

Review Article

The Relevance of Reason and Revelation in Guiding Man in Modern Nigeria

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Article History

Received: 08.08.2019

Accepted: 16.08.2019

Published: 30.09.2019

Abstract: Islam is a complete way of life. The religion leaves nothing untouched necessary to run the affairs of human being. The desire of Almighty Allah is that every people not only will leave the world simply as a Muslim but rather as a complete Muslim. With this end in view, the Glorious Qur'an was revealed as a source of guidance, mercy, and favor to the believers and it called in several passages the importance of the use of human intellect to reflect and understand the mercy, favor, guidance that Almighty Allah make upon his creation and if they were to be adopted, man will never be misguided and go astray. Despite the guidance sent to man, he has engaged himself in unrighteous deeds and attitudes which are contrary to the teaching of the true religion which is not exceptional among some of the Nigerian men. Therefore the research seeks to analyze critically the relevant and inter-play between reason and revelation in guiding man in modern Nigeria. Finally the research finds out that if man can truly followed the teaching and guidance sent down to him through revelation and also use his reasoning in a proper way and manner to reflect and acts over what has been revealed to him, he will never be misguided and Nigeria will be a peaceful atmosphere for him to live and worshipped his Lord without any obstacles.

Keywords: Revelation, Reason, Man, Guidance, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The religion of Islam through revelation delivers the Divine message of Allah (SWT) to mankind, guiding and teaching man the fundamental pillars of *Iman* (faith) which consist believing in the unity of Allah, His attributes and qualities. It also requires belief in the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad (May peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) [1]. Reason and revelation are amongst the concepts with which Islamic philosophy lies throughout its history. The problem of the relationship between revelation and reason is indeed one of the most famous and profound topics in the history of human thought and philosophy. It is a topic which, though debated without intermission now for some years, appears not to lose anything of its fascination and freshness; as far as reason and revelation is concerned, Muslim scholars are agreed that reason must be under the umbrella of Shari'ah. Islamic foundations are based on revelation and by all means reason cannot reach to the level of Shari'ah. However reason can be used as a tool for the evaluation of logic of the instructions of Shari'ah but reason alone without revelation from Allah cannot discover truth of facts beyond ordinary sense perception[2].

Today some individuals human beings in different part of the world had go astray as a result of them turning away from divine guidance and teachings sent down to them by the Law Giver as well as not pondering and using intellect to understand the guidance before them. As a result of this man finds himself in immoral attitudes such as corruption, prostitution, theft, robbery, injustice, kidnapping economic hardship, indecency and many others which are not exceptional among Modern Nigeria people. This paper therefore attempts to discuss the relevance of reason and revelation in guiding man in Modern Nigeria.

¹ W.David, An Introduction to Islam , Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 82-83

² F.Nasir, Reason and Revelation: A Comparative Study of Rational and Traditional School of Thought, University of Modern Language Press, Islambad, 2007, p.1

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Concept of Reason and Revelation in Islam

Reason (*al-Aql*)

The term *al-Aql* is derived from the verb "*Aqlu-yaqillu*" meaning reason, rationality, intellect or intelligence, Al-Anbari, a famous Arabic language Scholar said *al-Aqli* (Intelligent, sane or wise person) is the one who fastened upon his ideas and actions after careful excogitation, derived from one's statement [3]. The early Muslim Scholars from among the companions of the Prophet (May the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and their disciples all gave various but related meanings of *al-Aql* which are summarized by Ibn Jawzi in his book *al-Azkiya'* to only four. The first meaning is that which is used to describe that innate property of person wherewith, man is prepared to receive, understand and synthesize information as what distinguishes him from other living animals. This is the purport of what Scholars such as Imam Ahmad and al-Muhasibi stated, who respectively described *al-Aql* as innate property of man, or an inborn light by which one is prepared to perceive things.

The second meaning implies that which is used to designate self-evident things, the axiomatic truth (*Ilm al- Daruri*) in which both intelligent and dull-witted people are on par with one another. The third meaning of *al-Aql* cited by him is that which is gained through experience and the newly acquired experience is called *Aql*. The last meaning implies the inherent principle, by which one restrains his own self from his heart's vain desires [4]. In view of these meanings, *al-Aql* (reason) generally centers on two things: the knowledge of merit and demerit of things and then acting upon that knowledge. Person who grasped the perfectness and defectiveness of things, but refused to act upon the knowledge acquired by him is not wise, the term *al-Aql* therefore may not completely suit him [4]. To this end, *Al-Aql* implies the intellectual ability to comprehend evidence of factual knowledge in an information or message received or discovered. It is used also to distinguish wisdom from folly, which is the ability in man to be guided by the rule of wisdom.

Revelation (*Wahyi*)

Wahyi literally means inspiration, revelation, and suggestion, to point out a thing to someone, to put a thing into a mind of someone secretly; letter, writing: something revealed or written or the idea of inspired or revealed; saying; commandment; to dispatch a messenger to someone; to speak with someone secretly [5].

In Islamic terminology, revelation means communication of idea, command and information from Almighty Allah to a chosen human being, conveyed either directly or through super natural agencies like angels[6].

The revelation (*al wahyi*) is divided into two classes namely: *Al-wahyi al-Jahil* (manifest). That is Qur'anic revelation-direct words of Almighty Allah revealed to the noble Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him). Secondly, we have *al-Wahyi al-Khafi* (hidden) referring to the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him).

Relevant of Reason and Revelation in Islam

Reason and revelation are amongst the concepts with which Islamic philosophy depend throughout its history. The problem of the relationship between revelation and reason is indeed one of the most famous and profound topics in the history of human thought. It is a topic which, though debated without intermission now for some thousands of years, appears not to lose anything of its fascination and freshness, for all the dust overspreading the countless volumes of dead or seemingly dead metaphysics and theology [7]. As far as reason and Shariah is concerned, Muslim scholars are agreed that reason must be under the umbrella of Shariah. Islamic foundations are based on revelation and by all means reason cannot reach to the level of Shariah. However reason can be used as a tool for the evaluation of logic of the instructions of Shariah.

Al-Qardawi explains that the sound human intellect has been entrusted by Divine revelation to play crucial roles in the confirmation of revealed truths and the development of all fields of human knowledge necessary for effective and wholesome human vicegerency on earth. There should not be, however, any conflict between revelation and reason [8]. The importance of the use of the human intellect for thinking, reflection, understanding, knowing, pondering and contemplation is reflected by the Qur'anic use of several verbs which convey the aforementioned functions. The intellect is supposed to help human beings understand that the signs of Almighty Allah in the Qur'an as well as in the universe are meant to point to the existence and presence of Almighty Allah as well as His absolute power, wisdom and will[9].

Allah the Most High says:

³ M. Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan al-Arab al-Muhit*, Darr al-Lisan al- Arab, Beihrut, n.d.n.p

⁴ A.A. Al-Jawzi, *Ahkbar –al Azkhiya*, Dar Ibn Hazm, Beirut, 2004, p.11

⁵ A. Y. Qadhi *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quraan* Birmingham Al Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, 1999. P. 61

⁶ Ibid

⁷ F.Nasir, *Op. Cit.*, p.2

⁸ Y. Al-Qardawi , *al-Aql wa al-Ilm fi al Quran al Karim* , Maktabah Wahbah Cairo, 1996, P. 11

⁶ M.H. Kamal, *The Human Intellect, Divine Revelation and Knowledge on Al-Qardawis Work: al-Aql wa al-Ilm fi al Quran al Karim*, Malaysia, *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, vol. 2, 2011, , p.2

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and the succession of night and day; and in the ships that speed through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the waters which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless, and causing all manner of living creatures to multiply thereon; and in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between sky and earth: [in all these] there are signs for people who use their intelligence[10].

The above verse with many others found in the Qur'an such as 45: 5, 13: 4, 16: 12, 66-67 clearly indicate Allah's desire that human beings should use the intellect to understand the laws of nature and the benefits it brings as Allah's generous provision to mankind. The intellect is also to be used to draw moral lessons from the history of nations or civilizations which were destroyed by Almighty Allah because of their injustices and iniquities. Those who do not use their Allah-given intellect to derive such lessons and consequently turned their backs against the Messengers of Allah are described as people who have "hearts by which they could comprehend" (*qulubun ya' qiluna biha*), but instead they refused to learn from historical events because their hearts, rather than their eyes, were blind: Allah the Most High also says:

Have they not travelled in the land, and have they hearts by which they could comprehend (and gain wisdom), and ears by which they could hear (the truth)? For indeed it is not the eyes that have become blind, but it is the hearts, which are within their bosoms, that grow blind [11].

The Qur'an urges human beings in a variety of ways to engage in thinking and rational reflection on all matters, with the exception of the essence of Almighty Allah. "People who think or reflect" (*qawm yatafakkarun*) are mentioned favorably by Almighty Allah in connection with self-understanding and efforts to understand the laws of nature and its innumerable bounties as signs of Almighty Allah[12]. The whole of the universe, from the smallest to the biggest objects, according to the Qur'an, are to be subjected to human thought, reflection, and contemplation. But thinking and reflection are to be applied as well to non-material, moral, spiritual and eschatological matters, in addition to the wisdom behind Allah's revelation and injunctions [13]. Such sincere thoughts and reflections, freed from base desires, should lead to the recognition of Almighty Allah as The Creator, The One and Only Allah and The Master and Sustainer of all that exists, and the recognition of Prophet Muhammad as the true Messenger of Almighty Allah.

To emphasize the highly regarded value of deep and sincere reflection, al-Qardawi quotes from the book of Ibn al-Qayyim, Miftah Dar al-Sa'adah (The Key to the Abode of Happiness) what one of the Pious Ancestors once said: "A reflection (*tafakkur*) for a certain period of time is better than sixty years of worship (*ibadah*) [without reflection]." It is also said that "A reflection for a certain period of time is better than one night vigil." Umar b. Abd al-Azeez is reported to have said that "Thinking about the bounties of Allah is one of the best forms of worship"

Roles and Significance of Revelation and Reasoning in Guiding man in Modern Nigeria

The source of knowledge available to humans in this world is of two types [14]. The first is that Knowledge gained through revelation from Allah the Exalted. The second type is that of reasoning of which evidence of knowledge is collected from sense perception and empiricism. In Islam, the former is superior in that it is the scale upon which the intellectual value of the latter is measured, for reasoning as stated earlier, needs the guidance of the teachings of the Scripture to keep it away from illusion about things beyond it like the area of metaphysics.

Nowadays people in different part of the world particularly in Modern Nigeria are faced with some constraint and problems as a result of their denouncing to the true teaching of the ordain religion and not using their faculties of reason to determined their action which led to many problems that therein such as the issues of *Boko Haram*, Kidnapping, arm robbery, economic hardship, corruption, Prostitution, injustice, poor governance, and, many others and if Muslim can refer and reflect all what they have been commanded by their lord they will never go astray.

The Glorious Qur'an itself was revealed as a source of guidance and Mercy to mankind.

Allah the Most High says:

¹⁰ Qur'an 2:164

¹¹ Qur'an 22:46

¹² See Qur'an 13:3; 16:10-11, 68-69, 30:21

¹³ See Qur'an 39:42; 59:41; 10:24

¹⁴ M.H.Kamal, Op.Cit., p.6

Guidance and a mercy unto the righteous ones [15]

In another verse:

Indeed this Qur'an guides to the path which is clearer and straighter than any other[16].

Allah says in Sura An-Nahl, also

..... We have revealed to you the book which clarifies every matter.....[17]

He also says:

This Quran is guidance and glad tidings for those who believe [18].

Most surely this verses and many others strengthens the fact that mankind is in a loss if he/she does not heed the advice given to us in the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet (Peace and blessing be upon him) also explained the characteristic of the revealed book saying:

The Quran contains all information about what has happened to those communities before you, news of dissensions and tumults that will happen after you and signs of Doomsday. It is the distinguished between the truth and the falsehood. If anyone seeks guidance elsewhere lead him astray. It is the strong rope of Allah. It is the reminder with wisdom, and it is the straightest path. It protects souls who obey it from being ruined and misguidance and tongues that recite it from ambiguity [19].

Furthermore, In Islam, the significance of *al-Aql* cannot be over-emphasized. It plays a key role in recognizing the prophetic mission of Prophets of Allah the Exalted. Moreover, people who are insane are exempted from religious obligations; the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said:

The pen has been lifted from writing the deeds of three (individuals): the one who asleep until he awakes, a minor child until he reaches puberty, and the insane until he regains sanity [20].

Consequently, in several passages of the Glorious Qur'an we read the importance of the use of human intellect to reflect and understand the true teaching of the religion and sign and mercy of Allah towards his creation. Allah the Most High Says in these regard:

And in the alternation of night and day, and the provision (rain) That Allah sends down from the sky, and revives therewith the earth After his death, and in the turning about of the winds (i.e sometimes towards the east or north, and sometimes towards the south or west e.t.c., and sometimes bring the torment), are signs for a people who understand [21].

In another verse Allah the most High says:

Have they not travelled in the land, and have they hearts by which they could comprehend (and gain wisdom), and ears by which they could hear (the truth)? For indeed it is not the eyes that have become blind, but it is the hearts, which are within their bosoms, that grow blind [22].

The above verses of the Qur'an. 13: 4, 16: 12, 66-67 clearly indicate Allah's desire that human beings should use the intellect to understand the laws of nature and the benefits it brings as Allah's generous provision to mankind. The intellect is also to be

¹⁵ Qur'an 31:3

¹⁶ Qur'an 17:9

¹⁷ Qur'an 16:89

¹⁸ Qur'an 38:29

¹⁹ Tirmidhi, Thauwbul al-Qur'an, 14, 2908

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Quran 45:5

²² Quran 22:46

used to draw moral lessons from the history of nations or civilizations which were destroyed by Almighty Allah because of their injustices and iniquities. Those who do not use their Allah-given intellect to derive such lessons and consequently turned their backs against the Messengers of Allah are described as people who have “hearts by which they could comprehend” but instead they refused to learn from historical events because their hearts, rather than their eyes, were blind.

Furthermore, going with the above discussion in mind, one can be able to ascertain that some of the actions done by man in modern Nigeria are not guided either by revelation nor reasoning. For example with regard to the issues of the drastically and deadly grouped which was formed in the North Eastern part of the country claiming to be under the banner of the divine revelation called Boko Haram, their action and attitude are un-Islamic but rather for material or for political gain which can be understood through their deed, Islam had permitted Jihad but with some rules and regulations governing it. But the deadly grouped do not refer their actions towards the revealed guidance in such a case they killed infants, women, burnt houses and food which are totally against the revealed religion and it's in human taking it to another perspective, they also kidnapped children and compelled them to embrace Islam whereas there is no compulsion to the religion of Almighty Allah.

Another issues is on the social and economic life governing the attitude of man in modern Nigeria, our relationship towards our families, neighbors and other fellow Muslim, are they based solely on the guidance of the reveled religion? Or are they only determined by our reasoning? Corruption has become the order of the day, alcoholism and drunkenness among the youths, prostitution, theft, injustice, accumulation of interest, etc whereas Islam encourage and called for respect, caring and providing for our families. Talking to the issues of business transaction and financial dealing are we really following the true teaching and guidance of the revealed religion where you will see a man hoarding food for some years and his neighbor has nothing to eat, dying as a result of hunger. Giving *Zakkat* and charity was only limited to a few individuals. Accumulating interest (*ribah*) in our financial transaction and dealings has also been in every or almost all aspects economic dealings which all are against Islamic teachings and guidance.

On political issues, the so called democracy System that Nigeria is practicing has not help men in many ways, the leaders are only fighting for themselves and their families not even border to think about their subject, accumulating wealth and taking their ward abroad to studies in such a way they cannot even provide social wellbeing like schools, hospitals, electricity, roads e.t.c to their people living them in abject poverty which is totally against the teaching of the shari'ah and its also inhuman treatment.

Additionally, if man in modern day Nigeria can followed and practiced the teachings and commandment laid by Islam and using his intellect or rather reasoning and reflect upon to the sign, attributes and favour give to him, he will never go astray. He will stay within the limits of shari'ah because Islam forbade all these that we had mentioned. The issue Corruption, injustice, adultery and fortifications, alcoholism, e.t.c. So to this end the view, humans have only two sources of knowledge to guide their affairs as discussed above which are through revelation and reasoning and if were to be followed and adopted man will stay within the boundary of shari'ah and Nigeria will be a peaceful place to live.

CONCLUSION

The Glorious Quran was revealed as a source of guidance and mercy to mankind. Likewise the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him) also explained that the Qur'an was a distinguished between the truth and falsehood and if anyone seek guidance elsewhere he will be astray. Similarly several passages of the Glorious Qur'an called the Importance of human intellect to reflect and understand the true teaching of the religion and sign, mercy, existence and favor of Allah towards his creation. So if man in modern Nigeria can follow and practice the teaching and commandment laid to him by his lord and determined all his action using his intellect and reflecting upon them. He will never go astray. He will stay within the limit and boundaries of shari'ah in all his endeavors and be guided by them and Nigeria will be a peaceful place to live and worshipped his lord without any obstacles.

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