second one can be explained in such a way that the love of God, which is the foundation of faith, is based solely on God’s command so that in the case of God’s command to hate Him, hatred of God acquires moral value.

“To love God, or protect the innocent, “is by nature an indifferent [that is, morally neutral] thing.” Hatred of God or the persecution of the innocent becomes wrong only when or if God prohibits it.” (Cudworth, 1976, p.10)

Wainwright does not explain well whether this is an additional point of the previous reason or not. Isn’t this another expression of the same objection that morality is baseless and subject to change? What additional point is there in this statement? We will see in the section related to Muslim theologians that this form has a special interpretation and has an additional point to the previous one.

3. And the third is that if we assume that God’s command to kill an innocent child causes moral goodness and even the necessity of killing an innocent person, then it should be accepted that the Divine nature is the same as seen in the command to kill or torture an innocent person. In fact, by denying the reality of moral values and believing that they are subject to God’s command, there is no reason to believe in God’s moral essence. Whereas, if the moral values as the eternal law are the basis of the divine act, as rationalist theologians say, in the assumption that there is a command from God to kill the innocent (as it is in the case of Prophet Ibrahim), we take it and interpret it in a sense consistent with God’s moral essence.

The third unpalatable implication is that it is consistent with God’s

essential nature “to command blasphemy, perjury, lying, etc.” Commanding “the hatred of God,” for example, “is not inconsistent with the nature of God,” but only with what God has in fact commanded (Cudworth, 1976, pp.10-11).

4. In addition to the three objections of Ralph Cudworth, Wainwright brings a fourth one of George Rust, which is the collapse of religious ethics and Sharia in case one accepts the theory of Divine Command.

If God isn't essentially just and truthful, if nothing in his nature prevents him from lying to us or breaking his covenant with us, then we have no basis for trusting him or for believing that what he has declared to be his will (in scripture, through the church, and so on) really is his will. A commitment to theological voluntarism thus makes the practice of morality impossible (Wainwright, 2005, p.76).

Of course, Wainwright himself does not accept this argument and says:

That God is not essentially just and truthful only implies that God might not have been just and truthful. That God might not have been just and truthful, however, does not entail that he isn't just and truthful, or that we have no reason to believe that he is (Wainwright, 2005, p.76).

Committing to the possibility of change in the nature of things, including their essential and inherent moral characteristics, which can be seen in Descartes' opinions, requires one of these two impossibilities. Each of these two impossible things can be considered as a separate reason against the theory of divine command.

5. The first implication of the possibility of change in the nature of things can be enumerated as the fifth objection.

First, if the “essences of things [are] dependent upon an arbitrary will in God,” then God's essence is dependent on an arbitrary will of God. But in that case, God could have willed that “there ... be no such thing as knowledge in God himself,” or “that neither his own power nor knowledge should be infinite.” For if God freely determines the constituents of his own essence, he could determine that it not include power or infinite power, or knowledge or infinite knowledge, and thus determine that there be logically possible worlds in which his power or knowledge is limited, and possible worlds in which he has no power or knows nothing at all (Cudworth, 1976, pp. 33–34).

6. The second implication of the possibility of the change in the nature of the things can be enumerated as the sixth objection:



“Second, the view in question “destroys all knowledge.” (Cudworth, 1976, p. 32)

But the second one, unlike the first one, is ambiguous and needs to be explained. Wainwright uses new logic to explain it and says: “Presumably because a logically impossible proposition entails all propositions.” (Wainwright, 2005, p. 77).

In explaining this, he says:

There are at least two arguments for this. First, a proposition,  $q$ , is entailed by another proposition,  $p$ , if and only if it is logically impossible for  $p$  to be true and  $q$  to be false. Now suppose that  $p$  is a logically impossible proposition. If it is, then it is impossible for  $p$  to be true. But if it is impossible for  $p$  to be true, then, for any proposition  $q$ , it is impossible for  $p$  to be true and  $q$  to be false. So  $p$  entails  $q$ . This argument is question-begging in the present context, however, since it relies on the claim that logically impossible propositions can't be true—which is the point at issue. A second argument is less obviously circular. Cudworth makes the common assumption that logically impossible propositions are or entail contradictions. Suppose that they are or do. Then we can show that a logically impossible proposition entails all propositions. Let  $p$  and  $q$  be any propositions.

$p$  and not  $p$  (assumption), therefore,

$p$  (from [1])

$p$  or  $q$  (from [2]), therefore,

not- $p$  (from [1]), therefore,

$q$  (from 3 and 4)

If this is the sort of argument Cudworth has in mind, however, it may miss Descartes's point, namely, that God can make the impossible possible (and hence not self-contradictory). If God were to will that the angles of a triangle are not equal to two right angles, for example, or that promising breaking isn't wrong, he would thereby will that these things be possible (because true), and hence not self-contradictory (Wainwright, 2005, p.77. footnote).

7. Wainwright's seventh objection can be considered similar to the previous one because he says that due to the lack of independent normative reasons for obeying God, the principle of obeying God and the necessity of obeying Him is ruled out because if it is based on God's command, it becomes vicious circular and invalid.

What is the source of our obligation *to conform to God's will*? Could that, too, be grounded in a divine command? It could not, for willing

and commanding as such create no obligations. It is, rather, “natural justice or equity, which gives to one the *right* or *authority* of commanding, and begets in another *duty* and *obligation* to obedience.” (My emphases) Willing or commanding creates obligations only where there is a *prior obligation to obey*. Willing or commanding, then, can’t be the source of *all* obligation. If all obligation were grounded in God’s will, for example, then the obligation to obey God<sup>20</sup> would be grounded in God’s will. But it is “ridiculous and absurd” to suppose that “anyone should make a positive law to require that others should be obliged, or bound to obey him ... for if they were obliged before, then this law would be in vain, and to no purpose; and if they were not before obliged, then they could not be obliged by any positive law, because they were not previously bound to obey such a person’s commands (Cudworth, pp. 17–20 quoted from Wainwright, 2005, pp.82-83).

In general, it can be said that these seven objections are the basis for abandoning the theory of divine command in the Christian West. Of course, it is clear that in the West and even in Wainwright’s writings, there are other problems with the Theory of the Divine Command, but these are the main problems that we can find. He does not add any other case to these objections in his two articles published in *A Companion to Ethics*, (Wainwright, 2011) and in *Monotheism and Ethics*, even though the structures of those works are different from his book.

In the second article, he considers two cases as serious among the various objections. One is the impossibility of necessary moral truths:

Divine Command Theory is vulnerable to two powerful objections, however. First, the theory seems to imply that in logically possible worlds in which God fails to exist or commands nothing, such things as promise-keeping or fidelity wouldn’t be obligatory, and gratuitous cruelty, treachery, and the like wouldn’t be forbidden (Wainwright, 2012, p.46).

But he considers the most important reason for rejecting the Theory of Divine Command to be the point that Ralph Cudworth said, which is the impossibility of obligation to obey God by accepting the subordination of morality to Divine command and Sharia. He says:

The second and more serious problem in my opinion is this. Ralph Cudworth argued that willing and commanding as such create no obligations; for willing or commanding creates obligations only when there is a prior obligation to obey, an obligation which is ultimately

grounded in “natural justice or equity, which gives one [person] the right or authority of commanding, and begets in another duty and obligation to obedience.” It would seem, then, that even if God is the source of each of our *other* obligations, he cannot be the source of our obligation to obey God (Wainwright, 2005, p.47).

After explaining these seven objections that can be seen in Wainwright’s book and articles to the traditional version of Divine command ethics, we will go to the Muslim theologians and look for the above reasons in them, respecting the brevity. It is clear that there are more problems with the Theory of Divine Command in the Islamic tradition than these cases, but we will limit ourselves to these problems and give a report on the existence or non-existence of these problems in Islamic literature.

### **Objections to Command ethics in the Islamic tradition**

The discussion of moral concepts such as good and bad and should and should not is very serious in Islamic theology and is one of the important issues of theological thought that has had a great impact on other areas of Islamic knowledge such as jurisprudence and principles of jurisprudence. Of course, Muslim theologians originally proposed it to explain Divine actions. Questions such as, can God command or forbid things that are not in the power of man, or can He violate His promises, were the main topic of discussion.

In the Islamic world, both sides of Euthyphro’s case have serious supporters without referring to that dialogue. On one side, there are those who are known as the Ash‘arites who defend the Theory of the Divine Command, but on the other side, Mu‘tazilite and Shia theologians reject it and believe in the Theory of Intrinsic and Intellectual Good and Bad. The scope of this discussion has been extended to other branches of Islamic knowledge and, for example, in the principles of jurisprudence, the so-called Akhbari tendencies accept the Theory of the Divine Command, and in contrast, the rationalists accept the independency of moral properties from God’s command and prohibition. Here, we are not trying to investigate this issue in the history of Islam, and we are only going to show cases of objections to the Divine Command Theory, the content or structure of which is similar to the aforementioned objections in the Christian tradition.

### **The possibility of the exchange of moral judgments**

In this objection, the main point is that if the moral verdict is based on Divine command, there is a possibility that, for example, the verdict of killing an innocent which is wrong can be reversed by the verdict of helping him which

is right (Hilli, 1986, p.301). There have been many interpretations of this objection, which is known as the *exchange objection* (Taleghani & Rafiei, 2019). But in any case, this objection can be seen as consistent with Wainwright's first objection, and in a way, it is consistent with his second objection. Because in both arguments, the possibility of the exchange of moral values of the actions is the main point, but in the second argument, the emphasis is on the reversal of the value of the two key religious concepts that play a fundamental role in a person's religiosity or atheism. According to this theory, the moral value of loving God and hating Him can be changed based on God's command. In this assumption, in addition to the problem of the exchange of values, which also applies to other matters, there is a kind of paradox that further shows its unfairness.

Al-Hilli says:

If good and bad are not rational, there is a possibility of inversion and displacement in goodness and ugliness, so that what we imagine good as ugly, and vice versa [what we imagine as ugly is good]. So, in this case, it is possible that many nations believe that it is good to praise someone who has done bad things to them and condemn someone who has done good things to them; as we believe the opposite has been achieved. And since every wise person knows that it is invalid, we are sure that these rulings are based on rational issues, not based on the commands and restrictions of Sharia and customs (Hilli, 1986, p.303).

### **Denial of the necessary character of morality**

Accepting the Theory of Divine Command is incompatible with the necessity of moral basic statements. This point is emphasized in most theological books, for example, we find it in one of the earliest books (3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century) in Shi'ite theology, and it is repeated in the later tradition.

The human mind by itself and without referring to religion decides the badness of some actions such as cruelty and lies, or the goodness of some actions such as justice and truth. These rulings are always issued by everyone and even the deniers of religion (Nobakhti, 1984, p. 104).

Of course, the explanation of the necessity of morality in the Islamic world is different from what we saw in Wainwright's words. The necessity of ethics in the writings of Western rationalists means an objective necessity *de re necessity*.

For example, in the interpretation of the necessity of basic moral rules in his article, Wainwright says that the moral attributes that are the basis of our judgment are the same in every possible world.

But in the Islamic world, the concept of moral necessity refers to an epistemological or *de dicto necessity*. They say that these statements are self-evident. Of course, to explain the epistemological necessity, some of them referred to their objective necessity, but these two are separate. For example, Nobakhti, in explaining the epistemological necessity of these rules, which all humans accept, points to the objective necessity of those attributes and says:

The reason for the general acceptance of these rulings and the badness of oppression, for example, is that the nature of oppression actually has a necessary objective characteristic, which in the field of our knowledge becomes the necessary ruling of the badness of oppression (Nobakhti, 1984, p.105).

It is interesting that in explaining the necessity of some basic moral rules, Tusi points out that if these are not necessary, moral arguments become baseless and a sequence occurs which is not acceptable (Al-Sayuri, 1999, p.141).

From this sentence, it is easily clear that the words of Muslim theologians about the necessity of moral rules are epistemological and not existential, and this is an important difference in the explanation of this objection in Western and Islamic works.

### **The nullification of all moral laws by accepting Divine Command Ethics**

He states that if the Theory of Divine Command were to be right, all types of good and bad would be totally rejected. Al-Hilli states:

If we do not understand the good and bad of some things with reason, we will not judge the ugliness of a lie; therefore, its occurrence is permissible from God Almighty so when He informs us about something that is ugly, we do not believe in its ugliness, and when He informs us about something that is good we are not sure of its goodness because of the permissibility of lying. And we also consider it permissible for Him to command us to the ugly and forbid us from doing the good, due to the exclusion of the wisdom of God Almighty based on the absence of intellectual goodness (Hilli, 1986, p.304).

This argument is exactly the same as the fourth objection Wainwright quotes from George Rust. Of course, Wainwright himself did not accept this argument because he says that we cannot talk about the goodness and correctness of telling the truth without God's command; it only means that we do not know that He is telling the truth, but on the other hand, we cannot say that He is lying, and according to this, His words are lies. But it seems that this form of Wainwright is not correct because if we do not have confidence in the

correctness of God's commandments, the mere possibility of a lie destroys our trust in Sharia.

### **The lack of connection between moral perception and religious belief**

The fourth reason in the Islamic tradition can be seen as the lack of connection between moral judgment and religious belief. One of the major objections in Islamic theology refers to a fact, which is the general perception of people about the goodness and badness of actions, and that in such a perception, believers and atheists are the same. According to the Muslim theologians, even Indian Brahmins who accept God but do not believe in prophethood and Divine commands and prohibitions, have the same understanding of the rightness and wrongness of actions, and like the believers, they see the ugliness of lies and oppression and the goodness of truthfulness and justice. They find that it is a sign that this understanding has nothing to do with Divine commands and prohibitions and is rooted in the natural rationality of man. This objection, which is sometimes called epistemic objection, can be seen in most theological books.

For example, this expression was seen in the book of Tufi (1259- 1316):

The ugliness of some actions and their goodness were necessary and self-evident before the emergence of laws and can be seen in the eyes of Brahmins who deny the law. If moral good and badness is a consequence of God's commands and prohibitions, this should not be the case (Tufi, 2005, p. 88).

Of course, Tufi himself, who is a serious supporter of this theory and has dedicated his book to defending it, accepts these perceptions, but he does not consider them to be the moral perception of good and bad. It is interesting that Tufi, who collected all objections, also mentions seven objections in the Islamic tradition

### **Denial of Divine command ethics by a thought experiment**

The fifth objection is a kind of thought experiment that if we assume that all of our factual knowledge about truth telling and lying are the same, and for example, we know that there is the same amount of benefit in both, or both are compatible with our desires, and even that both actions have a Divine command, it seems that in such an atmosphere of mental assumption, man still realizes that telling the truth has a special character make it to be good. It can be said that this argument shows some kind of intellectual differences in affairs, which, despite the commonality of all other attributes, still causes the difference between truth and falsehood. This point shows the existence of sui

generic moral properties in the actions. (Tufi, 2005, p. 90)

### **Rejection of the obligation to study the claims of the prophets**

The sixth objection can be seen as the rejection of the obligation to examine the claims of the prophets in the assumption of the acceptance of the dependency of moral rules on divine commands and prohibitions. If goodness and badness are dependent on Divine commands, we can say in the face of the messengers that there is no need to investigate your claim of prophethood, because there is no moral obligation before committing to the sharia and accepting the command and prohibition of God, not even the obligation of the study and examination of the your alleged Prophethood. (Tufi, 2005, p. 91)

### **The impossibility of describing God's action as moral**

If moral judgments such as good and bad or right and wrong are based on God's commands, then we cannot have a moral judgment about God's own actions. Because it does not make sense to consider the Divine command itself, which is a divine act, as good or right because it is compatible with the Divine command. (Tufi, 2005, 92)

### **Conclusion**

By examining the seven objections that Wainwright proposed using the views of Christian rationalist theologians, especially Ralph Cudworth, it can be seen that basing moral judgments on Divine commandments, although it seems to be in accordance with the main teachings of religion, i.e. Sovereignty and absolute power is divine, but it has serious flaws. The same point can be understood by examining similar objections in the Islamic tradition. It is interesting that most of the objections to the theory of Divine command are the same in both traditions, and of course each has its own objections.

## References

- Ashari, A. H. (1995). *Al-Luma' fi-al-radd -'ala ahl al-zaygh wa al-bida'*. Corrected by Hammouda Gharaba. Cairo: Matba'a Misr, Sherkat-i Mosaheme Misriya.
- Cudworth, R. (1731). *A Treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality*. London: J. & J. Knapton. (Reprint, New York: Garland, 1976.)
- Eiji, E. A. (Azad-al-din). (n.d.). *al-Mawaqef fi 'Ilm al-kalam*. Beirut: 'Alam al-Kotub
- Hilli, H. (Allamah Hilli). (1407 AH). *Nahj al-haq wa kashf al-sidq*. Foreword by R. Sadr. Qom: Mu'assasat Dar al-Hijra.
- Al-Hilli, N. D. (1413 AH). *Kashf al-Murad fi sharh tajrid al-i'tiqad*. (H. Hasanzade Amuli, Ed.). Qom: Mu'assasat Nahr al-Islami.
- Al-Sayuri al-Hilli, M. (1378 SH). *Al-Anwar al-jalaliyya fi shark al-fusul al-Nasiriyya*. Research by A. Hajiabadi & A. Jamalnia. Mu'assasat al-Bay' wa al-Nashr al-Tabi'a li-l-ustan al-Radawiyya al-muqaddasa. 2nd ed.
- Nobakhti, A. S. (1413 AH). *Al-Yaqut fi 'Ilm al-kalam*. Research by A. A. Diyaie. Qom: Ayatollah Marashi Najafi Library.
- Stratton-Lake, Ph. (2013). Rational Intuitionism, in R. Crisp (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Ethics*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Taleghani, A., & Rafiei, H. (1398 SH), A critical assessment of epistemological and mutual-reverse arguments for intellectual moral good and bad. *Falsafe va Kalam-e Eslami* (Iranian Journal for the Philosophy & Kalam), 52(2), 271-287. doi: 10.22059/JITP.2019.274447.523085
- Taleghani, S.A. & Rafiei, H. (2019). Critical evaluation of the argument of intifah on intellectual goodness and ugliness, *Philosophy of Religion Research*, 17(33), 87-110.
- Tufi, N. (2005). *Dara'-al-qobh al-qabih bi-al-tahsin wa al-taqbih*, Tashih Imen Shahada. Riyaz: Markaz-i al-Malek Faysal li l-bohuth wa al-darasat al-Islamia
- Tusi, N. D., & Hilli, H. (1993). *Kashf al-fawa'id fi sharh qawa'id al-'aqaid*. Research by H. Makki al-Ameli. Beirut: Dar al-Safwa.
- Wainwright, W. (2012). Religion and morality, in Y. Tzvi Langermann (ed.). *Monotheism & Ethics: Historical and Contemporary Intersections among Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (45-58). Leiden (Netherland): Brill.
- Wainwright, W. (2011). Morality and Religion, in Ch. Miller (ed.). *The Continuum Companion to Ethics* (119-142). London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Wainwright, W. (2005). *Religion and Morality*. U.K.: Ashgate.