



## Doubt of Reason as a Source of Knowledge: A Study of the Iranian School of Segregation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 14 September 2023 Revised: 11 October 2023 Accepted: 07 December 2023 Online: 28 August 2024	In the process of religious education, reason is accepted as one of the sources of knowledge, while the difference about its definition, role and position cannot be ignored. The school of segregation has doubts about the role of human reason in understanding religious knowledge. The present researchers tried to use Norman Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis to examine the perspective of the segregation school regarding reason at the three levels of description, interpretation and explanation. The findings showed that the difference between <i>Imami</i> jurists regarding the interpretation of religious texts has become the basis for the emergence of school of segregation in Iran, while the influence of political, cultural and scientific factors cannot be ignored. Also, the findings reveal that segregation school emphasizes the role of revealed reason, nature and tradition in religious understanding, while it cannot provide a precise and clear definition of these concepts. In addition, the findings made it clear that from a comparative point of view, seven similarities and five differences can be found between the proponents and opponents of the segregation school regarding the sources of knowledge and role of reason. The similarities show that both groups believe in the role of revelation, nature, and senses in acquiring knowledge, while the proponents of the segregation school reject the knowledge that comes from science and emotion. Also, belief in divine science is common in both groups, while belief in human science does not differ among the supporters of the segregation school. Based on these similarities and differences, the authors emphasize that the denial of reason and human sciences - such as philosophy and mysticism - by the school of segregation adds to the complexity of religious education in Iran's educational system.
<b>KEYWORDS</b> Cognition Imami Jurisprudence Reason Religious Education Segregation School	

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## 1. Introduction

One of the goals of religion-oriented political systems is the religious education of the young generation. The dominant structure of the political and religious system in Iran is influenced by *Imami Shia jurisprudence*, although other religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism - as well as various Sunni sects - are also recognized by the Iran's constitution. Considering that the majority of the population is *Shiite*, during the last four decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran has tried to implement religious education through the general formal education system (Ajam & Rizvani, 2013). In order to realize this goal and familiarize the young generation with the teachings of Islam from the perspective of *Imami Shia jurisprudence*, one of the important issues is determining the sources of religious knowledge. In fact, the basic question facing religious experts and curriculum planners is how best to introduce students to the religion of Islam and educate religious people. In other words, what are the sources of knowledge? Religious sects have different answers to this question, although many similarities can be found between them from a historical perspective. The classic answer of *Imamiyyah jurisprudence* to this question clearly points to the four epistemic sources of revelation, reason, *ijtihad* and consensus (Al-Alvani, 2003). Meanwhile, reason - as a source of knowledge - has been the subject of more controversy. In fact, *Shiites* and *Sunnis* - as well as their different sects - can be divided into two main general groups in terms of belief or lack of belief in the ability of "reason" to know religious knowledge: First, rationalist groups such as *Mu'tazila*; Second, narrative-oriented groups such as *Ashareh* (Mohammed, 2012). In this way, it can be said that among both *Shiites* and *Sunnis*, one can find those who are in favor or against the role of reason - to interpret and understand the words of revelation. The rationalist groups tries to understand Islam in the light of rational principles and teach it to the young generation, while the anti-rationalists, with a kind of listening and submission and without analyzing the concepts and revelations, refer to the appearances of the *Qur'anic* verses and think tradition is enough to understand religion (Nekunam, & Haji Amiri, 2017).

It is obvious that in every period of time, there are opportunities for the emergence and prosperity of intellectual trends - inclined to one of the two streams of rationalism and anti-rationalism. However, the difficulty arises from the fact that it is not possible to determine exactly to what extent religion, politics, culture or even technology play a role in the tendency to believe or reject reason - and the emergence of new schools of thought - in a period of time. For example, historical evidence shows that during the period of *al-Ma'mun*, the tendency towards rationalism and during the period of *al-Mu'tasim*, the tendency towards anti-rationalism was more prevalent in the Islamic world (Mohammed, 2012). Also, in Iran and during the *Ilkhanid period*, the belief in the

role of reason to understand the teachings of Islam was stronger and weaker during the *Safavid period*. To what extent these orientations have been affected by differences of opinion between the scholars of Islamic sects or affected by the positive or negative influence of the political system, requires more research.

One of the new thought that can be called as an Iranian school is the "Segregation School". It seems that the emergence of this school, as well as the examination, criticism and interpretation of the opinions of its supporters requires knowledge of the currents of thought among *Shia Imamia* scholars, as well as the role of the political system in the last few decades of Iran. From the perspective of religious developments, it seems that in the early 20th century, which coincides with the scientific life of the founder of the Segregation school, Mirza Mahdi Esfahani (1886-1941), the dominant thinking among the *Imamiyya scholars* was a rationalist approach. The experience of living in *Najaf City* and perhaps the exaggeration of the role of reason in understanding religion by some *Imami Shia* scholars made Mirza Esfahani show a tendency to negate reason as a source of religious knowledge (Raqavi, 2015). Also, from a political point of view, it can be said that the establishment of the Islamic Republic system in Iran once again provided the ground for the design of different religious schools within the framework of *Shia Imamia jurisprudence* - including the school of segregation - (Khosrupanah, 2011).

Although the extent to which the establishment of the Islamic Republic system has caused the rise or stop of "segregation school" requires a separate research, but since the current religion-oriented political system of Iran wants the religious education of the young generation, this question naturally arises for curriculum planners that in the process of religious education of the young generation, which of the sources of knowledge have more credibility among *Imamiyya* scholars. In this regard, Mohammad Reza Hakimi, as one of the main theorists of the segregation school, believes that human societies need two things: First, education means making a righteous person; and second, politics means building a righteous society. As these two works in interaction with each other, religious governments involve a great benefit, which is the promotion and education of religion, and a great danger, which is the possibility of not fulfilling the great expectation of human sovereignty (Panahi Kadim, Shakri Khoi, Nasiri Hamed & Ismail Zad, 2022). Also, according to Hakimi (2002), the basis of divine education is the formative guardianship that reaches the *Prophet* and the infallible imams through *God*. Therefore, in order to reach absolute perfection, one must refer to the "*absolute perfection*" that the prophets and imams are infallible. In this regard, the main goal of the current research is to examine the viewpoint of the "Segregation

School” regarding the place of reason in the knowledge and teaching of Islamic knowledge. Before concluding this introduction, it is necessary to briefly refer to the research literature:

Hamami and Ali Akbarzadeh (2012a) found that according to the Segregation School, it is not permissible to understand the concepts of the *Qur'an* through interpretation, and there is no other way to understand the *verses* and *surah* than to refer to the *hadiths*. These two researchers also examined the reason and its role in interpretation from the perspective of the Segregation School and came to the conclusion that the followers of this school believe that the natural intellect is the best intellect to understand the concepts of the *Qur'an*, but at the same time they themselves use the philosophical intellect to interpret the verses of the *Qur'an* (Hamami & Ali Akbarzadeh, 2012a, b, c). Esfahani & Akbari (2012) emphasize that according to the Segregation School, the separation of the science of religion is only possible by appealing to imams. In a comparative study, Vahidi Mehrjardi (2014) shows that while German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Karl Bultmann believes in the interpretation of sacred religious sources through the interpretation of all human beings, the supporters of the Segregation School are against the philosophical interpretation of the *Qur'an*. Ahmadi (2017) believes that according to the Segregation School reason divided into two categories: posterior intellect and anterior intellect. The posterior intellect is connected to the revelation and does not need the help of other sources of knowledge to understand religion. Mokhtari, Soleimanipour & Hosseini (2017) believe that there is no reason to prove that the nature of religion - as the followers of the Segregation School believe - obtain through original disposition (*Fitra*). Qaderdan Qaramalki (2018) shows that there is a difference of opinion between the beliefs of the majority of *Shia Imamiyya* scholars and the opinions of Mirza Mahdi Esfahani - as the founder of Segregation School - regarding the validity of the *Qur'an* as a document. Shakrin (2019) considers this opinion of the proponents of the Segregation School that "philosophical reason is the evidence of the devil" as having no religious and rational basis. Karimi, Mosalaipour & Tafzali (2022) in their criticism and analysis of the rule of narration over reason in the Segregation School came to the conclusion that from the point of view of the followers of this theory, the description of narrations about reason is not compatible with its philosophical concept.

The previous findings show that the Segregation School has been examined and evaluated by Iranian researchers from various aspects. Also, in terms of methodology, most researchers have benefited from the descriptive-analytical method to criticize this way of thinking. In the current research, the basis of the researchers' study is the examination and analysis of the ideas of the proponents of the Segregation School regarding reason from a comparative perspective by using

the model of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse. Based on this, the sub-goals of the research are:

- Identifying the sources of knowledge from the perspective of the Segregation School
- Identifying the role of reason from the point of view of the Segregation School
- Identifying the similarities and differences between the views of the Segregation School and its opponents regarding reason

## 2. Research Method

The present research method is qualitative comparatively. The method of data collection was documentary using primary sources (books and articles of jurists and founders of the segregation school) and secondary sources (books and articles, interviews and lectures). To collect data, use the Boolean method based on searching keywords such as Islam, *Fiqh*, reason, *Imamiya*, Revelation, *Sunnah*, *Tafsir*, *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, *Sunnah*, *Infallible Imams*, Knowledge, and Religion, etc. in information databases such as Alamnet, SID, MacIran, Normag, and international database like Google Scholar. To analyze the data, the critical discourse approach was chosen. Critical discourse is considered as a formative process of discourse analysis, in which, by going beyond the description of linguistic data, attention is paid to the effective processes in the formation of discourse (Bashir, 2006). Based on this, the present researchers tried to use the model of critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough (1995) to examine the perspective of the segregation school regarding reason in the three levels of description, interpretation and explanation, in order to examine the descriptive aspects, dominant discourses and to examine the secondary and hidden concepts of the text - which have received less attention-.

## 3. Findings

In the description stage, the readers get to know the thinkers and the main ideas of the "Segregation School" (hereafter abbreviated as SS) regarding reason as one of the sources of knowledge of religion. The interpretation stage is mainly focused on the historical background and the social, religious and political atmosphere in which the school of segregation has grown and developed. In the explanation stage and through the application of the matching approach, the points of similarity and difference between the opinions of the supporters of the SS and the opinions of other *Iranian Imami Shia jurists*, as well as the objections to their opinions regarding reason are stated.

### A) Description

Mohammad Mehdi Gharavi Esfahani Khorasani, known as Mirza Mehdi Esfahani, is known as the founder of the SS. He was born in Isfahan, spent most of his scientific life in Najaf (Iraq) and spent the last three decades of his life in the religious schools of Mashhad (Eastern Iran). He trained many students, some of whom became very famous such as Seyyed Ali Sistani (author of Shiite imitation in Iraq & a political influencer), Mirza Hassan Ali Marwarid, Mehdi Elahi Qomshaei, and Muhammad Taqi Shariati. Also, for the first time, the term "Segregation School" was proposed by a contemporary of Esfahani, Mohammad Reza Hakimi (1935-2021) - an Iranian jurist and writer (Nekunam, & Haji Amiri, 2017). According to Hakimi, the SS is an epistemological and methodological theory about how to understand religious texts, in which the distinction between three methods of religious knowledge is emphasized - method of the Qur'an, philosophy and mysticism - (Mortazavi, 2004). This school of thought has five fundamental principles: Separation of the path of religion from philosophy and mysticism, superiority of religious knowledge, reliance of religious knowledge on the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, reliance on the appearance of verses & traditions; and rejection of any type of interpretation (Iskandari, 2021). From the point of view of the SS, the way to know the truths and religious knowledge is "real reason and science"; not what is called reason and action in human sciences. Hence, learning human sciences and mental concepts and ideas not only does not add to human knowledge and understanding, but also hinders the acquisition of knowledge and the discovery of facts. Therefore, filling the mind with human sciences means increasing darkness and ignorance. According to the followers of SS, in order to obtain a perfect understanding of religion, one must refer to the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*, and therefore, the interference of human sciences such as philosophy and mysticism, deprives the understanding of religion of its purity and leads to the valley of fusion and eclecticism.

Hence, not only religious knowledge is not dependent on the acquisition of human sciences, but the special terms of these sciences prevent people from reaching a correct religious understanding. In order to achieve a correct understanding of religious teachings, a person must free her/his mind from the shackles of human knowledge and seek recourse to the natural intellect (Mortazavi, 2004; Karimi, Moslaipour & Tafazali, 2022; Shakrin, 2019). Based on this thinking, Mirza Esfahani and his supporters believe that the origin of human differences is in the multiplicity of thoughts, exaggeration in philosophical reasoning, Greek logic and mystical discovery. If the thinkers had followed the *Prophets* from the very beginning, they would have obtained correct and true knowledge of religion and would not have suffered from all these contradictory and conflicting

intellectual and discovery data (Al-Gharbawi, 1995). Of course, it must be acknowledged that since the time of Mirza Isfahani, the followers of the SS have also undergone changes in their opinions and sometimes have modified them. For example, people like Hakimi and Seyyed Ja'far Sidan (1934- ) believe that it is possible to discover things through reason and knowledge, but the divine habit and tradition are based on the fact that knowledge and reason are obtained through real means, i.e. prophets. Therefore, the *Qur'an*, the *Prophet* of Islam and *Imams* are the cause of finding the true light (Khosrupanah, 2011). The followers of the SS emphasize that the interpretation of revelation should be protected from mixing with these sciences, because revelation is infallible and human sciences are fallible. Of course, religious scholars can study these intellectual sciences and benefit from them; however, these sciences should not be used to understand and interpret the verses of the *Qur'an* and narrations. The concern of the SS is that the interference of mystical intuition and philosophical content in the interpretation and understanding of the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* will lead to the interpretation of verses and narrations, because philosophers and mystics try to interpret the *Qur'an* in a way that is compatible with their beliefs (Reza'i Birjandi, 2012).

### *B) Interpretation*

According to Fairclough (1995), interpretation is based on the context of a situation that gives rise to a thought or action. The situational context underlying the emergence of the SS can be examined from the perspective of history, politics, scientific developments and social changes in Iran and Islam. From a historical point of view, it is possible to pay attention to the role of reason and its acceptance or rejection in the history of philosophy in Greece, as well as the opinions of Muslim philosophers - such as Imam Muhammad Ghazali, Ibn Rushd, Fakhr Razi, and the followers of *Ash'ari* and *Mu'tazila* - (Bahmanpour, 2000, Gilson, 1992). In this regard, the early founders of the SS considered philosophy and mysticism - who wanted to reach an understanding of Islam by appealing to the mind and heart - contrary to religion and its origin from the thoughts of the Greeks. Also, they believed that the *Abbasid Caliphs* spread the intellectual sciences to close the door of *Shia Imams* and prevent people from referring to them. Esfahani also considered the path of religion to be separate from the path of reason and mysticism and even emphasized the principle that the divine sciences were revealed to eradicate human sciences. Divine sciences are completely different from human sciences, and human sciences are a head of ignorance and darkness (Mofid, 2006). In any case, the anti-rationalism of the SS can be seen from the historical point of view as the repetition of topics that are not new for philosophers and jurists.

From the side of scientific developments, we can point to the fact that during the last one hundred years, one of the common concerns in many societies - including Iran - is to prove religious teachings through reason and using new scientific findings, as well as creating compatibility between religion rulings human reason (Paymanjo, 2019). In this direction, sometimes excessive scientism has caused the interpretation of religious rulings to change with scientific findings. Based on this, the SS can be considered as a natural reaction of some *Imami jurists* in Iran who do not want to accept the rule and dominion of "variable reason" over "fixed religion". From the point of view of political developments, the current researchers have not been able to find any evidence that shows to what extent the emergence, growth and development of the SS in Iran has been influenced by political events. However, different and sometimes contradictory signs can be found. The constitutional revolution provided the ground for the penetration of new intellectual developments in Iran. One of the developments was determining the relationship between the political system and the religious system from a different perspective. In this regard, the clerics were divided into two groups for and against the Constitution (Najafi & Haqqani, 2015).

The establishment of the *Pahlavi* dynasty increased the distance between politics and religion and reduced the power of the jurists (Basirt Menesh, 2007). The reaction of the supporters of the SS was to emphasize the emergence of the twelfth Imam of the Shiites to establish justice and, of course, to deny the direct struggle with the political system by adopting the policy of "patience". The fall of the royal regime in the late 1970s meant the direct return of jurists to power. Therefore, in the new political system, the politics of "patience" lost its meaning. For this reason, we can see a major difference between the situation of the supporters of the SS before and after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Before the fall of the Shah's regime, the influence of the SS was limited to seminaries, while after the Islamic revolution, its supporters found a clear presence in all social scenes (Panahi Kadim et al, 2022).

Here we are facing basic but unanswered questions. For example, does the policy of "highlighting the role of the twelfth Imam" still mean the withdrawal of the followers of the SS from the field of politics or their stronger presence in politics through the continuous struggle of the Islamic Republic with the Baha'i supporters? Is the choice of the word "Segregation" a decade after the victory of the Islamic revolution by Mohammad Reza Hakimi - who is one of the commentators and strong supporters of this school - was not a renewed emphasis by the supporters of this school on preventing the influence of non-religious intellectual systems - such as philosophy, mysticism and even Politics - in the interpretation of verses of the Qur'an, for the benefit of self-interests. Does the SS not continue to influence fields such as religious education and political education through

highlighting and projecting concepts such as *Fitra* and *original disposition* - which is a very key word in the upstream document of "Fundamental Transformation of Iran's Education System". Doesn't this mean the dominance and influence of the *Mashhad* seminary - which is the main base of supporters of the SS among Iranian Imami jurists - over the seminaries of *Qom* and *Tehran*? Doesn't this influence mean rejecting the role of reason in religious education and political education and following more imitation (Vakili, 2008)? In fact, these aspects, which are not reflected in the works of the founder of this school, become a central issue in the thought of people like Hakimi. He emphasizes the importance of the SS as follows: "As Segregation School is based on the key principles and fundamentals of Qur'anic and Islamic teachings; it raises issues in the vital issues of politics, society, economy, and education, which constitute the Qur'anic society, cannot be realized except with them" (Hakimi, 2002:343). In any case, it can be concluded that the emergence and growth of the SS and their anti-rationalism in the realm of religious education cannot be done without considering the Iran's religious, social, scientific and political understanding and interpretation.

### *C) Explanation*

According to Fairclough (1995), explanation is a stage that expresses the relationship between interaction and social context, how the processes of production and interpretation are influenced by society. In explaining the view of the SS, it should first be mentioned that, according to the majority of *Imamiyya jurists*, the valid evidence from the book, Sunnah, and reason is clear, and each of them can be trusted. In the meantime, Islam has accepted the validity of reason, and based on this, it has addressed man with the attribute of "rational being". The way to know the teachings of religion is possible through the activation of reason, and the criterion for distinguishing right from wrong is general intellectual principles. Islam makes reason, proof and logic its "acceptance criteria" and calls people to rationalize and compare religious rules with rational principles (Alidoost, 2002). Likewise, Imami jurists believe that Islam does not believe in distinguishing between sciences and does not consider the ways of acquiring religious knowledge to be limited only to a particular science. The concern of the SS is of a different kind. From the point of view of the followers of this school, with the arrival of the prophets in the field of thought, three cognitive processes were formed in the context of history: Process of revelation (religion & Quran), Process of reason (philosophy) and Process of discovery (mysticism & mathematics).

These three processes are separate, because the fields of formation, essential elements, and their origin are not the same, and the pure data of each one does not have essential unity with each

other without the intervention of the element of interpretation. Therefore, the correct way to understand the words of the speaker is not to interpret them, and the duty of every theological researcher is to avoid interpretation and adaptation (Mortazavi, 2004). Therefore, the true facts and correct knowledge are the same revelations that do not need any kind of human thought. In order to reach the facts, one must reach the natural language, which is the language of revelation. The container for receiving revealed knowledge is only the natural intellect, and this is the time when we can find out the revealed truths from appearances. In this way, the SS has two basic goals: First, to separate three cognitive streams from each other, i.e., the stream of revelation, the stream of reason, and stream of mysticism; and secondly, the expression of pure Quranic teachings without any combination, eclecticism and interpretation. In this way, according to the defenders of the SS, sciences such as philosophy, theology and mysticism have no relationship with true Islam and are an external and non-Islamic phenomenon (Islami, 2007). It is natural that the emphasis on the role of revelation is approved by *Imamiyyah jurisprudence*, but what differentiate between the supporters and opponents of the SS are the criticisms that the opponents put forward. The first criticism is focused on the fact that the proponents of the SS have not been accurately defined and explained their key concepts and words such as nature, reason, science, and human sciences (Khosrupanah, 2012). For example, if the meaning of natural knowledge is the theoretical and practical axioms that all Islamic scholars agree on, and if they mean something else, they should explain it.

The second criticism is the conflict between the claim of the SS with the verses of the *Qur'an* and the *hadiths* that clearly defended the role of human reason (Karimi, Moslaipour & Tafzali, 2022). The third criticism goes back to equating revelation with reason. The supporters of the SS have thought that their rationalists have equal status between the two, while no one considers reason and abstract reasoning as well as sense and experience to be equivalent to revelation, and does not consider jurist, philosopher, and mystic to be comparable to prophets. What is important is man's understanding and interpretation of revelation because revelation is only available to perfect human beings like prophets (Shakerin, 2019). The point is that what is available to humans are the words of the revelation, not its meanings, so the ordinary human understanding of the revelation, in any form, is not a pure understanding and pure truth; sometimes the understanding and interpretation of ordinary human beings reaches the true meaning of the revelation, and sometimes it leads to error. But this right and wrong does not necessarily mean the absolute negation of reason in acquiring religious knowledge (Reza'i Birjandi, 2012).

Another criticism of the SS is that they do not provide a precise definition of reasoning based on revelation (Ebrahimi Dinani, 2001). Mohammad Reza Hakimi quotes from Mirza Mahdi Esfahani that "it is clear that the foundation of religion is based on reason and the perfection of man is possible by paying attention to reason and following the rules of reason. But the reason we are looking for is the inner proof". But Esfahani deprives the readers of the understanding of the meaning of revelation and leads them astray (Iskandari, 2021). Table 1 shows the opinions of the proponents of the SS and their opponents in matters related to reason from a comparative perspective:

Table 1 . Opinions of proponents and opponents of SS in subjects related to reason

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Proponents</b>	<b>Opponents</b>
Goal of religious education	Knowledge of Islam is far from human interpretation	Understanding Islam through human reasoning
Sources of knowledge	Revelation, nature, sense, revelatory intellect	Revelation, nature, sense, heart, human intellect
Knowledge tool	Quran, Sunnah	Qur'an, Sunnah, science, consensus
Approach to source of knowledge	Militancy based on segregation	Reconciliation based on unity
Approach towards the claimants of knowledge	Rejection of philosophers and mystics	Acceptance of philosophers and mystics
Division of science	Divine	Human
Types of intellect	Divine and natural	Divine, natural, philosophical, mystical
Islamic Historical roots	Ash'ari, Ahl al-Hadith, Salafi, Akhbari	Mu'tazila, Usuli, Kennedy, Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra
Non-Islamic Historical roots	Thoughts of Augustine and Anselm	Thoughts of Greek philosophers
Creator of the source of knowledge	God, prophets, infallible imams	God, prophets, infallible imams, non-infallible people

The analysis of data extracted from primary and secondary sources shows that there is agreement in some issues and differences in others between the two groups of supporters and opponents of the SS (Table 2).

Table 2: The similarities and differences of proponents and opponents of the SS by component

Components	Similarities	Differences
Revelation	*	*
Nature	*	*
Senses	*	*
Intellect	*	√
Heart	*	√
Divine knowledge	*	*
Human science	*	√
Interpretation of Qur'an	*	√
Quran	*	*
Sunnah	*	*
Position of philosophers and mystics	*	√

According to the comparative table, out of eleven components, there are similarities in seven components and differences in five components between the viewpoints of supporters and opponents of segregation school. The similarities show that both groups believe in the role of revelation, nature, and senses in acquiring knowledge, while the proponents of the SS reject the knowledge that comes from science and emotion. Also, belief in divine science is common in both groups, while belief in human science is not different among the supporters of the school. In addition, while both groups accept the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* as a means of knowledge, the interpretation and understanding of humans from the verses of the *Qur'an* and hadiths is only accepted by rationalists. The last aspect of the difference between the two groups is related to the acceptance or rejection of the position of philosophers and mystics in the acquisition of religious knowledge, in such a way that the SS does not value the philosophical and mystical understanding of religious knowledge.

#### 4. Conclusion

Understanding religion has never been easy for mankind. For this reason, the existence of clerics can be considered the most important common feature of all religions, those who open the religious mystery for us and try to make people the true followers of their religion. In spite of this vital role, the complexities of religious teachings combined with human progress have made different understandings and interpretations of religious teachings a common thing throughout the history of religions. This common thing, of course, involves accepting a great risk namely "personal interpretation" of religion for one's own benefit; a danger that again indicates another commonality

between all religions. In this process, it is natural for clerics to be divided into two groups: The group who refer to the primary sources of their religion such as the *Holy Book* or the words of the prophets or early religious leaders without any interference in the text and without reference to personal and group perception and interpretation and a group who accept the primary sources and pay attention to the text and its appearance consider it impossible to understand the text without explanation and interpretation. The SS belongs to the first group. Mirza Isfahani, the founder of this school, called it the *Ahl al-Bayt School* (the family of the Islamic prophet Muhammad) to show that what he says comes from the words of *infallible imams* and not his own interpretation of religion. It is easy to understand Mirza Isfahani's concern from one point of view, because the history of mankind easily shows that abuse of religion has always been common. The other side of the coin cannot be ignored either. Human understanding is not a fixed thing. Reason- and consequences of that knowledge- make the rules and principles of religion better and deeper known. Avoiding imposing one's own interpretation of religion and understanding it according to scientific developments requires finding a balance point. The SS may be able to reduce extremism in the use of human reason to interpret religion, but at the same time, it cannot negate human reason. This support the findings of Vakili, 2008; Paymanjo, 2019; Karimi, Moslaipour & Tafzali, 2022; Hamami & Ali Akbarzadeh, 2012a,b; and Iskandari, 2021 who emphasized that it is not easy to understand religious concepts without relying on reason. Based on this thought, it should be acknowledged that the cultural, social and scientific structure of societies is changing every day, and the education of the young generation is based on theoretical concepts of religion that are inherently complex (For example, revelatory wisdom) or cannot be easily explained, only makes the process of religious education more difficult.

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