

Submission And Faith In Divine Religion

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Abstract:

After reminding God, mankind will find himself facing two ways: "Submission and gratitude" or "denial and infidelity". It is in this stage which the primary role of "mankind's will" in the way of guidance will be cleared. There are many hindrances in front of men when they turn to believe in God which can be divided into the following classes: a) Moral vices, b) Sin, c) Satans from jinns and d) Satans from men. Though, the effects of these hindrances and obstacles are not unavoidable and are conditioned to the free-will of mankind and how much he likes to stop them and control them.

Key words:

Submission, free-will

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Introduction

In the previous articles, we talked about two stages of religious theology, i.e., “introduction” and “reminding”. In this article, we will talk about the third and in fact the last stage that are “submission” and “faith”. In the present study, we will talk about “submission and faith in divine religion” and “their obstacles”.

Third Stage

After man traverses the two stages i.e. “introduction” and “reminding”, and perceives by all his existence, the gifted divine gnosis, he may find two alternatives: “Submission and gratitude” or “denial and infidelity”.

“Surely We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful”. (The holy Quran 76:3)

At this crucial juncture, the fundamental and determining role of man’s authority in guidance becomes clear. It is not out of place to pursue the matter by the help of one question:

The holy Quran, on the one hand, attributes guidance to God, and on the other hand, underlines the importance of man’s authority in his own salvation.¹

¹ This question and absence of its proper reply is one of the causes for the appearance of two extreme views i.e., Pre-determinism and freedom in the discourses of the Muslims. Of course, this discussion has had an ancient record among the societies, sciences and has always drawn man’s attention. Nevertheless, the twofold apparent meanings of a few Quranic verses (particularly on the matter of guidance) on the one hand, and non-presentation

Regarding the first category, we may refer to the following verses:

“Surely Ours is to show the way”. (The holy Quran 92:12)

“To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases”. (The holy Quran 2:272)

“Surely, the guidance is the guidance of Allah” (The holy Quran 2:73)

“Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance”. (the holy Quran 6:71)

The following verses are examples of the second category:

“if they submit then indeed they follow the right way; and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message”. (The holy Quran 3:20)

“Nay! It is surely an admonition. So whoever pleases may mind it”. (the holy Quran 74:54 & 55)

How should these verses be interpreted so that while being in harmony with one another, they reveal the Quran’s standpoint in this matter? A deep contemplation over the verses will reveal that acquisition of guidance is the result of two stages: i.e., “introduction” and “submission” and that guidance comprises two inseparable parts: God’s favour and man’s submission.

of a comprehensive layout in this regard and absence of division between “divine guidance” and “being guided” on the other hand has not been ineffective in giving shape to the two schools: “Free-will” and “Pre-Determinism”.

“Say: Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance, and we are commanded that we should submit to the Lord of the worlds”. (the holy Quran 6:71)

“It is for God to define (introduce) Himself to the human-beings and it is upon man to accept Him after introduction”¹.

As such, it is upon God to introduce Himself and show man, the right and wrong path. Correspondingly, it is man’s duty to seek the truth; to acknowledge and worship God and lead the path of servitude and perfection.

“So if they submit then indeed they follow the right way”.
(The holy Quran 3:20)

In fact, guidance through “introduction” (of God) and following the right way through “submission” (before God) are the two pillars of the school of divine prophets and theology which together with “reminding”, complete the foundations of divine theology and the means of servitude.

We have already discussed “introduction” and “reminding” and the topic of this stage is about “submission”.

This discussion will be set forth in two chapters. The first chapter shall strive to describe the ground for confession and denial and reveal man’s reaction vis-a-vis the clear gnosis. Moreover, it will explain why and in what manner man turns his back on the divine gnosis and instead, chooses the path of obstinacy and disobedience. In the second chapter, we shall discuss the consequences of submission and the manner of acquiring faith.

¹ Kulaini, al-Kafi, Vol 1, p.164

First Chapter:

Obstacles and stimulus to submission

There exists numerous verses and traditions concerning guidance and following the right way and various obstacles and stimulus have been enumerated for them. The holy Quran and other heavenly books reckon the mental faculties and moral vices to be the basis of infidelity and faith and have underlined the role of man's authority and free-will.

Here, we shall discuss, in general, free-will; and morals and then set forth obstacles to submission and faith from viewpoint of the Quran.

1. Relation of free-will with stimulus and impelling factors

By stimulus and impelling factors mean man's inner and outer states, like mental and moral conditions; the family and environmental conditions, and the social and friendly relations. Such conditions form the basis of man's actions.

The expressions used in such instances are commensurate with their strong influence over man. It seems, impelling factors are more influential than stimulus because, the latter implies something which invites while the former implies something which impels. These two terms have also come down in the traditions.

"Greed, vanity and jealousy are stimulus (invitations) to falling into sins"¹.

¹ Nahaj al-Balagha; Wise sayings: 366

“Oppression and injustice drives (impels) man towards destruction”.¹

From the viewpoint of divine religions, man possesses the power and means of selection, and is capable of choosing any path kept open before him. In cases where man’s character is endowed with goodness and evil earning for himself reward and punishment, the matter of free-will and authority play a special and influential role. Although, various internal and external factors too influences man’s actions yet, man’s free-will, due to its special characteristic, prevails over all other factors and plays the main and fundamental role.

The noteworthy point is that incompatible internal stimulation and the environment open varied ways before man, and encourages and invites him to traverse those ways. They force and create an urge in him. However, these stimulations, forces and tendencies will turn into action only when man chooses, through his free-will and authority, one of the ways.

In more precise terms, stimulations, impelling forces and inclinations are the determinant factors of man’s action but **not the complete cause**. In fact, the power of free-will governs the other causes and factors and man is not bound by these factors.

As such, in divine anthropology, the ability and power of free-will is reckoned to be one of the “*primary qualities of the soul*” and cannot be reduced to knowledge and inclination. For

¹ Commentary of Ibne Maitham Bahrani on one hundred sayings of Amir al-Muminin (p.b.u.h.) ; p. 129

this reason, power and free-will must be taken into consideration while defining man.¹

2. Relation of free-will and morals to belief and deeds

The role of moral virtues and vices in beliefs and deeds and similarly, the underlining of authority and the sovereignty of man's free-will over moral, faith and deeds is among the outstanding points and criterion of divine gnosis.

Submission or denial takes place at a stage when man has passed the two stages of "introduction" and "reminding" and the divine argumentation has been finalized for him. It is here that man's role begins and man exhibits his reaction vis-a-vis the divine argumentation. The question that arises here is this: What is the reason for the disbelief of the infidels?

Answer: Although, free-will and authority is the main and fundamental cause in man's decision-making nevertheless, other determinant factors intervene and prepare the ground for evil free-will. While they do not disavow authority, they by themselves, originate from man's free-will.

The verses of the holy Quran reckons infidelity, polytheism, mis-guidance and non-submission (before God) to spring from such factors as pride and arrogance, injustice and envy, insolence and callousness, desire and superiority and sin and abjuration. On the one hand, such terms and concepts show that from the viewpoint of the Quran, man possesses

¹ Compare the above matter with the views of the Greek philosophers (particularly, Aristotle) on definition of man and moral virtues. In this regard, refer to "Fundamentals of knowing God in Greek philosophy and divine religions".

free-will and authority in his actions and the most vital base for unfit selection is moral and spiritual vices which spring from previous evil background. On the other hand, it shows that cleanliness of the inborn disposition and purification of the soul are the conditions of divine faith and guidance. This matter recounts the firm relation between morals and belief from the viewpoint of religion and shows that morals do not merely imply admonition but are one of the corner stones for seeking the truth. From the viewpoint of Quran and sunnah, moral vices and the gloom resulting from it is reckoned to be one of the obstacles to recognition (of God) and prepares the ground for man's evil free-will. In contrast, moral virtues prepare man's soul and spirit for receiving the divine gnosis and guidance.

Now, we shall enumerate briefly the obstacles to submission from the viewpoint of Quran:

3. Obstacles to submission in the Quran

*I*n general, the aforesaid obstacles in the Quran refer to two internal and external factors. Each of these two comprises two sets of factors as follows:

- a) Moral vices and material attachments.
- b) Sin and inequity
- c) Satans from jinns
- d) Satans from men

Each of the above titles, in their turn, possesses diverse aspects. We shall point out a few of them supported with their

related verses. At the end, we shall give references to a few others.

a) Moral Vices

With regards to moral vices, it is noteworthy that these vices take place by man's free-will, and they are acquired by man.

1. Carnal Desires

Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?"¹

According to the above noble verse, deviation and sealing of the heart, ear, and eye as well as deprivation from guidance is due to man's evil authority and his selection of carnal desires as god.

"And as to the Thamud, We showered them the right way, but they chose error above guidance" (The holy Quran 41:17)

2. Hardened Hearts

"And He shows you His signs so that you may understand. Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness".

(The holy Quran 2:73 & 74)

¹ The holy Quran (45:23). Also refer to 28:50; 54:3; 47:14; and 2:87

According to this noble verse, the ontological signs [which was discussed in the second stage] together with rationalization paves the way for man's guidance. But, man's hardened heart does not allow his intellect to find its due course. In such verses and traditions their number being no less, the matter of rationalization (intellect) and heart has been jointly mooted. One should see the meaning of intellect from the viewpoint of revelation and divine writings.

In the other heavenly books too, much has been spoken about the hardened heart. Moreover, they reckon the hardened heart to be the factor responsible for man's straying from God and His religion. For example, it has come down in the Exodus from Torah as follows:

“Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh and said: Yahova, the God of Israel, says: Set free My nation, so that they may celebrate for Me in the desert. Pharaoh said: Who is Yahova that I should listen to him and set free the Israel? I do not know Yahova and I shall not free Israel”¹.

Thereafter, Moses manifested numerous miracles before Pharaoh but each time, Pharaoh did not submit due to his hardened heart. The sentence: *“Pharaoh's heart became hard”* has been repeated more than ten times in the Exodus.²

¹ Old Testament (Torah); Exodus: Chapter 5; p. 89

² Same source; p. 92-95; 97-100 and 104

3. Pride and Arrogance

“Surely (as for) those who dispute about the communications of Allah without any authority that has come to them, there is naught in their breasts but pride”.

(The holy Quran 40:56)

So, the divine communications are good enough for guidance but a group dispute about it. And this dispute is not out of ignorance but due to pride and arrogance.

“As to those who disbelieved: What! Were not My communications recited to you? But you were proud and you were a guilty people”.¹

4. Avarice

“But when He gave them out of His grace, they became niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew. So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts”. (The holy Quran 9:76 & 77)

Turning back from religion and hypocrisy are the result of avarice.

5. Seeking Exaltation and Superiority

About disbelief by Pharaoh and his companions of the divine communications, the holy Quran says:

¹ The holy Quran (45:31). Also, refer to (2:17); (7:36,40 & 76); (46:10) and (63:5)

“And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them; consider, then how was the end of the mischief-makers”. (The holy Quran 2:14)

b) Indulgence In Sins

1. Injustice

“And none deny Our communications except the unjust”. (The holy Quran 27:14)

“Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people”.¹

It has come down in the Evangel as such:

“Thus, the reason He (God) hardened Pharaoh’s heart was because he punished our tribe and wished to do injustice to them.”²

2. Transgression

“And certainly We have revealed to you clear communications and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors”. (The holy Quran 2:99)

In this verse, disbelief is confined to transgression. The reason for this may be the wide concept of transgression which includes all indecent acts.

“Surely, Allah does not guide the transgressing people”.¹

¹ The holy Quran (6:144). Also, see (9:109); (2:86 & 258); (61:7);(28:50); (46:10) and (27:14)

² Bible of Barnabas: Chapter 166; p. 332

3. Evil Deeds

“Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the communications of Allah”. (The holy Quran 30:10)

This warning by the Quran is very strong and intense as sin does not merely remain within its own limits. Rather, because of the reciprocal relation of deed with the human heart and soul, the evil deeds directly influences man's heart related position vis-a-vis religion and results in the disbelief (of God).

4. Lie

“Surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful”. (the holy Quran 39:3)

c) & d) Satans from jinn and men

“And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the Satans from among men and jinn”.
(The holy Quran 6:112)

“Like the Satan when he says to man: Disbelieve”. (The holy Quran 59:16)

“Surely (as for) those who return on their backs after that guidance has become manifest to them, the Satan has made it a light matter to them; and He gives them respite”. (The holy Quran 47:25)

¹ The holy Quran (63:6). Also, see (2:26); (61:5) and (9:80)

*“And the Satan desires to lead them astray into a remote error”.*¹

It has come down in the Evangel as follows:

*“Faith never errs because its foundation is God and His Words... But (the Satan) earnestly seeks to nullify the faith”.*²

Numerous traditions too have come down concerning the topic under discussion. For the sake of brevity, we shall set forth only a few of them:

Imam al-Sadiq (p.b.u.h.) said:

*“The principles of disbelief are three: Greed, vanity and jealousy”*³.

*“The pillars of disbelief are four: Greed in worldly provisions; fear from fading of worldly provisions; fury and anger”.*⁴

Hazrat Ali (p.b.u.h.) said:

*“Disbelief has been founded on four pillars: Ungodliness, exaggeration (extremism), doubt and uncertainty”.*⁵

Imam Musa Kazim (p.b.u.h.) said:

¹ The holy Quran (4:60). Similarly, see (4:43 & 121); (7:27); (22:3); (27:24) and (29:38)

² Bible of Barnabas; p. 211 & 212

³ al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.289; tradition 1.

⁴ al-Kafi, vol. 2, p.289; tradition 2

⁵ Al-Kafi, vol.2, p.393. Similarly, refer to Nahaj al-Balagha: wise sayings No. 31 and Bihar al-Anwar vol.72, pp.104-123; chapter concerning pillars of disbelief; hadith 1,2,16,17,19 and vol. 70, p.53; hadith 15 & p. 55 hadith 24.

“Surely, people are aloof from God due to their manifold sins”.¹

Human freedom, good and evil free-will and moral vices and virtues greatly influences man’s life. Amongst their effects is man’s submission or non-submission before God. Besides, enjoyment or deprivation from “*Ruh-e-Iman*”(spirit of faith) is the result of this submission or non-submission finally resulting in the worship or disobedience of God. The outcome of submission and worship too (as mentioned in the stage of ‘reminding’) is nothing but achievement of special guidance i.e., intensification of innate gnosis and greater recognition of the Almighty God.

Among the effects of free-will and moral capability is the manner of achieving and remembering the innate gnosis in the foremost stage of guidance (general guidance). Verily, the basis of divine gnosis has been manifested for all and the divine plea will be finalized for all men (as explained in the stage of ‘introduction’. But, an individual’s spiritual state influences the manner of manifestation of innate gnosis and its remembrance.

Perhaps, a few expressions from the Quran (as mentioned below) bear witness, apart from special guidance, to general guidance and the manner of achieving the first stage of guidance.

Thus, free-will and morals play a fundamental role in recognition (of God), belief, and deeds and in short, in all aspects of man’s life.

¹ Bihar al-Anwar, vol.3, p.15