

The Historical Revelation and Ultra-Historic Presence of the Glorious Qur'an

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ABSTRACT: Having discussed the issue of eternity and temporality of the glorious Qur'an, this paper demonstrates that the Qur'an is not designated to a certain period of time, rather it is a divine manuscript in order to reveal eternal realities and truth to all humanity throughout the time. The paper introduces the substantial aspects of the Qur'an which make it an eternal and everlasting book. It also discusses and criticises the view of those who believe in temporality of the Qur'an.

KEYWORDS: the Qur'an, temporality, eternity, historicism, subsistence of the Qur'an.

Introduction

A contemporary issue worthy of attention is the historicalness and temporality of ideas (or thoughts). Developed in the nineteenth century, historicism held the notion that in social sciences, the veracity (or authenticity) of propositions is contingent on historical circumstances and values related to that time.¹

Karl Marx formulated the theory of historical materialism and thereby concluded that all human thought derives from material causes and social

conventions.² Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911 CE) considered historicism to be the unavoidable corollary of every kind of thought and worldview that is intertwined with relativity.³

Some modern psychologists have come to believe that the appearance of rational principles, or, in technical terms, affirmative self-evident truths, is the result of social causes. According to this theory, the appearance of these principles is always connected to and in accordance with man's natural and social environment. Thus changes in his natural and social environment inevitably make these principles change. In other words, there is between intellectual perceptions and social needs a relationship of dependence and succession.⁴

Historicism is the nemesis of religious thought. The reason is that it disregards philosophical and intellectual principles, and hence does not reflect constant knowledge and considers all theorisation and rational creativity to be conditional on temporal scientific elements and categorisation. Despite this and the disastrous consequences it has produced for religious knowledge, this point of view has been warmly welcomed by some Muslim intellectuals. Drawing inspiration from this theory, they have firstly evaluated religious knowledge within the confines of this theory and then undertaken, by lowering divine revelation to the level of changeable human experience, to correlate it with the Glorious Qur'an.

We will hereunder demonstrate that the Glorious Qur'an is divine revelation received directly from an Immutable God and thus transcends changeable human experience.

Assumptions of the Historical/Ultra-Historical Identity of the Glorious Qur'an

There are three assumptions regarding the historicalness or ultra-historicalness of the linguistic and thematic structure of the Glorious Qur'an:

The first assumption is that the Glorious Qur'an is a purely divine and heavenly reality which has no relation to and connection with the social conditions of the era in which it was revealed.

As is clear, this presupposition runs contrary to the historical fact of gradual revelation of the Glorious Qur'an and also to its thematic components. In the period of its revelation the Glorious Qur'an concentrated on contemporary issues that had engulfed the society such as ignorance, disbelief, polytheism, injustice, oppression and corruption. Thus, this assumption does not have strong rational or historical support.

The second assumption is that the Glorious Qur'an is, like other works, a human and temporal book.

The third assumption is that the Glorious Qur'an, while addressing the contemporary issues of the era of its revelation, nonetheless has a metaphysical and eternal identity for the guidance of mankind during the final era of Prophethood.

We will hereunder discuss the last two assumptions.

1. The Viewpoint of Ultra-Historicalness of the Glorious Qur'an

As is historically clear, Muslims have always considered the Glorious Qur'an to be the last Book of Revelation and the final Divine Message to mankind. The main reason for this belief has been that the Noble Prophet (s) is the Seal of the Prophets and hence his Book is the last Book of Revelation and Human Guidance.

The Glorious Qur'an has seven essential qualities that guarantee its eternity among mankind:

- a) The capacity for semantic eternity that makes it adapt to every era;
- b) Conformity to the common primordial nature of all human beings;
- c) Conformity to human reason and rationality;
- d) Comprehensiveness that embraces material and spiritual, personal and social issues;
- e) It is flexible and predicts certain conditions necessary for the development of new religious sciences and teachings;

- f) It predicts the growth of human reason and social advancement in various scientific fields, and, adaptation to the modern science, on the basis of course of certain immutable Qur'anic principles;
- g) The existence of the infallible Imams (as) as the guarantor of its eternity and reference point for Qur'anic exegesis.

The Noble Prophet (s) said: The Glorious Qur'an has an outward aspect and an inward aspect, and that inward aspect has another inward aspect, up to seven inward aspects.⁵

He also said: The outward aspect of the Glorious Qur'an is beautiful and its inward aspect is deep.⁶

The Glorious Qur'an says:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ
ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَنْ كُنَّ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of God according to which He originated mankind (There is no altering God's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know.) (Sūrah 30:30)

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُم مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ
تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللَّهُ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْقُوا لِلَّهِ إِن
اللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

They ask you as to what is lawful to them. Say, 'All the good things are lawful to you.' As for what you have taught hunting dogs [to catch], teaching them out of what God has taught you, eat of what they catch for you and mention God's Name over it, and be wary of God. Indeed God is swift at reckoning. (Sūrah 5:4)

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of God and the Seal of the Prophets, and God has knowledge of all things. (Sūrah 33:40)

2. Historicism of the Glorious Qur'an

In the modern era, especially after the appearance of the theory of historicism and Orientalist religious studies and particularly after the formulation of the theory of philosophical hermeneutics in the West, three viewpoints have appeared on the words and meanings of the Glorious Qur'an:

- a) That the words and meanings of the Glorious Qur'an are the Noble Prophet's (s) own creation or invention; hence the Qur'an is a human work.
- b) That the meanings of the Glorious Qur'an are the work of God but its words are the Noble Prophet's (s) creation, in the sense that in explaining the Glorious Qur'an and its revealed truths, the Noble Prophet (s) would use terms suitable for his listeners and intelligible to the people of his era.
- c) That the Glorious Qur'an reflects the culture of the era in which it was revealed. Proponents of this viewpoint cite verses the purport of which is that the Glorious Qur'an was revealed in Arabic for the understanding of the people amongst whom it was revealed.

3. Critique and Opinion

- a) It is an indisputable philosophical truth that knowledge is based on immutable principles, namely self-evident truths, not on natural phenomena, because it is natural and material phenomena that undergoes changes and not self-evident immaterial realities, it is to be concluded that this viewpoint is based on nothing but fallacious argumentation. In other words, the purport of the Glorious Qur'an, which emanates and derives

from incorporeal divine knowledge, is as immutable as its Source and hence transcends historicism. That is to say, the Glorious Qur'an is always as true and as immutable as the Transcendent Divine Reality it emanates from.

- b) Even if it is true that some human knowledge is dependent on environmental conditions, it is nonetheless self-evident that not all human knowledge succumbs to historicism. There are many human theories and sciences the principles of which are unchangeable, transcend historicism and will always be true. For example, human knowledge the basic principles of which are self-evident truths, is immutable and always true because its principles are immutable and always true. Thus to apply the theory of historicism to all human knowledge is also nothing but fallacious argumentation.
- c) Furthermore, both the meaning and exact wording of the Glorious Qur'an is God's work and it was sent down for the guidance of all mankind regardless of what era they lived in:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand. (Sūrah 12:2)

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ
وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

The day We raise in every nation a witness against them from among themselves, We shall bring you as a witness against these. We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things and as a guidance and mercy and good news for the Muslims. (Sūrah 16:89)

It has to be said that the effective causes of historicism are philosophical hermeneutics, empirical epistemological methodologies, a materialistic worldview, liberal ideologies and humanism, the roots of all of which are

materialism and positivism. It has already been proven in the preceding paragraphs that these theories lack sound scientific proof.

It has been concluded that the theory of historicism lacks concrete theoretical and scientific support, and hence is nothing but fallacious argumentation.

Conclusion

It is to be concluded that the theory of historicism, the theories we have evaluated and critiqued, lacks concrete theoretical and rational support. The cornerstone of the argument for this assertion is that the content of the Glorious Qur'an is emanated from Divine realm, so it contains lots of immutable and eternal reality which transcend historicism. Although parts of human knowledge are dependent on environmental conditions, it is self-evident that not all human knowledge succumbs to historicism. There are many human knowledge such as philosophical, ethical, social, psychological sciences whose principles are unchangeable, transcend historicism and can always be true. Thus generalization of the theory of historicism to all human knowledge is nothing but fallacious argumentation.

Notes

1. Alizadeh, Abdorreza, *Jame'eh Shenasi-e Ma'refat*, (Qum: Pazuheshgah Hawzah va Daneshgah, 1383 (s.c.)), 43.
2. Marx, Karl, *Naghd Eghtesad-e Siyasi*, Persian translation of *A Critique of Political Economics*, trans. Sazeman Cherikhaye Fadaee Khalgh (Iran: n, 1358 (s.c.)), 2-3.
3. 'Alizadeh, *ibid*, 39 and 136.
4. Mutahhari, Murtada, *Usul-e Falsafeh va Ravesh-e Realism*, vol. 2, Entesharat Sadra, 8th edition, (n, 1376 (s.c.)), 135-138.
5. Ibn Abi Jumhur al-Ahsa'ee, *Awali al-La'ali*, vol .4, (Qum: Entesharat Sayyid al-shuhada, 1405), 107.
6. Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, (n, d), 599.

